

Note on Zagreb 4 Plan.

On Croatia, the Contact Group knew we had made considerable progress, in detailed talks from October 1994 to March 1995, on economic issues, restoring disrupted electricity and water supplies and also reopening, besides the highway, the oil pipeline which goes from the Adriatic through Croatia into Central Europe but had been shut down in the small section which went through the Northern UN Protected Area controlled by the Croatian Serbs. The constant questions before the Contact Group was to balance pressure with progress on the economic talks, the vital precursor to political negotiations. At risk was giving those Croatian Serbs who did not want to formally link up with the Bosnian Serbs no alternative if they felt betrayed by Belgrade. In the Contact Group the US were against these two Serbian entities merging yet in New York and Washington they seemed ready to adopt policies that could only have had this effect. Yet the US were in favour of serious autonomy for the Southern and Northern UNPAs as were the Germans, influenced by Ambassador Ahrens who was fully committed.

At this stage we had not yet won acceptance in Belgrade, let alone Knin, for UN Administration of the Eastern UN Protected Area approved in the Z4 plan. In Zagreb there was acquiescence but only if the ultimate solution was specified. It was clear from our discussions with Serbs that whereas most, with varying degrees of reluctance, accepted that Western Slavonia would eventually have to come under the Croatian system of local government, there was total resistance to that concept for the Eastern area which had a common border with the FRY. In Stoltenberg's and my judgement there was much to be said in favour of not closing any options on what structure of governance within Croatia would emerge after a period of UN administration in the Eastern UNPA. The US and Germany wanted to preempt any such discussion, for fear that this might keep open the option of the Eastern UNPA becoming part of the FRY. We felt it was easier at this stage to close this door and insist on the Eastern UNPA being part of Croatia by leaving open what degree of autonomy it had within Croatia, whether it should be part of the Republika Krajina, whether it should be semi-autonomous as a region or given self government in the different local areas.

President Tudjman was throughout distinctly cool to the Z4 plan. He did not like any aspect of it except the recognition that Western Slavonia should soon come under the Croatian Government's control. He adopted an attitude of disdain to the whole enterprise believing and hoping that the Croatian Serbs would never accept anything other than independence and justify him taking all the territory by force. The only question mark was over his attitude to Eastern Slavonia. He seemed to believe the Serbs could not be driven out in the short term, therefore he would play a waiting game and deal with Milosevic who accepted why he had to control communications between Zagreb and the Dalmatian coast. I believe these two Presidents think they know each others minds on Eastern Slavonia but I have no knowledge of any deal, which I suspect does not exist beyond agreeing this is an issue on which time must be allowed to work through. But patience is not one of Tudjman's virtues. For this reason I believed it a sensible use of ICFY effort to work very hard on achieving progress on, first, the economic, and as soon as feasible the political, front.

On 16 October, after visiting Moscow, Zagreb and Belgrade from 12-14 October I sent a COREU telegram to EU Foreign Ministers. For some time Stoltenberg and I had been anxious about the role of the Russian Ambassador in Zagreb and the extent to which his input into the Zagreb Four was really representative of the views in Moscow. We were also concerned as to the extent to which Moscow was consulting Milosevic. Churkin had admitted to me in Moscow that he had not discussed the Krajina in anything other than very general terms and then only when seeing Milosevic on his most recent trip on Belgrade on Thursday 6 October. When Stoltenberg and I started to explain the Z4 proposals to Milosevic on 14 October he was very clearly surprised to hear that the Z4 envisaged breaking up the RSK and were not giving autonomy to the Eastern UNPA as part of the autonomous area involving the North and Southern UNPAs. He argued strongly that if this became public he would not be able to hold the Croatian Serbs away from merging with the Bosnian Serbs and that he would have to steer clear of the whole initiative.

Stoltenberg and I countered his argument by invoking the Vance Plan which for Milosevic was holy writ. We argued that the plan had been virtually ignored in the Eastern UNPA, which was an area where the Croats had been in a majority prior to war and where we all knew that thousands of

Croats wanted to return but had felt unable to do so. A major part in our inability to persuade Croats to return was the dominating and at times threatening role of the RSK militia and the RSK's control of all aspects of the local administration. We told Milosevic bluntly that if it was not acceptable to the EU or the US that this state of affairs continued. We were not prepared to countenance a Cyprus solution where the status quo became over the years an accepted part of life. We also stressed that the 10 January report back to the Security Council by UNPROFOR on the extent to which Security Council Resolutions, covering the Vance Plan, had been implemented was almost certain to be a crucial threshold. While Tudjman had frequently threatened not to renew UNPROFOR's mandate there was this time a very real chance that in the absence of progress UNPROFOR would have to pull out of Croatia and then very probably Bosnia. We told Milosevic that his views would be taken very seriously since his support for the Contact Group map had been crucial and it would obviously be far preferable to have his support for any Croatian solution and that we increasingly saw a comprehensive global solution as the only way forward.

Milosevic was writing that day to Kozyrev to explain his anxieties. We had already been told by Kozyrev and Churkin that they had four main objections to the Z4 plan covering:

1. Greater degree of autonomy. It was already a generous autonomy package but we felt we ought to be able to satisfy the Russians on this score.
2. Demilitarization. This did not start for three years and was due to be completed by the fifth year, which we felt was fair.
3. Confederation. It appeared the Russians wanted to use this term contrary to what they had hinted previously to Ambassador Ahrens. We knew this would be opposed by the Croats, the US and the Germans, Kinkel having written to explain his position.
4. Dual citizenship. We felt we ought to be able to show that this aspect was fairly covered in the Z4 plan.

Stoltenberg and I believed that the most saleable way forward was to set the Z4 plan more clearly within the framework of the Vance Plan and we forwarded specific proposals to the Contact Group countries. Not only was Milosevic publicly committed to the Plan but the Croatian Serbs were becoming readier to accept it. Even Babic now admitted to Milosevic that his opposition in 1991 was because he was 'too young'. Milosevic, unlike many of the Croatian Serb leaders, I believed in his heart did accept that the RSK had to live within the boundaries of the Republic of Croatia, just as the Bosnian Serbs had to live within Bosnia-Herzegovina. He realized that formal secession meant the international community swallowing too many words. He had a strong vested interest, however, in wanting the Eastern UNPA to be Serb controlled. The Russians, I felt, would have to be persuaded to pressurize him on this issue, but where we could meet Milosevic was not to pre-empt at this stage what would be the permanent governance of the Eastern UNPA within Croatia once a proper climate had been established for the return of the refugees and a reasonable period had expired the local people could be consulted through a referendum on whether they wanted (a) to be part of the normal local government of Croatia, (b) to have a measure of regional part of an autonomous RSK within Croatia.

Where there could be no compromise with Milosevic was that Croatian Customs would have to go on the border and that the present UN regime within the Eastern UNPA had to be strengthened. Stoltenberg and I believed it would have to be UN administered and that the UNPROFOR presence would have to be strengthened in numbers perhaps as it was taken out from the other three UNPAs, also some of the existing RSK institutions would have to be dismembered. We also attached importance to a joint Serb/Croat company to exploit the oilfields, the pipeline and the refinery in neighbouring Serbia from the start of UN Administration as a very visible sign of cooperation. On this we had by March 1995 reached agreement between Mikelic and Sarinic.

Suggested changes to Z4 plan, put forward 15 October 1994

The sort of rewrite of the Z4 plan envisaged could be best understood by the following four illustrative paragraphs which we put forward to the Contact Group governments for their consideration.

'It is now necessary to move forward on the basis of the 1991 Vance Plan towards a phased abolition

of the four UNPAs which were always envisaged as part of the transition to an overall permanent settlement'.

'It is now possible for the RSK to be recognised as the governing body in the following areas of the Republic of Croatia (map A) with the powers and functions as set out in Sections ... This means that as from ... the Northern and Southern UNPAs will cease to exist'.

'It is now possible for the Western UNPA to cease to exist from . . . and the territory covered to be governed under the normal arrangements of local government currently applying within the Republic of Croatia'.

'It is still necessary to keep the Eastern UNPA since the objectives envisaged in the Vance Plan have not yet been achieved, in particular the large scale return of Croatian refugees. It is therefore necessary to make changes in the arrangements currently operating within the Eastern UNPA to ensure that the Vance Plan is fully implemented. It is therefore proposed that the present administration within the Eastern UNPA is not sufficiently representative of the incoming refugees and that it would be better for an interim period for there to be UN administration during which period those Croats and Serbs who wish to return to their homes and to live in areas where they had lived before the summer of 1990 should be given every assistance to do so. As far as is possible those Serbs and Croats who previously lived in other parts of the Croatian Republic and who now wish to live in the Eastern UNPA should be enabled to do so. During this period of UN administration the UN would be responsible for the police force and would undertake the training and organising of an ethnically-based police force when UN administration ceases. It is understood that the Croatian Customs will exercise Customs responsibilities on the border with the Republic of Serbia with UNPROFOR support. During the period of UN administration nothing shall be done to pre-empt the question as to the status of the permanent governing body in the area concerned once UN administration has ceased. The UN administration will be responsible for conducting referenda to establish the views of the local people. In any advisory bodies and in consulting the opinion of local people the UN administration will give due weight to the representatives of the Republic of Croatia and of the newly recognised RSK in the former Northern and Southern UNPAs'.

On our instruction Ambassador Eide on the Z4 group held out for a package that was more flexible in dealing with the Eastern UNPA. The package was then leaked extensively in the winter months in Zagreb which had the advantage of slowly softening opinion amongst some Croatian Serbs but it also hardened opinion amongst particularly key Croatian Serb leaders against any compromise. The four Ambassadors eventually presented the Z4 proposals formally to the Croatian government and then travelled to Knin but the Croatian Serbs refused to formally accept the document since the Croatian government had announced their decision to end UNPROFOR's mandate. Then the Croatian Serbs closed the Zagreb Belgrade motorway. The Croatian government moved in to the Western UNPA and within a few hours imposed their authority and in effect achieved by force of arms what had been envisaged in the Z4 plan, namely the early and complete return of this UNPA to Croatian government control. The Croatian Serbs, under Martić's foolish leadership, having suffered a humiliating rebuff over the Western UNPA then deliberately chose to disrupt the successful negotiating relationship which Mikelic had established with Sarinic and with Babic's concurrence dismissed Mikelic. In August the Croatian Government attacked the Southern and Northern Sectors which were no longer called UNPAs, routed the Croatian Serb army and took control of the Knin area. The Z4 plan had been shredded and all that was left was to negotiate or fight over the future of Eastern Slavonia.

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