CHAPTER 14

Peacekeeping in the Face of Ingratitude, Opportunism, and Treachery

Introduction

United Nations peacekeeping changed for ever in the former Yugoslavia. At the outset of UNPROFOR the peacekeeping doctrine was the classical one: that UN forces were interposed between warring parties who wished them to help keep a peace that they had agreed to. With a stretch, one could say that there was such an agreement in respect of the deployment in the UNPAs in Croatia.\(^1\) One could not, however, say this of the subsequent deployments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The leadership of the peacekeeping force was reluctant to have to deal with human rights issues. From the very outset of the deployment of UNPROFOR, however, it would be called upon to contribute to the human rights effort. As the duration of the Force's deployment increased it would come to accept a role in reporting on human rights violations, in speaking out on human rights violations, and in being ready to use force if needed for the protection of those at risk. Yugoslavia established the principle that UN peace forces had a duty to contribute to the defence of human rights.

In an earlier Chapter, we saw how UNPROFOR discharged its mandate as a protection force in the UNPAs in Croatia. In this chapter we shall see how the human rights-related role of the force would develop dramatically over time. For background, we provide an overview of the contributions of UN peacekeeping forces in the former Yugoslavia.

I The Contributions of UN Peace Operations in the Former Yugoslavia

In a briefing to the UN Security Council, meeting in Informal Consultations on 23 February, 1995, Thorvald Stoltenberg, Co-Chairman of the ICFY and, during 1993, the SRSG in charge of all UN operations in the former Yugoslavia, addressed head on criticism of UNPROFOR in the media and proceeded to provide a

dramatic account of the force’s contribution in the area. Noting that there had been charges that the UN and UNPROFOR had not fully implemented their mandate, he admitted that, to a certain extent, this had been true. But, he pointed out, a UN withdrawal from areas of the former Yugoslavia would make the world realize that what it had accomplished there had been of ‘capital importance’. Since the Council’s adoption of resolution 713 in September 1991, 62 resolutions had been adopted and more than 50 Presidential statements had been issued. UNPROFOR, whose authorized strength was 50,433 personnel, barely mustered 43,547. Its casualties then stood at 1,340,139 of them fatal.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, he continued, had spent more than 1 billion in direct assistance to some 4 million refugees and displaced persons. The Sarajevo airlift was the longest in history. UNPROFOR units were stationed along the 712 kilometre cease-fire line in Croatia, along a 1,205 kilometre line inside Bosnia, and along the 290 kilometre FYROM border. ICFY monitors were operating in a 500-kilometre arc between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) (Serbia and Montenegro) and Bosnia and Herzegovina and along a 245 kilometre line between Croatia and the FRY. There were no UN personnel along the 850 kilometre border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There had been close to 100 ceasefire agreements in Bosnia and a dozen in Croatia. Those figures, Mr Stoltenberg said, illustrated the seriousness of the threat that would arise if UNPROFOR were compelled to withdraw from Croatia. There had been successes in that country through the five successive blueprints for an overall regional settlement and the two plans for Croatia, the latest of which was the “Z-4” Plan emanating from a Zagreb group in which ICFY participated. An economic agreement between Croatia and the Croatian Serbs had led to the re-opening of the highway between the Croatian and Serbian areas of Croatia, permitting renewed contacts among people and among families. Four thousand five hundred vehicles were then using the highway daily. The oil pipeline had been opened on 26 January, 1995, and agreement reached on its joint operation by Croatia and the Knin authorities. The Croatian authorities had recently delivered the spare parts needed for the Obrowsz power plant, which would resume operation in a few weeks. Mine-clearance operations had begun along two railway tracks.

On the political front, Mr Stoltenberg continued, the “Z-4” document was a basis for political negotiations. The parties were all familiar with the

---