

Article by the High Representative: "Eight Days Diary"

Friday May 16

Train from Brussels to London in the morning for briefings with the new Labour government. First the new Secretary of Defence Mr. Robertson. He was planned to be Secretary of State for Scotland, but ended up with Defence, and seemed happy with it. Then the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Robin Cook in his magnificent offices. We know each other since before, and quickly went through the problems of peace implementation in Bosnia. Agreed on the areas where we have to press for more at the Sintra meeting.

Saturday May 17

After quick meetings with some friends a much too long journey from London to Banja Luka. We were sitting hours at London airport waiting for the fog to lift. From there to Zurich, and from there with the excellent crew of the French air force directly to Banja Luka.

Festive atmosphere in town. Students graduating. I spend the evening with political talks. A warm summer evening with music all over town.

Sunday May 18

A special day. I wanted to go around and see for myself once more some of the places of the worst ethnic cleansing of the spring and summer of 1992.

Slowly entered the ruins of Kozarac. We spent hours walking around. Every house systematically destroyed. Nothing has been touched since the days of darkness and evil five years ago. It was around 2 p.m. on May 24 that the attack on Kozarac

started, and all its 4.000 inhabitants started their journey of hell. There are now trees and flowers in the ruins.

A ladies shoe in the middle of the rubble. Is she still alive? A Koran and a few other religious books never touched and still there.

Will those that survived ever have the possibility of returning? Will the memories of evil be too strong for reconciliation to be possible?

A Serb family from Croatian Krajina had moved into one room of a ruined house. "We know it's a Muslim house and we are ready to pay for it the day Tudjman pays for our house and our future he destroyed in Croatia." And the burdens of history. The mother of the eldest man in the large family was murdered by the Ustasja.

They are as much victims of the evil as those which were forced from the house they now live in.

On the large Partisan monument in the Kozarac national park. Another of these rather grotesque titoist structures. Only remnants left of the museum.

Through Prijedor – we did not stop this time, but drone slowly past the police station – up on the hill to Hambarine.

Destruction perhaps even more massive than in Kozarac. It was here 90 houses were pulverized by mines last Autumm. We drove up to the old school with its view of the beautiful landscape. According to some an execution site in 1992 when the 20.000 Muslims and Croats were driven out of the Hambarine and Ljubija areas.

In a corner with trashed papers a half-destroyed drawing by a child of a mosque – probably one of the mosques no longer there. How did it survive all these years? I kept it – and will keep it for a long time. What happened to the boy or girl

who once made the drawing?

Briefly to Ljubija mines. And then to Omarska. Took us some time to find the camp site. Surprised to find that it was now a VRS cantonment site guarded by soldiers. We disregarded their warnings, walked in and walked around. The white house where the tortures and killings took place. The red house. The storerooms. But all traces gone.

Some discussion with VRS on our rights to be there. And later some discussions on the suitability of this as a cantonment site. This must – and will – be changed.

Back to Banja Luka for a meeting with President Plavsic. Told her about my trip. Gave her some books as well as the full Tribunal verdict on the Tadic case. She promised to read all.

A long meeting on police reform and freedom of movement. General Crouch, Ambassador Eide and Commissioner Seitner also there. Plavsic basically constructive and Interior Minister Kijac basically elusive and deceptive. But in the end we reached an agreement.

Helicopters back to Sarajevo and the few last hours in the office.

Monday May 19

Heavy schedule in Sarajevo. A few days away from the office creates an avalanche of papers and telephone calls which needs to be made.

Wrote the first draft of the Sintra Declaration and had the Brussels office circulate it to capitals for reactions at the latest Thursday. It is always a major exercise to get these documents ready. All governments want me to express dissatisfaction with the slow work of the common institutions. The Presidency has not had a proper working meeting for five weeks!

Tuesday May 20

On the telephone large parts of the day.

Constructive meeting with President Zubak on the situation in Drvar. He asked for our understanding concerning the situation of Croats in large parts of Bosnia – and he's right on that. But I stressed that the right to return home must apply to Drvar and the Serbs who fled from there as well. I told him about my impressions when I was personally there a couple of days ago.

Worried about the talks between PM Bicackic and PM Klickovic on a trade agreement between the Federation and the RS. There was a draft presented to their last meeting which, in my opinion, was in total violation of the Constitution and effectively risked the partition of the country.

A moral dilemma. It is their country – not mine or ours. But we cannot silently sit and accept that they take decisions which make a mockery out of talks of a united Bosnia. Checkpoints. Control of all trade. Agreement as if it were two states in old communist times.

Went to see President Izetbegovic on the issue to tell him that any agreement of this sort was contrary to the spirit and letter of a united Bosnia. Trade must be free. Control is an old communist practice. And he immediately agreed. He and I have not always agreed, but always had good and open conversations.

And in the evening some of the usual long calls on different issues to Washington. They were also worried by the risk of a trade agreement, and Mike Parmley and I had coordinated closely.

Wednesday May 21

Meeting between the two Prime Ministers in Pale. Good move of Bicakcic to go there, and for Klickovic to agree for the next

meeting in the Federation offices in Sarajevo. This would have been unthinkable just a few months ago. And they deferred the issue of trade agreement.

Long talk with visiting First Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Igor Ivanov. We are all friends from the weeks in Dayton. And behind the scenes, Russia has played an important and constructive role in the peace implementation process. We discuss Brcko against the background of his talks with the three mayors there yesterday.

As usual on Wednesday a long and fruitful meeting with the Economic Task Force. Now focus on the discussions on the last details of the agreement of the common currency. The RS has an objective problem with fast conversion from the Yugoslav dinar to the convertible Marka, but we must under no circumstance allow them any sort of political blocking mechanism. Our line has to be firm – and all the ETF agree on this.

Difficult discussion on decision on humanitarian aid to Srebrenica. Right or wrong? But humanitarian aid to people suffering – different from help to local authorities and local infrastructure – is always morally right.

Worries about the continued supply of essential drugs to the hospitals and medical centers throughout the country. This is humanitarian assistance which simply must continue for quite some time. Discussion on the need for a fundamental reform of the health system – in Federation as well as RS. But there is good cooperation between the two Health Ministers.

Thursday May 22

Wrote letter to the Co-Chairs and the Vice-Chair of the Council of Ministers urging them to stop blocking each other and to take the important economic decisions on the Quick Start Package before Sintra. The outside world might well get tired if they see this going on for much longer – and that would be bad for Bosnia and for ordinary people all over the country.

But the Council of Ministers session – unfortunately – did not result in much. Too many games – too little sense of responsibility. As expected, problems with the RS and the police issues. At the meeting yesterday Minister Kijac refused to acknowledge the agreement which we had with President Plavsic.

Quick briefing to the Contact Group ambassadors on the RS and IPTF situation. Stressed that there are some problems with the Federation, but the RS problems are of another dimension. And then together with Crouch, Eide and Seitner up to Banja Luka – again.

This time it was different. I started out by saying that they had broken an agreement, that we much preferred cooperation to confrontation, but if they preferred confrontation it would come. Crouch agreed and supported. We will implement the checkpoint policy.

Plavsic concerned and ready to honour the agreement, but prevented by Kijac. He talked about his superiors. Who? And we left by saying we expected a Yes or a No by tomorrow.

After arriving back in Sarajevo, we had a small planning meeting at SFOR in Ilidza. We will be very firm on this. Checkpoints will be taken down if they are not approved by the IPTF.

In the office until nearly midnight. Long telephone conversations with Washington, Bonn, Banja Luka and Brussels on different issues. Tried to get time to call my children back in Stockholm before they went to bed – but failed.

And had to read all the small and large comments from capitals on the Sintra draft before I went to sleep.

Friday May 23

Follow-up contacts and meetings on the freedom of movement

issue in RS. An outrageous statement by the RS government yesterday – but then received a letter with a far more conciliatory tone signed by Vice President Mirjanic and Interior Minister Kijac. Evident confusion.

Crouch, Eide and myself briefed the Contact Group ambassadors on this. Strong support for what we are doing.

First meeting of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Great satisfaction to see the last of the common institutions of the country now starting to meet. I talk to them about their responsibilities for the future of the country – and my hopes that they will be a force for unification, the rule of the law and reconciliation.