

# REPORTING THE ATTACKS ON DUBROVNIK IN 1991, AND THE RECOGNITION OF CROATIA

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EDITED BY  
**Renaud de la Brosse  
and Mato Brautović**



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## CHAPTER TWELVE

# CROATIAN PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES ORGANISED IN 1991 IN THE DUBROVNIK REGION

JULIJA BARUNČIĆ PLETIKOSIĆ,  
CROATIAN HOMELAND WAR MEMORIAL  
AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE, CROATIA  
ŽELJKA KRIŽE GRAČANIN,  
CROATIAN HOMELAND WAR MEMORIAL  
AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE, CROATIA

### Summary

In the fall of 1991 when the Dubrovnik region and the city of Dubrovnik suffered a war of aggression and destruction fought with the aim of building Greater Serbia, the defence efforts included, besides the engagement of military troops enlisting, among others, volunteers from all parts of Croatia, various humanitarian activities and contributions by individuals, which together formed a unique front aimed at helping the citizens of Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik region endure a life under siege more easily by collecting humanitarian aid and ensuring that it reached the city. Among such humanitarian initiatives, the *Libertas* convoy organised at the end of 1991 was the most famous one. The media also played a significant role in sensitising the public and encouraging the Croatian citizens to help and show solidarity to the citizens of Dubrovnik. The purpose of this paper is to present how the media, the print media in particular, reported on the difficult situation in Dubrovnik and their coverage of the related humanitarian initiatives and efforts.

**Keywords:** Dubrovnik, Homeland War, media, humanitarian activities, *Libertas* convoy

## Introduction

After a part of the Serbian population in Croatia started an open rebellion in the summer of 1991, the war of aggression fought by the Serbian paramilitary forces with the help of the Yugoslav People's Army spread across Croatia in the fall of 1991, reaching also the region of Dubrovnik. Already in September, the Yugoslav Navy blocked the sea access to the city. Soon after, on October 1, the Yugoslav People's Army, Montenegrin Territorial Defence, East Herzegovinian Territorial Defence and Serbian and Montenegrin paramilitary forces started a massive attack on the Municipality of Dubrovnik. On the same day, the aircrafts of the Yugoslav Air Force bombed the transmitter on Srđ Hill cutting off all communications lines with Dubrovnik, as well as the power transformation station in the village of Komolac and the Dubrovnik water supply station, leaving the citizens of Dubrovnik and the surrounding area without electricity and water. Following the occupation of Slano on October 4, road communication with Dubrovnik was also cut off. From that moment on, Dubrovnik was under a complete land, sea and air blockade (Radelić, Marijan, Barić, Bing & Živić, 2006, p. 147-150).

Besides volunteers and members of the Croatian Army who participated in the efforts to defend Dubrovnik and the surrounding area, various humanitarian organisations and numerous cultural and public workers, both Croatian and international, also contributed to defence efforts and provided help to the citizens of Dubrovnik by collecting humanitarian aid and ensuring that it reached the city, as well as by making public statements to the media.

The media that provided daily reports on the casualties and destruction of Dubrovnik, a city that has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1979, and the life of its citizens, also played a significant role in sensitising and encouraging the Croatian and international public to help the city of Dubrovnik and its citizens. It is precisely for this reason that their coverage of the numerous humanitarian activities organised during the fiercest and most severe attacks on the city and its surroundings in the period from September to December of 1991 is considered important.

This paper gives an overview of the Croatian print media published in the period from September to December of 1991 and their daily coverage of the situation in Dubrovnik and the humanitarian activities and peace initiatives organised during the fiercest and most severe attacks on the city and its surroundings, with a special emphasis on the *Libertas* and *Libertas*

2 convoys, as the two most famous humanitarian initiatives organised with the aim of breaking the sea blockade of the city of Dubrovnik and ensuring delivery of the desperately needed humanitarian aid to the tormented and exhausted citizens of Dubrovnik.

The overview of the Croatian print media includes Croatian daily newspapers *Večernji list*, *Vjesnik* and *Slobodna Dalmacija*, and Croatian weekly magazines *Danas* and *Globus*.

## First humanitarian activities

*Večernji list* reported almost daily on the events in Dubrovnik, the attacks on the city, destruction of its cultural heritage, civil casualties and various peace efforts and calls for help. *Večernji list* also published various reports on the war in Dubrovnik taken from the foreign media and called upon the international public to help the city of Dubrovnik and its citizens in any way they can. For example, in its October 8 edition (*Večernji list*, 1991a), it published a short feature in which it reported that *Le Figaro*, a French daily newspaper, included a large picture of Dubrovnik on its last page and a public statement made by renowned French academic Jean d'Ormesson under the headline "Dubrovnik Must be Saved!"<sup>1</sup>

*Slobodna Dalmacija* also reported on the war developments in Dubrovnik daily and exhaustively, covering also the humanitarian side of war stories. Almost each edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* issued in the period from September to December of 1991 included news headlines about the war horrors and destruction of Dubrovnik already on front pages, and news reports from Dubrovnik, accompanied by numerous photographs, regularly filled 3 to 4 pages of each edition.

In its October 6 edition, *Slobodna Dalmacija* published an interesting short feature about anti-war demonstrations in Belgrade headlined "A Cry for Dubrovnik"<sup>2</sup>. Over a thousand citizens of Belgrade participated in the public demonstrations aimed at stopping the crime against Dubrovnik calling upon the Serbian public "to help prevent Dubrovnik from becoming Guernica of the Balkans" (*Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1991a).

The Zagreb edition of *Večernji list* published on October 21, 1991 included a short feature headlined "Food and Juice for the Citizens of

<sup>1</sup> "Treba spasiti Dubrovnik"

<sup>2</sup> "Vapaj za Dubrovnik"

Dubrovnik”<sup>3</sup> reporting on the food and juice aid delivered from Rijeka to Dubrovnik by the *Balkanija* ferry. About 20 tonnes of food and juice were collected and delivered to Dubrovnik in response to public TV messages from artist Milka Podrug Kokotović. The same edition also featured a short text about the peaceful demonstrations by a group of Dubrovnik citizens, i.e. Dubrovnik students who studied in Zagreb, whose aim was to raise the public’s awareness of the true extent of war suffering of Dubrovnik and its citizens, who were starving and living under a complete blockade (*Večernji list*, 1991b).

On October 23, 1991, *Večernji list* published an article about the aid sent to Dubrovnik by the Jewish Community of Zagreb, which included food, water and medical supplies. The aid collected and sent by Caritas was delivered to Dubrovnik on board the same ship that departed from Rijeka.

Eight courageous women from Zagreb, including famous opera singer Božena Ruk – Fočić, started a unique initiative entitled “There will Come a Time to Sing”<sup>4</sup>. *Večernji list* published a feature about the mentioned initiative on October 24, 1991 headlined “Shooting Grenades on Stradun”<sup>5</sup>. These women started a campaign with the aim of supplying Dubrovnik with 80 tonnes of food and sanitary material. None of these women had any relatives in Dubrovnik. Their campaign was motivated simply by the desire to help the tormented citizens of Dubrovnik. *Vjesnik* also published a short text about this initiative (*Vjesnik*, 1991a).

In its October 26 edition, *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991b) published an article headlined “Landing in Dubrovnik by Parachute if Necessary!”<sup>6</sup>, which included several excerpts from a statement given by Jean d’Ormesson, a French academic, writer and news reporter, published in the French daily *Le Figaro* in which he stated, among other, that on October 23 he had organised, in cooperation with a group of other writers, representatives from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNESCO, a peaceful visit to Dubrovnik but the Yugoslav Navy had prevented them from disembarking the ship and forced them to return to Bari, Italy, the day after their arrival with unfinished business.

<sup>3</sup> “Hrana i sokovi za Dubrovčane”

<sup>4</sup> “Za pjesmu će vremena bit”

<sup>5</sup> “Granatama po Stradunu”

<sup>6</sup> “I padobranom se spustiti u Dubrovnik!”

## *Libertas* humanitarian convoy

*Večernji list* featured numerous articles about the organisation and course of the voyage of the *Libertas* humanitarian convoy. It brought daily reports on the movements of the convoy and its voyage from Rijeka to Dubrovnik via Split, and particularly on the obstacles posed by the Yugoslav Navy to the convoy participants and the stopping of the convoy at the entrance to Dubrovnik. Convoy participants included a number of small boats led by the *Slavija*. In the period from October 28, 1991, when the convoy set out on the voyage to its destination from Rijeka, until October 31, 1991, when it sailed into Dubrovnik’s Port of Gruž, *Večernji list* featured daily reports in which it referred to that period as “a week of political and humanitarian solidarity shown by the entire Croatian nation to besieged Dubrovnik.” The article also reported on the convoy’s voyage from Rijeka to Dubrovnik and that, during the voyage, the convoy had been joined by numerous ships and boats from all Croatian ports proudly flying the Croatian flag. Many convoy participants, including news reporters from all over the world, came to Rijeka by bus to join the convoy. Send-off celebrations were organised in Rijeka and other Croatian ports, with Split being the convoy’s last stop on the journey to its final destination.

The headline “Peace Offensive in Dubrovnik”<sup>7</sup> appeared on the front page of the double edition of *Večernji list* published on October 31/November 1, 1991. The edition also included several short features about the convoy and its voyage towards the Port of Gruž (*Večernji list*, 1991d; 1991e).

*Večernji list* continued writing about the significance of the convoy and its moral, symbolic and media impact after it had already reached its destination, which is evident from its November 2 edition (1991f) featuring reports from *Delo*, a Slovene daily that also reported on the moral significance of the convoy for both the citizens of Dubrovnik and the entire Croatian public. According to *Večernji list*, *Delo* reported that the “Yugoslav Army had been defeated under the walls of Dubrovnik” and it referred to the *Libertas* convoy as “a true milestone in the Croatian Homeland War.”

In the mentioned period, *Vjesnik* also reported on the *Libertas* convoy daily. The front page of its October 30 edition featured a text headlined “The Convoy’s Goal Goes Beyond Dubrovnik”<sup>8</sup>, emphasising that the

<sup>7</sup> “Desant mira u Dubrovniku”

<sup>8</sup> „Cilj konvoja nije samo Dubrovnik”

convoy's great success could signify "the beginning of a large caravan that could bring home hundreds of thousands of refugees in the following days and months" (*Vjesnik*, 1991b). The same edition also included a few more short features about the convoy. For example, a short text headlined "Army to Attack the Convoy"<sup>9</sup> reported that Dubrovnik radio amateurs had intercepted a message from the commanders of the Boka Military Naval Sector in which a detailed inspection of passengers and ships participating in the convoy had been ordered.

In its November 3 edition, *Vjesnik* (1991c) published an overview of the success of the *Libertas* convoy and an article about the convoy's return to Rijeka headlined "Peace Convoy Returns to Rijeka"<sup>10</sup>. In its address to the citizens of Rijeka and the international public upon arrival of the convoy to Rijeka, Stipe Mesić said that the idea of the convoy had been successful because its motivation was to achieve victory for Croatia. In the same edition, in the *Topics of the Week* section, a large article headlined "Saint Blaise in the Arms of the Occupying Forces"<sup>11</sup> featured an overview of the voyage on board the *Slavija* and the *Libertas* convoy.

*Slobodna Dalmacija* also reported daily and exhaustively on the *Libertas* convoy and its voyage from Rijeka to Gruž.

The October 29 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991c) devoted an entire page to the convoy or, more precisely, to the press conference held in Zagreb, at which the members of the initiative commission for the return to Dubrovnik explained the civil initiative to organise an aid convoy for the citizens of Dubrovnik. The same page included a feature about the convoy's send-off from the Port of Split, as well as a feature about the big interest and desire of numerous Croatian citizens to join the convoy.

The headline "Grand Send-off"<sup>12</sup> appeared on the front page of the October 30 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991d). It referred to the text about the convoy's send-off from Split in the evening of October 29 when the *Slavija* sailed out from the Port of Split with around 800 passengers, numerous famous persons from the cultural, music and entertainment scene, Croatian Parliament and Government delegations, and Stipe Mesić, President of the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, who joined the convoy in Split. The first pages featured an

article headlined "Entire Croatia Stands by Dubrovnik"<sup>13</sup>, which included a report from the press conference held prior to the convoy's sail-off to Dubrovnik. At the press conference, Prime Minister Franjo Gregurić emphasised the significance of an initiative such as this for the citizens of Dubrovnik. The press conference was also attended by President Stipe Mesić, Deputy Prime Minister Milan Ramljak, Ministers Davorin Rudolf and Petar Kriste, Vice Chairman of Croatian Parliament Stjepan Sulimanac, and Sveto Letica, Commander-in-Chief of the Croatian Navy.

The headline "No, none will return!"<sup>14</sup> and the article about the *Libertas* convoy's voyage were published in the double edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991e) issued on October 31/November 1, 1991. The text mainly referred to the conversation between Stipe Mesić and General Pavle Strugar, Montenegrin Territorial Defence Forces Commander, who stopped the *Slavija* and the convoy in the Pelješac Channel claiming that the ship was carrying weapons and that it should be redirected to Zelenika, Montenegro, while the small ships and boats in the convoy should return to their respective ports of departure. Stipe Mesić was determined: "No, the *Slavija* will not sail to Zelenika, the *Slavija* will not leave the convoy!" After that, Stipe Mesić spoke with Admiral Stane Brovet. After the Admiral had stopped the convoy for inspection purposes, Stipe Mesić again responded that none would return, that all ships led by the *Slavija* would proceed further towards Dubrovnik. The same page also included several short features about the *Libertas* convoy. For example, the text headlined "Firearms were Stronger"<sup>15</sup> was about a dozen of small boats from Sućuraj, Sumartin, and the coastal area of Makarska that wanted to join the convoy but were intercepted in the Neretva Channel by the Yugoslav Navy and forced to return.

The same edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991f) also included a short feature about one more humanitarian effort aimed to help Dubrovnik. The text was headlined "Aid from BiH Arrives to Gruž"<sup>16</sup>, and it referred to around 80 tonnes of food, medical supplies and clothes delivered to Dubrovnik on October 30, 1991 on board the *Balkanija* ferry from the Red Cross of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aid was transported from Sarajevo to Split, where it was loaded onto a ship that would carry it to Dubrovnik.

<sup>9</sup> „Armijski napad na konvoj”

<sup>10</sup> „Konvoj mira vratio se u Rijeku”

<sup>11</sup> „Sv. Vlaho u zagrljaju okupatora”

<sup>12</sup> „Veličanstveni ispraćaj”

<sup>13</sup> „Cijela je Hrvatska uz Dubrovnik”

<sup>14</sup> „Ne, svi idu dalje!”

<sup>15</sup> „Rafali su bili jači”

<sup>16</sup> „Pomoć iz BiH stigla u Gruž”

After the military inspection in Zelenika, Boka Kotorska, the aid finally reached Dubrovnik.

The entire front page of the November 2 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991g) was dedicated to the *Libertas* convoy under a large print headline “The Convoy of Love Defeats the Blockade of Hate!”<sup>17</sup> The content of the first several pages was also entirely dedicated to the convoy. A text headlined “Dubrovnik Remains a Bastion of Democracy and Freedom”<sup>18</sup>, revealed the sentiments of the citizens of Dubrovnik expressed upon arrival of the *Slavija* and the convoy to Dubrovnik’s Port of Gruž on November 1, who welcomed the high Croatian officials, artists and guests from the public and cultural scene with an energetic applause and singing “Our Beautiful”<sup>19</sup>, the Croatian national anthem. Several other features were dedicated to the convoy’s arrival to Dubrovnik, including texts headlined: “And the Convoy Docks on Stradun”<sup>20</sup>, “The Truth Should Stop the Conflict”<sup>21</sup>, etc. The central two pages of this edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija*, filled with photographs from Dubrovnik, were also dedicated to the convoy’s arrival to Dubrovnik. But, almost ironically, the last page of this edition reported on the new attacks on Dubrovnik that happened on that same day, and the problems that the citizens of Dubrovnik had been facing for days, ever since Dubrovnik and its surrounding area were cut off from the power and water supply networks.

Most of the following editions of *Slobodna Dalmacija* during the entire month of November featured reports on new attacks on Dubrovnik and severe destruction of civil targets and cultural goods, mainly appearing on the front page. Two pages of the November 3 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991h) were again dedicated to the *Libertas* convoy, featuring mostly photographs of the convoy’s arrival at the city, the people gathered on Stradun and a few photographs of the daily war horrors and suffering in Dubrovnik.

One of the texts published in *Slobodna Dalmacija* on November 4 (1991i) featured a statement and an overview on the convoy’s significance for the citizens of Dubrovnik given by Dubrovnik Mayor Pero Poljanić. A text

<sup>17</sup> “Konvoj ljubavi jači od blokade mržnje!”

<sup>18</sup> “Dubrovnik ostaje bastion i demokracije i slobode”

<sup>19</sup> “Lijepa naša”

<sup>20</sup> “I konvoj se ukrcao na Stradun”

<sup>21</sup> “Istina bi trebala zaustaviti sukob”

headlined “*Libertas* Raises Hope”<sup>22</sup> reported on the press conference dedicated to the opening of the Dubrovnik Peace Convoy Office.

The November 6 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991j) featured an article by Slobodan Lang, published in the following editions as the *Libertas Journal* feuilleton, which included his comments and overviews about the situation in Dubrovnik, particularly those related to humanitarian initiatives and the *Libertas* convoy.

*Globus* and *Danas*, the Croatian weeklys published during the period when Dubrovnik was under siege, also featured articles dedicated to the *Libertas* convoy. In its edition issued on November 8, 1991, *Globus* featured an exhaustive article headlined “I was a Stowaway on board the *Slavija*”<sup>23</sup>, which was in fact a journal written by British journalist Christopher Long who joined the peace convoy in Split. Among other things, Christopher Long wrote the following in his journal: “The plan was for the *Slavija* and her convoy of 38 small ships to carry the message of solidarity and the practical aid that was so desperately needed in Dubrovnik... it was supposed to attract the attention of the world to what is happening in Croatia and, above all, it came from the heart.”

In its edition issued on November 5, 1991, *Danas*, a Croatian informative and political weekly, featured an exhaustive four-page article about the organisation of the *Libertas* convoy and its arrival to Dubrovnik.

### International humanitarian activities

The following editions of Croatian dailies, mostly *Slobodna Dalmacija*, included exhaustive reports from Dubrovnik, primarily about war developments, attacks on the city and increasingly severe destruction that culminated on December 6, 1991. They also covered humanitarian activities and peace initiatives organised after the *Libertas* convoy had left Dubrovnik.

The November 10 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991k) included a feature headlined “We Must Prevent Dubrovnik from Becoming Guernica of the Balkans”<sup>24</sup>, which was in fact a brief report from the peace movement forum held in Belgrade, at which the citizens of Dubrovnik

<sup>22</sup> „*Libertas* budi nadu”

<sup>23</sup> „Bio sam slijepi putnik na brodu *Slavija*”

<sup>24</sup> “Treba spriječiti da Dubrovnik postane balkanska Guernica”



who managed to flee from the city spoke publicly, calling upon the world to stop the aggression and attack against Dubrovnik.

In its November 14 edition, *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991l) featured a short text headlined “Ship Carrying Aid for Dubrovnik”<sup>25</sup> about an initiative by the International Red Cross Commission to send a ship carrying aid for Dubrovnik.

In its November 15 edition, *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991m) published a feature headlined “Rain Stops Fires in Gruž”<sup>26</sup>, which also included a brief overview on the *Slavija*’s sail-off with around 3500 wounded persons, pregnant women, mothers with children, foreigners and refugees that had been accommodated in devastated or severely damaged Dubrovnik hotels. The European Union Monitoring Mission and a few representatives from city authorities also boarded the *Slavija* and sailed from Dubrovnik.

The November 18 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991) featured a statement by Italian President Francesco Cossiga from his speech given at the San Marco Military Base, where the *San Marco*, the Italian Navy ship that later transported aid to Dubrovnik, was stationed. In his speech, Cossiga called upon the authorities in Belgrade to stop the military operations in Croatia and allow the ships carrying humanitarian aid access to Dubrovnik. The article also featured reports from Italian daily newspapers. *Corriere della Sera*, for example, featured a whole-page text headlined “Dubrovnik – A City of Hostages”<sup>27</sup>, and the *Republica* daily featured a text headlined “Children from Dubrovnik with War in their Eyes”<sup>28</sup>, a heart-felt report from Pula where the *Slavija* brought the refugees from Dubrovnik.

That same day, *Večernji list* (1991g) published an article headlined “Dubrovnik Must be Saved.”<sup>29</sup> “The mad and obsessive destruction of Dubrovnik and the suffering of refugees from Dubrovnik have attracted attention of most British Sunday newspapers and magazines. The *Sunday Telegraph*, for example, published a call for help addressed by Bernard Kouchner, French Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, to his British colleague Linda Chalker, who was responsible for organising aid for other countries. ‘The only way to make any progress in this bloody, meaningless

<sup>25</sup> „Brod pomoći za Dubrovnik”

<sup>26</sup> „Kiša gasi Gruž”

<sup>27</sup> “Dubrovnik – grad talaca”

<sup>28</sup> “Djeca Dubrovnika s ratom u očima”

<sup>29</sup> “Dubrovnik se mora spasiti”

war, that very much resembles the Lebanese war, is to send little crumbs of help, and the only way to avoid political paralysis is to send a series of humanitarian delegations of ministers to Dubrovnik...’ said Kouchner inviting other EC ministers to come and help stop the war.”

The same page also featured an article headlined “*San Marco* to Sail to Dubrovnik”<sup>30</sup> reporting that the high Italian politicians’ determined efforts had resulted with a permission to send the auxiliary Italian Navy ship *San Marco* with humanitarian aid for the children, the wounded and the sick to Dubrovnik (*Večernji list*, 1991h).

In its November 20 edition, *Večernji list* (1991i) again reported on the Italian Navy ship *San Marco* in a text headlined “And the *La Rance* Sails Out”<sup>31</sup>. The *San Marco* “sailed into Brindisi with 782 refugees from Dubrovnik” on November 19, and the French ship *La Rance* sailed into the Port of Gruž on November 20, contributing to the establishment of a “humanitarian corridor”, as reported by *Večernji list* on November 21 (1991k).

The November 21 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991o) featured a short news article about the arrival of the *La Rance*, a French Navy hospital ship, carrying over 100 tonnes of humanitarian aid to the port of Dubrovnik after being detained for several hours in the waters surrounding Dubrovnik. At the Port of Gruž, the *La Rance* was welcomed by Bernard Kouchner, French Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, who stayed in Dubrovnik at the time.

In its November 23 edition, *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991p) published an interview with Peter Luznik, St Blaise Aid Fund Chairman. The Fund was established on October 1, 1991 as a legal humanitarian organisation responsible for collecting all types of humanitarian aid.

The November 23 edition of *Večernji list* (1991k) featured a text headlined “Courage and Act of Conscience”<sup>32</sup> about Bernard Kouchner, French Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, who stayed in Dubrovnik and called upon high officials and celebrities from across the world “to come to Dubrovnik and help the Croatian nation and history avoid another Vukovar...” He also decided to inspire UN General Secretary to organise a global campaign to save Dubrovnik.

<sup>30</sup> “San Marco u Dubrovnik”

<sup>31</sup> “Isplovljava la Rance”

<sup>32</sup> „Hrabrost i nalog savjesti”

During November, *Večernji list* featured articles about other humanitarian organisations and aid for the citizens of Dubrovnik as well. For example, the November 24 edition (*Večernji list*, 1991l) featured a text headlined “On the Road of Uncertainty”<sup>33</sup> about 284 tonnes of food and medical supplies delivered to Dubrovnik by the *Ilirija*, as well as about the humanitarian mission organised by the Jewish Community of Zagreb.

The November 25 edition of *Večernji list* (1991m) featured a text headlined “Fires from Slano” which reported, among other, that ships from around the world carrying food, medical supplies and other humanitarian aid were coming to Dubrovnik, including the *Poladio* from Italy and the *Di Maratos* from Malta.

On November 24, *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991r) published a statement by Margherite Boniver, Italian Immigration Minister, who visited Dubrovnik on board the *San Marco*. After her visit to Dubrovnik, she stated that the “humanitarian corridor had been opened and that it was necessary to keep it so, since that was the only way to prevent Dubrovnik’s demise, which was possible at any moment.”

On November 29, *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991s) featured a report from the press conference given by the UNESCO delegation under the headline “The World is Opening its Eyes”<sup>34</sup>. The delegation had arrived to Dubrovnik the day before and hung three United Nations flags at most prominent old city centre locations, where they also opened a UNESCO Office.

In its November 30 edition, *Večernji list* (1991n) featured an article about Bernard Kouchner’s repeated visit to Dubrovnik and the address given by *Libertas* Office President Slobodan Lang to the citizens of Dubrovnik on November 29, announcing, among other, that in the period from December 1-10 Dubrovnik would host a Peace Festival to be opened by Mr. Bernard Kouchner.

On December 1, *Vjesnik* (1991d) reported on the conference on protecting human rights of refugees from the Municipality of Dubrovnik, on which occasion, Slobodan Lang, *Libertas* Love and Peace Convoy Office President, said that “it was absolutely impossible to divide the citizens of Dubrovnik by nationality or religion,” and emphasised that, in the difficult

days of war, no one suffered discrimination when it came to distribution of humanitarian aid that was coming from Croatia and abroad.

The December 2 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991t) featured the headline “May Dubrovnik Unite Europe”<sup>35</sup> and an exhaustive report about the commencement of the 10-day Peace Festival festivities organised by the *Libertas* Convoy Office under the auspices of French Minister Bernard Kouchner. The Festival began on December 1 and was opened by Slobodan Lang who said that “the Festival was the first gathering of intellectuals held in a besieged city.” On this occasion, Jean d’Omersson, Member of the French Parliament and Academy who stayed in Dubrovnik at the time, also gave a speech for the citizens of Dubrovnik.

### ***Libertas 2* humanitarian aid convoy**

All Croatian dailies featured texts about *Libertas 2*, a new aid convoy. On the front page of its December 10 edition, *Vjesnik* (1991e) reported that the *Liburnija* ferry carrying around 300 refugees from Dubrovnik and a few hundred other convoy participants, including public and cultural workers and Croatian and international journalists had set sail towards Dubrovnik (*Vjesnik*, 1991f).

On December 13, *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991u) featured a front-page headline about the arrival of the *Libertas 2* convoy to Dubrovnik, while page 5 of the same issue featured an exhaustive article about the arrival of the 25 ships participating in the convoy to Dubrovnik on December 12.

A few days after the *Libertas 2* convoy had sailed into Dubrovnik, *Vjesnik* featured an overview on the participants in the convoy who sailed into devastated Dubrovnik and their impressions of the situation in Dubrovnik: “Tears for all that suffering come streaming down their faces in rare moments only, since their priority is to survive, save the children. The food is cooked on improvised furnaces ignited by twigs at the steps in front of the houses, and broken beams and trees are carefully used as firewood. The black market is blossoming. In the thick darkness that enshrouded the city below Srđ Hill before the clock struck 5, the *Liburnija* was like a gleaming lighthouse boarded by Dubrovnik castaways from civilisation” (*Vjesnik*, 1991f).

<sup>33</sup> „Na putu neizvjesnosti”

<sup>34</sup> „Svijet otvara oči”

<sup>35</sup> “Neka Dubrovnik ujedini Europu”

The December 21 edition of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (1991v) featured a short report on the Christmas gift to Dubrovnik from Caritas of the Sarajevo Roman Catholic Archdiocese that send a humanitarian aid convoy from Sarajevo to Dubrovnik called “Merry Christmas, Dubrovnik!”<sup>36</sup>

After signing the Sarajevo Peace Accord on January 2, 1992 and after its ratification the day later, the first phase of the war in Croatia was finished and a period of ‘either war, nor peace’ began. The same was true of the Dubrovnik region. The fighting and destruction stopped and the daily and exhaustive reporting on the war situation in Dubrovnik in the media became less intensive.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded that the analysis of the Croatian highest circulation print media published during the Homeland War, i.e. during the period from September to December of 1991 when the fiercest and most severe battles were fought in Dubrovnik, when the city and its surroundings suffered tremendous devastation and the citizens were either forced to leave the city or remain in the city under minimum living conditions, deprived of electricity and water, showed that the analysed media provided quite an exhaustive coverage of the situation in Dubrovnik and on the Dubrovnik front line, as well as that, since the outbreak of the war, every edition featured at least one text devoted to the war in Dubrovnik, and news headlines on the topic of the situation in Dubrovnik often filled the front pages of all Croatian daily newspapers. Much attention was also dedicated to humanitarian activities, with all the print media providing regular and exhaustive coverage, often specifying the exact quantities of items delivered to the citizens of Dubrovnik. Logically, the two most famous humanitarian initiatives, the *Libertas* and *Libertas 2* convoys, were most exhaustively covered. The media regularly reported on the movements of the convoy, the misfortunes and obstacles on its voyage, as well as the send-off and welcoming celebrations at different ports. Thanks to the media and their daily reports from the front lines and articles on the topic of Dubrovnik and its citizens, the humanitarian efforts in particular, the Croatian and international public were able to follow the developments on the Dubrovnik front line, have a daily insight into the situation in an attacked and besieged city and, thus motivated, react by organising various humanitarian campaigns, public protests or addresses, primarily calls for

help addressed to the international community. We can certainly say that the Croatian print media played a significant role in sensitising the Croatian and international public concerning the situation in Dubrovnik and the suffering of its citizens, and thus also contributed to the success and number of humanitarian activities and the international recognition of Croatia on January 15, 1992.

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<sup>36</sup> “Sretan ti Božić, Dubrovniče!”

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