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NATO's Reign of Terror in Kosovo

In occupied Kosovo, the massacres directed against Serbs, ethnic Albanians, Roma and other ethnic groups have been conducted on the instructions of the military command of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Yet because NATO ostensibly denies KLA involvement, these so-called "unmotivated acts of violence and retaliation" are not categorised as "war crimes" and are therefore not included in the mandate of the numerous FBI and Interpol police investigators dispatched to Kosovo under the auspices of the Hague War Crimes Tribunal (ICTY). Moreover, whereas NATO has tacitly endorsed the self-proclaimed KLA provisional government, KFOR—the international security force in Kosovo—has provided protection to the KLA military commanders responsible for the atrocities. In so doing, both NATO and the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have acquiesced to the massacres of civilians.

In turn, public opinion has been blatantly misled. In portraying the massacres, the western media have casually overlooked the role of the KLA, not to mention its pervasive links to organised crime. In the words of National Security Adviser Samuel Berger, "these people [ethnic Albanians] come back ... with broken hearts and with some of those hearts filled with anger."¹ While the massacres are seldom presented as the result of "deliberate decisions" by the KLA military command, the evidence (and history of the KLA) amply confirm that these atrocities are part of a policy of "ethnic cleansing" directed mainly against the Serb population, but also against the Roma, Montenegrins, Goranis, and Turks.

Assassinations: NATO Complicity

Under NATO's regency, the KLA has also ordered assassinations of political opponents, including "loyalist" ethnic Albanians and supporters of the Kosovo Democratic League (KDL), headed by Ibrahim Rugova. The KLA has also abducted and killed numerous professionals and intellectuals. These acts—ordered by the self-proclaimed Provisional Government of Kosovo (PGK)—are being carried out in a totally permissive environment. The leaders of the KLA, rather than being arrested for war crimes, have been granted KFOR protection.

In May, Fehmi Agani, one of Rugova's closest collaborators in the KDL, was killed. The Serbs were blamed by NATO spokesperson Jamie Shea for having assassinated Agani. But according to the Skopje, Macedonia, paper *Makedonija Danas*, Agani had been executed on the orders of the KLA's self-appointed Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci.² "If Thaci actually considered Rugova a threat, he would not hesitate to have Rugova removed from the Kosovo political landscape."³

Both NATO and the UN prefer to turn a blind eye. UN Interim Administrator Bernard Kouchner (a former French Minister of Health) and KFOR Commander Sir Mike Jackson have established a routine working relationship with Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and KLA Chief of Staff Brigadier General Agim Ceku.

As western leaders trumpet their support for democracy, state terrorism in Kosovo has become an integral part of NATO's post-war design. The

KLA's political role for the post-conflict period had been carefully mapped out well in advance. Prior to the Rambouillet Conference February [1999] the KLA had been promised a central role in the formation of a post-conflict government. The "hidden agenda" consisted of converting the KLA paramilitary into a legitimate and accomplished civilian administration. "We want to develop a good relationship with them [the KLA] as they transform themselves into a politically oriented organisation, ... [W]e can provide [help] to them if they become precisely the kind of political actor we would like to see them become."⁴

In other words, Washington had already slated the KLA "provisional government" (PGK) to run civilian state institutions. Under NATO's "Indirect Rule," the KLA has taken over municipal governments and public services including schools and hospitals. Rame Buja, the KLA "Minister for Local Administration," has appointed local prefects in 23 out of 25 municipalities.⁵

The self-proclaimed KLA administration has largely been upheld by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) entrusted by UNMIK with the post-war task of "democracy-building" and "good governance." In turn, OSCE officials have already established a working rapport with their KLA counterparts.⁶ The PGK is made up of the KLA's political wing together with the Democratic Union Movement (LBD), a coalition of five opposition parties opposed to Rugova's Democratic League (LDK). In addition to the position of prime minister, the KLA controls the ministries of finance, public order and defence. The KLA has a controlling voice on the UN-sponsored Kosovo Transitional Council set up by Bernard Kouchner. The PGK has also established links with a number of western governments.

Paramilitary Government

Under NATO occupation, the rule of law has visibly been turned upside down. Criminals and terrorists are to become law-enforcement officers. KLA troops—which have already taken over police stations—will eventually form a 4,000-strong "civilian" police force (to be trained by foreign police officers under the authority of the UN) with a mandate to "protect civilians." Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien has already pledged Canadian support to the formation of a civilian police force.⁷ This force—which has been entrusted to the OSCE—will eventually operate under the jurisdiction of the KLA-controlled Ministry of Public Order.

Despite NATO's commitment to disarming the KLA, the Kosovar paramilitary organisation is slated to be transformed into a modern military force. So-called "security assistance" has already been granted to the KLA by the US Congress under the Kosovar Independence and Justice Act of 1999. Start-up funds of \$20 million will largely be "used for training and support for their [KLA] established self-defence forces" modelled on the US National Guard.⁸

While the KLA maintains its links to the Balkan narcotics trade that financed many of its terrorist activities, the paramilitary organisation

has now been granted an official seal of approval as well as "legitimate" sources of funding. The pattern is similar to that followed in Croatia and in the Bosnian Muslim-Croatian Federation where so-called "equip and train" programs were put together by the Pentagon. In turn, Washington's military aid package to the KLA has been entrusted to Military Professional Resources, Inc. (MPRI), of Alexandria, Virginia, a private mercenary outfit run by high-ranking former US military officers.⁹

MPRI's training concepts—which had already been tested in Croatia and Bosnia—are based on imparting "offensive tactics ... as the best form of defence." In the Kosovar context, this so-called "defensive doctrine" transforms the KLA paramilitary into a modern army without, however, eliminating its terrorist make-up.¹⁰ The ultimate objective is to transform an insurgent army into a modern military armed police force which serves the Alliance's future strategic objectives in the Balkans. MPRI has currently "ninety-one highly experienced, former military professionals working in Bosnia & Herzegovina."¹¹ The number of military officers working on contract with the KLA has not been disclosed.

Croatian General Heads KLA

The massacres of civilians in Kosovo are not disconnected acts of revenge by civilians or by so-called "rogue elements" within the KLA, as claimed by NATO and the United Nations. They are part of a consistent and coherent pattern. The intent (and result) of the KLA-sponsored atrocities has been to trigger the ethnic cleansing of Serbs, Roma, and other minorities in Kosovo.

KLA Commander Agim Ceku, referring to the killings of 14 villagers at Gracko on July 24, claimed that: "We [the KLA] do not know who did it, but I sincerely believe these people have nothing to do with the KLA."¹² In turn, KFOR Lieutenant General Sir Mike Jackson has commended his KLA counterpart, Commander Ceku, for "efforts undertaken" to disarm the KLA. In fact, very few KLA weapons have been handed in. Moreover, the deadline for turning in KLA weaponry has been extended. "I do not regard this as non-compliance" said Jackson in a press conference, "but rather as an indication of the seriousness with which General Ceku is taking this important issue."¹³

Yet what Jackson failed to mention was that Commander Ceku (though never indicted as a war criminal) was, according to *Jane's Defence Weekly* (June 10, 1999) "one of the key planners of the successful Operation Storm... led by the Croatian Armed Forces against Krajina Serbs in 1995. General Jackson—who had served in Croatia and Bosnia under the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)—was fully cognisant of the activities of the Croatian High Command during that period, including the responsibilities imparted to General Ceku. In February 1999, barely a month prior to the NATO bombings, Ceku left his position as Brigadier General with the Croatian Armed Forces to join the KLA as Commander-in-Chief.

An internal report of the Hague War Crimes Tribunal (leaked to the *New York Times*) confirmed

that the Croatian Army had been responsible for carrying out “summary executions, indiscriminate shelling of civilian populations, and ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the Krajina region of Croatia ... Operation Storm resulted in the massacre of several hundred civilians in the course of a three day operation (August 4 to 7, 1995).”¹⁴ The massacres set the stage for the ethnic cleansing of more than 200,000 Krajina Serbs.

In a section of the controversial leaked ICTY document, *The Indictment: Operation Storm, A Prima Facie Case*, the Tribunal inquiry confirms that:

During the course of the military offensive, the Croatian armed forces and special police committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law including but not limited to, shelling of Knin and other cities... During, and in the 100 days following the military offensive, at least 150 Serb civilians were summarily executed, and many hundreds disappeared... In a widespread and systematic manner, Croatian troops committed murder and other inhumane acts upon and against Croatian Serbs.¹⁵

US Generals For Hire

The internal 150-page document concluded that the ICTY has “sufficient material to establish that the three [Croatian] generals who commanded the military operation” could be held accountable under international law.¹⁶ The individuals named had been directly involved in the military operation “in theater.” Those involved in “the planning of Operation Storm” were not mentioned:

The identity of the “American general” referred to by Fenrick [a Tribunal staff member] is not known. The tribunal would not allow Williamson or Fenrick to be interviewed. But Ms. Arbour, the tribunal’s chief prosecutor, suggested in a telephone interview last week that Fenrick’s comment had been ‘a joking observation’. Ms. Arbour had not been present during the meeting, and that is not how it was viewed by some who were there. Several people who were at the meeting assumed that Fenrick was referring to one of the retired US generals who worked for Military Professional Resources Inc.... Questions remain about the full extent of US involvement. In the course of the three-year investigation into the assault, the United States has failed to provide critical evidence requested by the tribunal, according to tribunal documents and officials, adding to suspicion among some there that Washington is uneasy about the investigation.... The Pentagon, however, has argued through US lawyers at the tribunal that the shelling was a legitimate military activity, according to tribunal documents and officials.¹⁷

The Tribunal was attempting to hide what had already been disclosed in several press reports published in the wake of Operation Storm. According to a US State Department spokesman, MPRI had been helping the Croatians “avoid excesses or atrocities in military operations.”¹⁸ Fifteen senior US military advisers headed by retired two-star General Richard Griffiths had been dispatched to Croatia barely seven months before Operation Storm.¹⁹ According to one report, MPRI executive director General Carl E. Vuono “held a secret top-level meeting at Brioni Island, off the coast of Croatia, with Gen. Varimar Cervenko, the architect of the Krajina campaign. In the five days preceding the attack, at least ten meetings were held between General Vuono and officers involved in the campaign....”²⁰

According to Ed Soyster, a senior MPRI executive and former head of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) (interviewed by *Time* in early 1996): MPRI’s role in Croatia is limited to classroom instruction on military-civil relations and doesn’t involve training in tactics or weapons. Other US military men say whatever MPRI did for the Croats—and many suspect more than classroom instruction was involved—it was worth every penny. “Carl Vuono and Butch [Crosbie] Saint are hired guns and in it for the money,” says Charles Boyd, a recently retired four-star Air Force general who was the Pentagon’s No. 2 man in Europe until July [1995]. “They did a very good job for the Croats, and I have no doubt they’ll do a good job in Bosnia.”²¹

The Hague Tribunal’s Cover-up

The untimely leaking of the HCTY’s internal report on the Krajina massacres barely a few days before the onslaught of NATO’s air raids on Yugoslavia was the source of some embarrassment to the Tribunal’s Chief Prosecutor, Louise Arbour. The Tribunal attempted to cover up the matter and trivialise the report’s findings (including the alleged role of the US military officers on contract with the Croatian Armed Forces). Several Tribunal officials including American lawyer Clint Williamson sought to discredit the testimony of Canadian peacekeeping officers who witnessed the Krajina massacres in 1995.

Williamson, who described the shelling of Knin as a “minor incident,” said that the Pentagon had told him that Knin was a legitimate military target.... The [Tribunal’s] review concluded by voting not to include the shelling of Knin in any indictment, a conclusion that stunned and angered many at the tribunal.²²

The findings of the Tribunal contained in the leaked ICTY documents were down-played, their relevance was casually dismissed as “expressions of opinion, arguments, and hypotheses from various staff members of the OTP during the investigative process.” According to the Tribunal’s spokesperson “the documents do not represent in any way the concluded decisions of the Prosecutor.”²³

The report has not been released. The staff member who had leaked the documents is (according to a Croatian TV report) no longer working for the Tribunal. During the press conference, the Tribunal’s spokesman was asked “about the consequences for the person who leaked the information. Blewitt [the ICTY spokesman] replied that he did not want to go into that. He said that the OTP would strengthen the existing procedures to prevent this from happening again; however he added that you could not stop people from talking.”²⁴

Prior to the onslaught, Croatian radio had broadcast a message by president Franjo Tudjman calling upon “Croatian citizens of Serbian ethnicity ... to remain in their homes and not to fear the Croatian authorities which will respect their minority rights.”²⁵ While US military officers were on hand advising the Croatian High Command, Canadian peacekeepers of the Royal 22nd Regiment witnessed in theatre the atrocities committed by Croatian troops in the Krajina offensive of September 1995: “Any Serbs who had failed to evacuate their property were systematically ‘cleansed’ by roving death squads. Every abandoned animal was slaughtered and any Serb household was ransacked and torched.”²⁶

The 1993 Medak Massacre

According to *Jane’s Defence Weekly* (June 10, 1999), Brigadier General Agim Ceku (now in charge of the KLA) had also “masterminded the successful HV [Croatian Army] offensive at Medak” in September 1993. In Medak, the combat operation was entitled “Scorched Earth”, resulting in the total destruction of the Serbian villages of Divoselo, Pocitelj, and Citluk, and the massacre of over 100 civilians.²⁷

These massacres were also witnessed by Canadian peacekeepers under UN mandate:

As the sun rose over the horizon, it revealed a Medak Valley engulfed in smoke and flames. As the frustrated soldiers of 2PPCLI waited for the order to move forward into the pocket, shots and screams still rang out as the ethnic cleansing continued.... About 20 members of the international press had tagged along, anxious to see the Medak battleground. Calvin [a Canadian officer] called an informal press conference at the head of the column and loudly accused the Croats of trying to hide war crimes against the Serb inhabitants. The Croats started withdrawing back to their old lines, taking with them whatever loot they hadn’t destroyed.... French reconnaissance troops and the Canadian command element pushed up the valley and soon began to find bodies of Serb civilians. Some already decomposing,

others freshly slaughtered.... Finally, on the drizzly morning of Sept. 17, teams of UN civilian police arrived to probe the smouldering ruins for murder victims. Rotting corpses lying out in the open were catalogued, then turned over to the peacekeepers for burial.²⁸

The massacres were reported to the Canadian Minister of Defence and to the United Nations:

Senior defence bureaucrats back in Ottawa had no way of predicting the outcome of the engagement in terms of political fallout. To them, there was no point in calling media attention to a situation that might easily backfire... So Medak was relegated to the memory hole—no publicity, no recriminations, no official record. Except for those soldiers involved, Canada’s most lively military action since the Korean War simply never happened.²⁹

NATO’s “Post-conflict Agenda”

Both the Medak Pocket massacre and Operation Storm bear a direct relationship to the ongoing situation in Kosovo and the massacres and ethnic cleansing committed by KLA troops. While the circumstances are markedly different, several of today’s key actors in Kosovo were involved (under the auspices of the Croatian Armed Forces) in the planning of both these operations. Moreover, the US mercenary outfit MPRI, which collaborated with the Croatian Armed Forces in 1995, is currently on contract with the KLA. NATO’s casual response to the appointment of Brigadier General Agim Ceku as KLA Chief of Staff was communicated by Mr. Jamie Shea in a press briefing in May: “I have always made it clear, and you have heard me say this, that NATO has no direct contacts with the KLA. Who they appoint as their leaders, that is entirely their own affair I don’t have any comment on that whatever.”³⁰

While NATO says it “has no direct contacts with the KLA,” the evidence confirms the opposite. Amply documented, KLA terrorism has been installed with NATO’s tacit approval. The KLA had (according to several reports) been receiving “covert support” and training from the CIA and Germany’s *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) since the mid-nineties. Moreover, MPRI collaboration with the KLA predates the onslaught of the bombing campaign.³¹

The building up of KLA forces was part of NATO planning. By mid-1998, “covert support” had been replaced by official (“overt”) support by the military alliance, in violation of several UN Security Council resolutions. NATO officials, western heads of State and heads of government, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, not to mention ICTY chief prosecutor Louise Arbour, were fully cognisant of General Ceku’s involvement in the planning of Operation Storm and Operation Scorched Earth. Canadian Major General Lewis McKenzie, who served under the UN, confirmed that “the same officer who masterminded the 1993 Medak offensive in Croatia that saw Canadian soldiers using deadly force to stop horrendous atrocities against Serb civilians [had also] ordered the overrunning of lightly armed UN outposts, in blatant contravention of international law. His influence within the KLA does not augur well for its trustworthiness during Kosovo’s political evolution.”³² Surely, some Questions should have been asked.

Yet what is shaping up visibly in the wake of the bombings in Kosovo is *the continuity* of NATO’s operation in the Balkans. Alongside the transfer of General Ceku to Kosovo, NATO military personnel and UN bureaucrats previously stationed in Croatia and Bosnia have also been routinely reassigned to Kosovo.

KFOR Commander Mike Jackson had been routinely assigned to Kosovo following his stint in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. His experience in “ethnic warfare,” however, predates the Balkans. From his earlier posting in Northern Ireland as a young Captain, Jackson was second in command in the “Bloody Sunday” massacre of civilians in Derry in 1972. Under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Derek Wilford, Captain

Jackson and 13 other soldiers of his parachute regiment opened fire "on a peaceful protest by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association opposing discrimination against Catholics. In just 30 minutes, 13 people were shot dead and a further 13 injured. Those who died were killed by a single bullet to the head or body, indicating that they had been deliberately targeted. No weapons were found on any of the deceased."³³

Jackson's ignominious role in Bloody Sunday did not hinder his military career from Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s, he was reassigned to the theatre of ethnic warfare in the Balkans. In the immediate wake of Operation Storm and the ethnic massacres in Krajina, Jackson was put in charge as IFOR Commander for organising the return of Serbs "to lands taken by Croatian HVO forces in the 1995 Krajina offensive."³⁴ And in this capacity General Jackson had "urged that the resettlement [of Krajina Serbs] not [be] rushed to avoid tension [with the Croats]," while also warning returning Serbs "of the extent of the [land] mine threat."³⁵ In retrospect, recalling the events of early 1996, very few Krajina Serbs were allowed to return to their homes under the protection of the UN. According to Veritas, a Belgrade-based organisation of Serbian refugees from Croatia, some ten to fifteen thousand Serbs were able to resettle in Croatia.

And a similar process is unfolding in Kosovo. The conduct of senior military officers (including Jackson and Ceku) conforms to a consistent pattern; the same key individuals and the same US mercenary outfit are now involved in Kosovo. While token efforts are displayed to protect Serb and Roma civilians, those who have fled Kosovo are not encouraged to return under UN protection. In post-war Kosovo, ethnic cleansing implemented by the KLA has largely been accepted by the international community as a *fait accompli*.

Moreover, while calling for democracy and "good governance" in the Balkans, the US and its allies have installed in Kosovo a paramilitary government with links to organised crime. The foreseeable outcome is the outright criminalization of civilian state institutions and the establishment of what is best described as a Mafia State. The complicity of NATO and the alliance governments (namely their relentless support to the KLA) points to the de facto criminalization of KFOR and of the UN peacekeeping apparatus in Kosovo. The donor agencies and governments providing financial support to the KLA (including funds approved by the US Congress in violation of several UN Security Council resolutions) are, in this regard, also accessories to the de facto criminalization of state institutions. Through the intermediation of a paramilitary group (created and financed by Washington and Bonn), NATO ultimately bears the burden of responsibility for the massacres and ethnic cleansing of civilians in Kosovo.

Terror And The Market

State terror and the free market seem to go hand in hand. The concurrent criminalization of state institutions in Kosovo is not incompatible with the West's economic and strategic objectives in the Balkans. Notwithstanding the massacres of civilians, the self-proclaimed KLA administration has committed itself to establishing a "secure and stable environment" for foreign investors and international financial institutions. The Minister of Finance Adem Grobozci and other representatives of the provisional government invited to various donor conferences are all KLA appointees. In contrast, members of the KDL of Ibrahim Rugova (duly elected in parliamentary elections) were not even invited to attend the Stabilization Summit in Sarajevo in late July.

"Free market reforms" are envisaged for Kosovo under the supervision of the Bretton Woods institutions largely replicating the structures of the Rambouillet Agreement. Article 1 (Chapter 4a) of the Rambouillet Agreement stipulated that: "The economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles." The KLA government will largely be responsible for

implementing these reforms and ensuring that loan conditionalities are met.

In close liaison with NATO, the Bretton Woods institutions had already analysed the consequences of an eventual military intervention leading to the military occupation of Kosovo. Almost a year prior to the beginning of the war, the World Bank conducted "simulations" which "anticipated the possibility of an emergency scenario arising out of the tensions in Kosovo."³⁶

The eventual "reconstruction" of Kosovo financed by international debt largely purports to transfer Kosovo's extensive wealth in mineral resources and coal to multinational capital. In this regard, the KLA has already occupied (pending their privatisation) the largest coal mine at Belacevac in Dobro Selo, northwest of Pristina. In turn, foreign capital has its eyes riveted on the massive Trebca mining complex which constitutes "the most valuable piece of real estate in the Balkans, worth at least \$5 billion."³⁷ The Trebca complex not only includes copper and large reserves of zinc, but also cadmium, gold, and silver. It has several smelting plants, 17 metal treatment sites, a power plant and Yugoslavia's largest battery plant. Northern Kosovo also has estimated reserves of 17 billion tons of coal and lignite.

In the wake of the bombings, the management of many of the state-owned enterprises and public utilities were taken over by KLA appointees. In turn, the leaders of the Provisional Government of Kosovo (PGK) have become the brokers of multinational capital, committed to handing over the Kosovar economy at bargain prices to foreign investors. The IMF's lethal economic therapy will be imposed, the provincial economy will be dismantled, agriculture will be deregulated, local industrial enterprises which have not been totally destroyed will be driven into bankruptcy.

The most profitable state assets will eventually be transferred into the hands of foreign capital under the World Bank-sponsored privatisation program. "Strong economic medicine" imposed by external creditors will contribute to further boosting a criminal economy (already firmly implanted in Albania) which feeds on poverty and economic dislocation.

Moreover, the so-called reconstruction of the Balkans by foreign capital will signify multi-billion dollar contracts to foreign firms to rebuild Kosovo's infrastructure. More generally, the proposed Marshall Plan for the Balkans financed by the World Bank and the European Development Bank (EBRD) as well as private creditors will largely benefit western mining, petroleum and construction companies while fuelling the region's external debt well into the third millennium.

And Kosovo is slated to reimburse this debt through the laundering of dirty money. Yugoslav banks in Kosovo will be closed down, the banking system will be deregulated under the supervision of western financial institutions. Narco-dollars from the multi-billion dollar Balkans drug trade will be recycled toward servicing the external debt as well as financing the costs of reconstruction. The lucrative flow of narco-dollars thus ensures that foreign investors involved in the reconstruction program will be able to reap substantial returns. In turn, the existence of a Kosovar *narco-State* ensures the orderly reimbursement of international donors and creditors. The latter are prepared to turn a blind eye. They have a tacit vested interest in installing a government which facilitates the laundering of drug money.

The pattern in Kosovo is, in this regard, similar to that observed in neighbouring Albania. Since the early 1990s (culminating with the collapse of the financial pyramids in 1996-97), the IMF's reforms have impoverished the Albanian population while spearheading the national economy into bankruptcy. The IMF's deadly economic therapy transforms countries into open territories. In Albania, and to a lesser extent Macedonia, it has also contributed to fostering the growth of illicit trade and the criminalization of state institutions.

Notes

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8. House Resolution 1425, Apr. 15, 1999.
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