

# **COLLAPSE IN KOSOVO**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. CLASHING VISIONS OF KOSOVO'S FUTURE.....</b>	<b>2</b>
A. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY POLICIES.....	2
B. BELGRADE'S POLICIES .....	3
<b>III. INCREASING FRICTIONS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
A. PRIVATISATION .....	6
B. PARALLEL STRUCTURES .....	7
C. THE POLITICAL HERITAGE OF THE WAR.....	8
<b>IV. FORESHADOWING THE VIOLENCE.....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. VIOLENCE AND SECURITY .....	10
B. THE FUSE IS LIT .....	13
<b>V. SPONTANEOUS OR ORGANISED VIOLENCE?.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>VI. A SECURITY SYSTEM NEAR COLLAPSE .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>VII. REACTIONS AND RESPONSES.....</b>	<b>24</b>
A. KOSOVO ALBANIANS .....	25
B. THE INTERNATIONALS .....	27
C. ON THE GROUND .....	30
<b>VIII. KOSOVO ALBANIAN SOCIETY - THE NEED FOR RENOVATION .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>IX. RESHAPING THE INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE.....</b>	<b>36</b>
A. THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE ECONOMY.....	36
B. PARALLEL STRUCTURES .....	39
C. SECURITY COORDINATION .....	40
<b>X. LOOKING AHEAD .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
A. A CHRONOLOGY OF VIOLENCE: 17-19 MARCH 2004 .....	44
B. MAP OF KOSOVO .....	53

## COLLAPSE IN KOSOVO

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On 17 March 2004, the unstable foundations of four and a half years of gradual progress in Kosovo buckled and gave way. Within hours the province was immersed in anti-Serb and anti-UN rioting and had regressed to levels of violence not seen since 1999. By 18 March the violence mutated into the ethnic cleansing of entire minority villages and neighbourhoods. The mobs of Albanian youths, extremists and criminals exposed the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led peacekeeping force (KFOR) as very weak. Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-government (PISG), media and civil society afforded the rioters licence for mayhem. The international community urgently needs new policies -- on final status and socio-economic development alike -- or Kosovo instability may infect the entire region.

The rampage left nineteen dead, nearly 900 injured, over 700 Serb, Ashkali and Roma homes, up to ten public buildings and 30 Serbian churches and two monasteries damaged or destroyed, and roughly 4,500 people displaced. The riots were more spontaneous than organised, with extremist and criminal gangs taking advantage, particularly on day two. Frustration and fear over the international community's intentions for Kosovo, UNMIK's inability to kick-start the economy and its suspension of privatisation, and Belgrade's success over recent months in shredding Kosovo Albanian nerves all built the tension that was released with explosive force by the inciting incidents of 16 March.

Regional security implications are serious and widespread. KFOR and NATO have lost their aura of invulnerability and invincibility. The perception of international weakness and lack of resolve will not be lost on extremists in Kosovo and elsewhere in the Balkans, including newly resurgent nationalists in Belgrade. If the underlying causes of the violence are not dealt with immediately and directly -- through

political, developmental and security measures alike - - Kosovo risks becoming Europe's West Bank.

The violent explosion revealed Kosovo Albanian society to be deeply troubled, lacking institutions, leadership and the culture to absorb shocks and contain its violent, criminal minority. In its current state, this society will continue to push out minorities and ultimately consume its own wafer-thin layer of liberal intelligentsia. Its large number of young people threaten to sweep aside the fragile institutions of the older generation. Since 1999 a migration from the undeveloped countryside has swamped the capital and the modernised elements of society. UNMIK has not come near to making good Kosovo's development deficits, particularly the decay in education and literacy.

UNMIK's structure and mandate are now exposed as inappropriate to prepare Kosovo for the transition from war to peace, from socialism to the market economy, and from international political limbo to final status. The international community had beguiled itself into believing that the patchy half-promises of its November 2003 undertaking to begin reviewing Kosovo's final status by mid-2005 represented a complete policy. Unable to agree on what that final status should be, it relied on the naive assumption that delaying the decision would allow passions to cool. It also failed to take security concerns seriously and deal with parallel structures and criminal groups. This lack of resolve left the majority Albanian and minority Serb communities locked in a confrontation that was suppressed, never resolved.

With status uncertainty deterring investors, and without the myriad club memberships open only to nation states, Kosovo's development is stunted under the current UN rule. Its GDP -- dependent on the waning contributions of prematurely disengaging

donors and with only 4 per cent of imports covered by exports -- is unsustainable at even the current low level. With many families dependent on remittances from their migrant children, Kosovo is engaged in a humiliating demographic war of attrition with Western Europe. As Kosovo Albanians furtively cross their borders and enter their labour markets, these nations seek to throw them back. For the more than 50 per cent of Kosovo's labour force that is unemployed, including the 30,000 to 40,000 who join it every year, the present interim dispensation for Kosovo is not enough.

It is crucial that all concerned face up quickly to the implications of 17-18 March. The international community's institutions in Kosovo need new ways of operating and, in the case of UNMIK, a new structure and mandate. If the notion of partition is to be rejected -- as ICG believes it still should be except in the unlikely event that both interested sides freely choose it (in which case it would be consistent with the Helsinki principles) -- this can no longer be out of hand or on faith but only because new international policies and new honesty among Kosovo Albanians about their society produce changes on the ground that make Kosovo a much more viable place for all its communities.

If this is to happen, a real political, social, economic and institutional development process must be put in place rapidly to absorb the energies of Kosovo's population. The present policy of "standards before status" is only half a policy. The regional consequences of continued drift leading to a destabilised Kosovo are incalculable. The international community has a very brief window in which to learn from its mistakes and regain control of the agenda. Otherwise Kosovo may become ungovernable and dissolve into a vicious cycle of violence that infects all of the Western Balkans.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To Kosovo Albanian Institutions, including PISG, Media and Civil Society:**

1. Combat the extremist and intolerant pathologies in Kosovo Albanian society rather than placing the whole blame for Kosovo's problems on the international community and UNMIK.
2. Accept that media coverage of the violence was indefensibly one-sided and inflammatory, and cooperate with the Temporary Media

Commissioner and the OSCE in finding a way forward, including by reforming the management and board of the public broadcaster, RTK, and seeking sustained technical assistance from experienced European broadcasting professionals.

3. Go beyond the PISG commitment to help rebuild homes, monasteries and churches destroyed in the rioting with government funds by launching a broad initiative to raise money from all corners of society for this purpose, and otherwise taking the initiative to develop Kosovo Serb infrastructure including education and healthcare.
4. Continue the process of dialogue with Serbia initiated in October 2003.

### **To the Contact Group Countries (U.S., UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia) and Other Members of the International Community:**

5. Re-engage seriously with the Kosovo issue, by:
  - (a) taking action to enhance the security of Kosovo's minority communities, especially the Serbs;
  - (b) beginning preparatory work for final status talks, including confirming their legal basis in Resolution 1244; and
  - (c) making a substantial and sustained social, economic, and institutional development effort for the express purpose of preparing Kosovo rapidly for final status.
6. Work through the UN Security Council to change the structure of UNMIK to suit better the mandate of a transition to final status and eventual EU membership, giving social and economic development the priority they currently lack, including by:
  - (a) dismantling the current pillar structure;
  - (b) transferring UNMIK's social and economic responsibilities to the PISG; and
  - (c) splitting the role of SRSB into two, with functions respectively of chief administrator of Kosovo and chief negotiator on final status.
7. Respond promptly to UNMIK's request for more investigators, prosecutors and judges so

that UNMIK can vigorously investigate and prosecute those reasonably suspected of violent rioting within the framework of the new Kosovo criminal procedure code.

**To UNMIK:**

8. Institutionalise dialogue between Kosovo Albanian leaders and civil society and their Kosovo Serb counterparts on the means of co-existence in Kosovo, taking the Council of Europe decentralisation plan as a starting point.
9. Revitalise privatisation by making any procedural changes necessary to ensure rapid progress with this; build upon the dismissal of the former Kosovo Trust Agency chief by continuing to signal fresh thinking on, and accommodation with, Kosovo's economic and social development needs; and seek from the UN and the Contact Group the policy and resource tools necessary to meet them.
10. Improve command and control within UNMIK and the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), enhance their coordination with KFOR (especially on gathering intelligence on extremists and parallel structures), provide the police with more training and equipment, and further increase their ability to face challenges like 17-18 March by boosting their dangerously low morale.

**To NATO:**

11. Increase the capacity of KFOR troops to deal with future violent disorders by equipping, instructing and training them better in graduated use-of-force responses to riot situations, and by reinforcing border security.

**To the Serbian Government:**

12. Work with UNMIK to get parallel structures recognised, regularised, and, if possible, supported by the PISG in order to provide security and social services for Serb communities within Kosovo.
13. Continue the process of dialogue with Pristina on technical issues.

**To the U.S. Government:**

14. Designate a special envoy to initiate discussions with other members of the Contact Group, the EU, the PISG, Belgrade and neighbouring states on the legal basis and format of the eventual final status negotiations.

**Pristina/Belgrade/Brussels, 22 April 2004**

## COLLAPSE IN KOSOVO

### I. INTRODUCTION

In recent months, the international community had beguiled itself into believing that the patchy half-promises of its November 2003 undertaking to begin reviewing Kosovo's final status if the province met a set of standards on governance and inclusion of minorities by mid-2005 represented a complete policy. After the two-day rampage of partly coordinated arson, looting, shooting, and stone-, petrol bomb- and grenade-throwing that left nineteen dead, nearly 900 injured (more than twenty gravely), over 700 Serb, Ashkali and Roma homes, up to 10 public buildings and 30 Serbian churches and two monasteries damaged or destroyed, and some 4,500 Kosovo Serbs displaced,<sup>1</sup> that "standards before status" policy looks threadbare and sorely in need of repair.

The Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) cannot bring themselves to give direction to the society they purport to represent. An early decision that the Kosovo Consolidated Budget must pay for the destruction was welcome but they have not offered an apology to Kosovo's Serbs; they have not even publicly acknowledged which and whose buildings were attacked and who the victims were. Kosovo Albanian media that on the eve of the violence were quick to identify Albanian children drowned after allegedly being chased by Serbs are now slow to identify and empathise with the thousands of new victims. The more "liberal" media have concentrated on the political damage Kosovo has sustained and have neglected the human dimension. Others, such as the newspaper *Epoka e Re*, regard Albanians as the victims and are denouncing the actions of the security forces against the rioters.

The PISG and Kosovo Albanian society now stand in the dock of world opinion -- having squandered in two days the moral capital amassed during Milosevic's campaign of atrocities and mass expulsion perpetrated against them in 1998-1999.<sup>2</sup> Will they belatedly mobilise in opposition to the violence or will they allow the actions of their rampaging children and criminal gangs to determine the future of Kosovo? Although the majority Albanians aspire to declare their land a country, on course for joining the European Union, their acquiescence in this latest ethnic cleansing threatens to relegate the territory and themselves to pariah status as the region's problem neighbour.

As the dust settles, the international peacekeeping mission and Kosovo's PISG, media, and society each show signs of retreating into separate realities, risking the opening of a chasm between them. This report outlines what happened and proposes steps that must be taken to move Kosovo onto a peaceful path.

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<sup>1</sup> See chronology of the 17-19 March violence at Appendix A below.

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<sup>2</sup> The events of 17-18 March 2004 were presaged by Albanian violence against other ethnicities in 1999. See Human Rights Watch report, "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Abuses Against Serbs and Roma in the New Kosovo", August 1999, available at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/kosov2/>.

## **II. CLASHING VISIONS OF KOSOVO'S FUTURE**

For Kosovo Albanians, independence was declared in October 1991, and the last twelve and a half years have been a process of waiting for the international community and Serbia to recognise it. UN Security Council Resolution 1244 -- expressly referring to the Rambouillet talks that failed to head off the 1999 war -- further enshrined the idea of the popular will as a significant factor for determining Kosovo's future status. As a result, 90 per cent of Kosovo's population will accept no final outcome other than independence. From this perspective, the inconvenient fact that sole authority in Kosovo under international law rests with the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is irrelevant; the "shadow government" of 1991-1999 and since 2002 the PISG have successively been regarded by Kosovo Albanians as the only legitimate organs of government.

The lack of progress over final status and the absence of any indication how much longer UNMIK's mandate would last were sources of frustration. Every action taken by UNMIK, in particular its relations with Belgrade, was scrutinised by Kosovo Albanians to judge whether or not it advanced the recognition of independence and usually found lacking. (In parallel, of course, Belgrade characterised every action of UNMIK with regard to setting up internal systems of government in Kosovo as yet another unilateral and illegitimate step towards independence.) The standards-before-status process set up by former UN special representative (SRSG) Michael Steiner in mid-2002 appeared to both sides yet another temporising measure, with few details given at first of how the standards would be evaluated and none of how the status would be resolved.<sup>3</sup>

### **A. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY POLICIES**

A more dynamic phase began on 4-6 November 2003 when U.S. Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman, visiting Brussels, Pristina and Belgrade, announced a new initiative on behalf of the Contact Group nations that dominate policy on Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> It promised a

review of final status in mid-2005 if by then the PISG had satisfied a raft of specified standards on governance and treatment of ethnic minorities. The announcement changed Kosovo's perception of its own future; where previously UNMIK rule appeared to have no expiry date, the countdown had begun. Asked by a Kosovo Albanian journalist in Pristina whether independence was an option at the end of the process, Grossman responded: "All options are on the table".

It now seemed possible to channel growing Kosovo Albanian impatience, frustration, and insecurity into constructive processes. During the following months, joint planning of standards implementation rescued the stagnating relationship between UNMIK and the PISG from sliding into breakdown.<sup>5</sup> The UN Security Council-endorsed Standards for Kosovo plan that flowed from the Contact Group initiative established five joint UNMIK-PISG working groups to plan and coordinate the fulfilment of eight sets of standards covering functioning democratic institutions; the rule of law; freedom of movement and sustainable returns; the rights of communities; the economy; property rights; dialogue between the PISG and Belgrade; and the building of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) as a civilian emergency organisation. Beginning in May 2004, the PISG's efforts to achieve these standards were to be evaluated by UNMIK in quarterly reports to the Security Council.

However, as the events of mid-March 2004 demonstrated, the PISG represents and enjoys the trust of Kosovo Albanian society only to a limited extent. The modest array of governing competencies UNMIK has transferred to it, and its own weaknesses -- limited ability, myopic vision, and alleged venality -- leave it vulnerable to being perceived by that society as a quisling, corrupt elite. The improvement in UNMIK-PISG relations after Grossman's visit did not bring the rest of Kosovo Albanian society with it. To an extent these two governing structures were between themselves building castles in the air.

Far too much of Kosovo bulges outside its institutional life; on top of a demographic structure dominated by children and young people, unemployment of 50 to 60 per cent, and a stagnant, inadequate education system, is a large body of

<sup>3</sup> See ICG Europe Report N°148, *Two to Tango: An Agenda for the New Kosovo SRSG*, 3 September 2003, pages 16-18.

<sup>4</sup> The members of the Contact Group are the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Russia; the

five members other than Russia are sometimes referred to as the Quint.

<sup>5</sup> See ICG Europe Report N°148, *Two to Tango: An Agenda for the New Kosovo SRSG*, 3 September 2003.

Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) veterans, who feel passed over in post-war Kosovo, and some of whom have gravitated to criminal organisations. The new elites in the PISG do not reach out far into society: they interact with it mainly through patron-client relations channelled through the political party system. Among those at the margins, without a stake in the institutions, the Kosovo status equation looks cruder than the convoluted formulations of the Contact Group would have it: create facts on the ground, drive out the foreign bodies, be they Serb or international. If they succeed, they will create a pariah state not at peace with neighbours.

UNMIK does not have Kosovo's social and economic development at the heart of its mandate. These urgent tasks have been relegated beneath the political compromises that form its pacifying, status quo-preserving role. With unresolved status deterring investors, and without the myriad club memberships open only to nation states -- everything from membership of the SWIFT bank transfer system, the international Green Card car insurance scheme, ownership of a telephone code, a generally recognised passport, through the availability of sovereign lending from development banks -- Kosovo's development is stunted under UN rule. For the impatient crowds of unemployed, including the 30,000 to 40,000 young people who enter its labour market every year, the present interim dispensation is not enough.

Far from improving, within the last year Kosovo's economy has regressed. Retailers have reported to ICG that their turnover is down a third, and the business community complains of a growing liquidity crisis. As the size of the expatriate staff declines, the service industry that brought into Kosovo possibly €1 billion annually at its height, shrinks. Even Kosovo's present low level of GDP is unsustainable. In 2002, 50 per cent was accounted for by foreign assistance, 30 per cent by remittances from the diaspora -- both sources now fatigued and in decline -- and only 20 per cent by domestically generated economic activity.<sup>6</sup> In 2003, exports covered a mere 4 per cent of imports.<sup>7</sup>

Worse still, in attempting to survive economically, Kosovo is locked humiliatingly into a demographic war of attrition with Western Europe. For many desperate Kosovo families, sending a young member abroad to work is the only chance of keeping above water. Yet, the Western European countries to which they flock are far from willing partners: furtive border crossings, falsified documents, black market visas, marriages of convenience, and black economy work provide the unstable elements that characterise this corrosive relationship. In 2003 the UK, for example, was returning a planeload of Kosovo Albanians back to Pristina every week even as more were finding their way in.

## **B. BELGRADE'S POLICIES**

Although Serbia was welcomed back into the international community after the fall of Milosevic in October 2000, Kosovo Albanians see no change in Belgrade's basic attitudes towards them. The post-Milosevic Serbian governments have continued to pursue his policy of creating parallel structures and working towards territorial division of the province so that if Kosovo ever gains independence, those de facto divisions could be the basis of a partition. Serbian officials continue to use the name "Kosovo and Metohija" with which Milosevic re-dubbed the province after revoking its autonomy in 1989,<sup>8</sup> insist on the property rights of those Serbian companies to whom ownership of Kosovo's formerly state/socially-owned enterprises was questionably re-assigned during the 1990s, and attempt to block privatisation of state/socially-owned enterprises. Belgrade officials and media still denigrate Kosovo Albanians, associating them with organised crime and terrorism. Acknowledgement of the crimes committed against Kosovo Albanians is sketchy, perfunctory, and usually justified as a response to Albanian "terror". Albanians are alarmed that there has been insufficient recognition of this continuity in the rush to re-establish a partnership with post-Milosevic Serbia. These fears were aggravated by the strong nationalist showing in the 28 December 2003 Serbian parliamentary elections.<sup>9</sup>

Serbia appears to view standards implementation as the road to Kosovo independence, something to

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<sup>6</sup> Banking and Payments Authority of Kosovo 2002, Annual Report, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Trade Policy for Kosovo 2004*, joint paper of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and UNMIK Pillar IV (the EU Pillar), 8 April 2004.

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<sup>8</sup> The name Kosovo and Metohija was used until the Yugoslav constitution of 1968.

<sup>9</sup> See for those elections ICG Europe Report N° 154, *Serbia's U-Turn*, 26 March 2004.



which official Belgrade remains strongly opposed.<sup>10</sup> From having made supportive noises initially, Belgrade's Kosovo envoy, Deputy Prime Minister Covic, hardened his position in December 2003 on the Kosovo standards implementation process, complaining that Serbia was not being adequately consulted. This culminated in Belgrade's dragooning of the Kosovo Serbs into making a 19 December "St. Nicholas Day declaration" that they would boycott the process and call for separate Albanian and Serbian entities.

Serbia's prime minister, Vojislav Kostunica, devoted a small part of his 2 March 2004 pre-inaugural speech to the Serbian parliament to Kosovo, ruling out independence as an option. Rather, he presented a vision of Kosovo as an autonomous province of Serbia, with Serbs enjoying autonomy within that autonomy. He stated that if "fundamental autonomy is the formula by which [UN Security Council] Resolution 1244 provides the self governance of Kosovo and Metohija in relation to Serbia, then the fundamental autonomy of the Serbian community is the new formula which will provide this community the foundations for remaining in today's Kosovo and Metohija".<sup>11</sup> This "fundamental autonomy" meant "territorial autonomy, partition into entities, that is the cantonisation of Kosovo and Metohija". At the time these statements were rather vague, and the use of the term "partition" alarmed both Kosovo Albanians and the international community.

Since then -- perhaps as a result of EU and US pressure -- Kostunica has elaborated on this theme, stating that it should include "a high level of autonomy for Serbs in Kosovo", and should "extend to Serbs where they are concentrated and in the majority". He also stated that he has "mentioned several terms -- decentralization, entities, cantons -- deliberately not singling out any one of them".<sup>12</sup> He has stated that it is "all the same whether that autonomy is called cantonisation or decentralisation".<sup>13</sup> Kostunica has also stated that the realignment of municipal

boundaries inside Kosovo would enable the Serbs to form larger and more compact territorial units.<sup>14</sup> He has stated, however, that the Serbian government will soon present a plan for resolving the situation in Kosovo.<sup>15</sup> It does not yet appear that this plan has been finalised.

Belgrade has used the terms cantonisation, partition and decentralisation on previous occasions, and in terms of Serbian political discourse, all terms appear to point to the same thing: the platform and ideas published by the Coordination Centre's Branislav Krstic as a potential model for territorial division.<sup>16</sup> Krstic's works do not clearly define governing structures or the relationship of the Serbian territories inside Kosovo with Pristina. Rather, they appear to stipulate an ethnically based territorial settlement, in which separate Albanian areas will be given some unspecified degree of autonomy, yet remain part of Serbia. According to maps published in the Belgrade electronic and print media, as well as the maps prepared by Krstic, the areas that Belgrade covets as part of the Serbian territories include not only the Serbian majority north, but also regions that were (and still are) Albanian majority prior to 1999, such as Pec/Peja, Gnjilane/Gjilan, and Pristina.

Though Belgrade has often paid lip service to supporting UNMIK's project of creating a unitary multi-ethnic administration in Kosovo, Kostunica's 2 March declaration and subsequent statements indicated an open break with any further pretence of accommodation. What Belgrade actually wants is a territorial solution. Since 1999 efforts at creating a division on the ground have been backed up by moves to build parallel administrative structures within Kosovo that are outside UNMIK's jurisdiction. Belgrade does not appear interested in multi-ethnic life for the province, and Kostunica and other politicians have repeatedly stated that Serbs and Albanians cannot live together, but only alongside each other.<sup>17</sup> This presupposes a sort of ethno-geographic apartheid. Serb goals are for Kosovo to remain inside Serbia with a degree of autonomy only

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<sup>10</sup> This was seen in the 26 March resolution on Kosovo adopted by the Serbian Parliament, in which Kosovo was declared an "inalienable" part of Serbia.

<sup>11</sup> The full text of Kostunica's speech 2 March speech to the parliament may be found at the Serbian government's web site, <http://www.srbija.sr.gov.yu/cms/view.php/510.print.html>. See also "Kostunica: pred srbijom cetiri najvaznija zadatka," *B92 web site*, 2 March 2004.

<sup>12</sup> "Izmedju 17 i 31 Marta" *NIN*, 1 April 2004.

<sup>13</sup> "Kostunica: ne odustajemo od ideje autonomije za Srbe na Kosovu," *B92 web site*, 4 April 2004.

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<sup>14</sup> "Izmedju 17 i 31 Marta" *NIN*, 1 April 2004.

<sup>15</sup> See Kostunica's interview with the daily *Politika*, "Uneti red u drzavu," 4 April 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Krstic, *Kosovo: Causes of the Conflict, Reconciliation of Rights*, Belgrade: 2001.

<sup>17</sup> "Kostunica: nezavisnost Kosova nije dobro resenje," *B92 web site*, 19 March 2004. Also see Kostunica's remarks explaining the Serbian Parliament's declaration on Kosovo: "Skupstina Srbije usvojila rezoluciju o Kosovu," *B92 web site*, 26 March 2004.

slightly greater than under Milosevic's Serbian constitution (1992), but far less than under the 1974 Yugoslav federal constitution. In the context of this autonomy, the Serb majority pockets of Kosovo would enjoy complete autonomy from Pristina, while remaining under the direct control of Belgrade, yet still retain voting power in the Kosovo provincial assembly. As a result, Belgrade's use of the terms "decentralisation", "cantonisation", and "partition" should not be understood as a precise formulation using these words' usual meanings.

### III. INCREASING FRICTIONS

Contradictory UN and PISG interpretations of the mid-2005 review date became public as early as mid-February 2004. SRSG Holkeri warned on 17 February that there was no automaticity to the beginning of a process to determine final status in mid-2005 if adequate progress on standards was not made. Kosovo Albanian politicians reacted sharply. A measure of the pressures building up on the Kosovo Albanian side was the reaction of Prime Minister Rexhepi -- one of the most mature, reasonable, and statesmanlike figures in the Kosovo Albanian spectrum:

I would not like the summer of 2005 in Kosovo to be a hot one. I wish for the promises that have been made, that there is a willingness on the part of international community to say "yes" to starting to define final status, and this [promise] is kept, so that we are not forced into making unilateral decisions. We don't want to undertake unilateral decisions, whether referendum or declaration of independence; but we shall be forced to do that and we will have moral justification for this move if the international community hesitates.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, the initial welcome of the new initiative and the relative calm that lasted through several months beguiled the Contact Group into believing that its half-promises could substitute for a complete policy.<sup>19</sup> The reluctance to specify what awaited in mid-2005 removed incentives and leverage from

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<sup>18</sup> *Zeri* weekly magazine, 21 February 2004. In the wake of the March rioting, Rexhepi made the intention even more explicit. In an interview published in *The Financial Times* on 19 April, he stated: "If we wait until September 2005 and we see they are buying time, probably we will unilaterally move for a referendum on independence or a declaration of independence."

<sup>19</sup> Although far from a perfect analogy, the situation holds some striking parallels with Albanians' reception of the Ottoman Young Turk constitution in 1908 -- initial euphoria, several months of remarkable civil peace, followed by a swift onset of disillusion. See Edith Durham, *High Albania* (reprinted London, 1985), p. 327: "It promised to give us roads, and railways, and schools, and to keep order and justice. We have had it two whole months, and it has done none of these things. We have given our *besa* [oath] till St. Dimitri, and if it has not done them by then -- good-bye Konstituzioon!"

the standards process, while building expectations explosively among Kosovo Albanians. The U.S. in particular appeared to believe that determining Kosovo's final status could be de-politicized, and that evaluation of standards implementation could be elevated almost to an objective science.

## A. PRIVATISATION

Holkeri did mend fences with the PISG over the standards partnership<sup>20</sup> but this could not completely compensate for setbacks on other fronts, of which the most striking was the crucial issue of privatisation. After the war, UNMIK and its partners took three years to come up with a complex privatisation mechanism to reintroduce Kosovo's roughly 400 socially owned enterprises (SOEs) into the provincial economy and attract investment for them. By creating new companies from SOE assets, and directing privatisation proceeds into a trust fund to settle past ownership claims, UNMIK intended to press ahead with a policy necessary for Kosovo's economic development while directing the highly political dispute over ownership into a residual channel. Through mid-2003, it proceeded with its plans despite protests from Covic that they amounted to theft of Serbian property. However, on 6 October 2003 the new head of UNMIK's Pillar IV -- responsible for reconstruction and economic development -- was rattled enough by the question marks piling up about legal sustainability to suspend the program. To Kosovo Albanians, it looked like a cave-in to Belgrade.

UNMIK should have pressed for agreement from New York, drawing on support from the overlapping membership of key states in the Security Council and the Contact Group, to give UNMIK staff legal cover for expropriating the SOEs before privatisation.<sup>21</sup> However, in October 2003 the Kosovo Trust Agency (KTA) -- the body established under Pillar IV to manage or privatise the publicly and socially owned enterprises -- was rebuffed by the UN on two crucial requests. The UN declined to

confer its own legal immunity on KTA staff, and it declined to allow UNMIK to declare invalid in Kosovo three Serbian laws of the 1990s under which the Milosevic-era ownership transformations had been effected. Moreover, it decreed that KTA policy should change, that the ownership of each SOE should be exhaustively evaluated prior to privatisation. That change, together with the then KTA chief Marie Fucci's<sup>22</sup> wish to make the privatisation procedure generally more complex, held out the prospect that privatization would not restart for many months and would then proceed at a snail's pace over many years.

The failure of UNMIK's privatisation strategy produced a groundswell of bitterness within Kosovo Albanian society and poisoned relations with the PISG. Beyond its economic impact and the risk for Kosovo Albanians that "we could find ourselves refugees in our own country living among the property of Serbia",<sup>23</sup> privatisation was a tangible litmus test as to which of the competing realities of the 1990s the international community would legitimate: Serbia's revocation of Kosovo's autonomy or the Kosovo Albanian resistance. As the UN headquarters retreated from its support for the privatisation program, UNMIK-PISG deadlock in Pristina boiled down to confrontation over the fate of the new KTA chief, Fucci, who rapidly became a hate figure for Kosovo Albanian society. Her past work on privatisation in Serbia and confrontational approach toward her Kosovo Albanian counterparts fuelled the belief that she was a defender of Serbian interests. The more that the UNMIK leadership defended her, refusing local demands for her dismissal, the more it appeared to Kosovo Albanians that it was selling out their economic future to Belgrade.

Thus, whatever the vague promises of a mid-2005 review date, Kosovo Albanians feared that facts were being created on the ground against them, pre-empting status talks. This insecurity was further fuelled by a combination of renewed assertiveness and tactical adroitness from Belgrade from 2003 onwards and weak or insensitive responses from UNMIK in two other areas: the growing power of Belgrade-sponsored parallel administrative structures,

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<sup>20</sup> Under Holkeri's predecessor, SRSG Michael Steiner, relations between UNMIK and the PISG became strained. See ICG Report, *Two to Tango*, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> This would be in keeping with current practice inside Serbia towards assets owned by other former Yugoslav Republics, the most notable example being the seizure and subsequent privatisation of assets owned by Croatia's INA company. To date no compensation has been paid to INA.

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<sup>22</sup> On 10 April SRSG Holkeri announced a decision to replace Fucci as head of the KTA.

<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi, ICG interview, 11 December 2003.

and perceptions that the legitimacy of the KLA's liberation struggle was being undermined.

## **B. PARALLEL STRUCTURES**

Northern Mitrovica and the three northern-most Serb-dominated municipalities have been bastions of Belgrade-supported parallel administration ever since KFOR consolidated the defensive line drawn by beleaguered Kosovo Serbs along the River Ibar in summer 1999. However, 2003 witnessed an expansion of parallel structures south of the Ibar. Both UNMIK and KFOR had been aware for some time that the Serbs were creating high-visibility parallel structures, yet had not acted decisively.<sup>24</sup> After UNMIK failed -- despite its declared policy -- to resist the unilateral takeover of health centres by parallel structures in Gracanica (September 2002) and Kosovo Polje/Fushe Kosove (early summer 2003), Belgrade's Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija (CCK), led by Covic, raised the ante. In mid-2003 it opened new offices in most areas of Kosovo Serb concentration in the Pristina and Gjilan/Gnjilane regions. Its office in the enclave of Gracanica developed specialised departments, enabling it to become a hub of embryonic parallel government in the Pristina region. The CCK "poached" Serb UNMIK employees and elected municipal assembly members, offering a carrot of higher salaries and a stick of rescinding Serbian pension rights if they opted for Kosovo institutions.

Rumours spread that representatives of Serbia's security services were entrenching themselves in leadership positions in the expanding parallel structures. In early January 2004 and again in early February the chief of Serbia's Military Security Agency (VBA, responsible for military intelligence and counterintelligence),<sup>25</sup> Momir Stojanovic,<sup>26</sup>

publicly taunted the Kosovo Albanians and UNMIK by claiming that over the previous year the VBA had re-established its network of agents in Kosovo.<sup>27</sup> From having been an advisory presence in the background, the CCK advanced to a marshalling role inside Kosovo. After a period of gradual improvement in relations, their Kosovo Albanian counterparts at municipal level perceived Serb colleagues who were now regularly attending meetings at CCK headquarters in Belgrade with renewed suspicion. Ethnic cantonisation appeared to be in the process of creation in a way that fed Kosovo Albanian anxiety and animosity.

UNMIK's Pillar II<sup>28</sup> was alarmed and attempted to clamp down from October 2003, issuing warnings that parallel CCK employment was incompatible with municipal service contracts. However, UNMIK failed to react at a political level. It did not attempt to close the new CCK sub-municipal offices; it did not even formally address a demand to Covic. By November there was despondency in Pillar II at the new harm done to the fragile fabric of multi-ethnic municipal government. An UNMIK official gave the example of Novo Brdo municipality in the Gjilan/Gnjilane region:

We had an ideal situation there. The Serbian president and Albanian vice president were working well together. But now that Serbian president is coming under pressure from

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<sup>24</sup> See ICG Balkans Report N°131, *UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross: Tackling Division in Mitrovica*, 3 June 2002, for more background.

<sup>25</sup> Formerly known as KOS. Given Kosovo Albanian fears about the alleged reassertion of influence by the former KOS among Kosovo's Serb minority and among Albanians compromised by their dealings with Belgrade's Kosovo security regime during the 1990s, a clumsy mistake in an UNMIK poster campaign launched in 2003 was particularly badly timed. One variant of UNMIK's billboard poster message of "I too am a Kosovar" -- meant to forge a mutual sense of belonging among Kosovo's fractured communities - - was translated into Serbian and displayed as: "I ja sam

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Kosovac" - giving the double meaning of: "I too am a KOS agent".

<sup>26</sup> Belgrade's appointment of Stojanovic as the head of the VBA in March 2003 itself sent a blunt message to the Kosovo Albanians. During the 1990s he was the KOS chief in Kosovo for four years. In testimony at the ICTY trial of Slobodan Milosevic in The Hague in May 2002, a former Yugoslav army officer named Stojanovic as responsible for ordering the execution of more than 100 Kosovo Albanians in the villages of Korenica and Meja on 27 April 1999. See Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) article by Milanka Saponja-Hadjic: "Serbia: Security Chief Dogged by War Crimes Claims", 23 May 2003.

<sup>27</sup> V.I.P. Daily News Report, "Kosovo at a Glance", 8 January 2004 and Belgrade Media Highlights in UNMIK DPI media monitoring bulletin, 2 February 2004.

<sup>28</sup> UNMIK's structure is based on four pillars: I) police and justice; II) civil administration; III) democratization and institution-building; and IV) reconstruction and economic development. Pillars I and II are led directly by the United Nations. Pillar III is led by the OSCE and Pillar IV by the European Union.

Belgrade and it's going downhill -- due to our inactivity, our passivity, our acquiescence.<sup>29</sup>

From having barely acknowledged the phenomenon of parallel structures, UNMIK began to make public its concerns in late 2003. In October the OSCE-led Pillar III<sup>30</sup> published a report detailing parallel court, administrative, security, school, and healthcare structures. It recommended they be absorbed by negotiation into Kosovo's unitary UN administration since many of them were filling service voids.<sup>31</sup>

Holkeri stepped up criticism of parallel structures around the turn of the year. His quarterly report to the Security Council on 6 February 2004 was notably explicit. However, the lack of follow-up action spoke volumes to Kosovo Albanians about UNMIK weakness in the face of Belgrade's determination.<sup>32</sup> Rightly or wrongly, Holkeri has come to personify that weakness to Kosovo Albanians.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> ICG interview, Pristina, 17 November 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Responsible for democratization and institution-building; see above footnote.

<sup>31</sup> In one sense, Kosovo Albanians have contributed to creating the environment in which Belgrade was able to grow its parallel structures. At municipal level, electoral competition between the Kosovo Albanian parties makes it politically disadvantageous to be seen as giving too much to minorities. Moreover, scarce resources, governmental inexperience, and pursuit of self-interest by local elites have meant that all over Kosovo, regardless of the minority situation, municipal authorities have failed to look after rural and peripheral areas. An UNMIK local community officer told ICG in February 2004: "The concept of multi-ethnicity is a joke. Kosovo Albanian municipal authorities don't take it on board at all. For them it boils down to creative accounting. They are just playing a waiting game -- waiting for the internationals to leave".

<sup>32</sup> The dead hand element of UNMIK governance is particularly marked in its lack of capacity adequately to represent Kosovo's interests to the outside world, especially to Serbia and neighbouring states. Outside Kosovo, UNMIK is little more than a reporting facility, its staff servants of a UN composed of nation states, and thus with no standing when it comes to dealing with those nation states. UNMIK lacks the rainbow multiplicity of roles that a government would have such as defence and foreign affairs. During 2003 Belgrade was increasingly able to outmanoeuvre UNMIK, because of the latter's inability to differentiate its approach at various levels. During the second half of 2003, while UNMIK was busy engaging Belgrade at the high diplomatic level over dialogue and standards, Belgrade was actively sabotaging UNMIK at the municipal level.

<sup>33</sup> Holkeri's policies differ little from his predecessors in this respect. However, his media appearances, particularly a rambling appearance on TV21's "Sy me Sy" current affairs program on 25 February 2004 (he was suffering from

## C. THE POLITICAL HERITAGE OF THE WAR

The suspension of Kosovo's final status, and the resulting failure to end the war, as opposed to freezing it, has preserved the political dominance of political parties and figures who either draw their authority from their KLA wartime exploits or who rely on nationalist myths and independence rhetoric. In this atmosphere of semi-mobilisation, Kosovo Albanians will read any encroachments against the KLA heritage as attacks upon their hopes for independence. Since late 2002, when the first long prison sentences were handed down by an UNMIK court to former KLA figures, and KFOR commander General Fabio Mini began to dismantle KFOR's partnership with the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), many Kosovo Albanians have come to believe that the KLA heritage is being delegitimised by the peacekeeping mission. In Autumn 2003 this began to dovetail with deft Belgrade tactics that unnerved Kosovo Albanians, who saw their liberation struggle being bracketed as criminal -- squeezed by both Serbia and the international community.<sup>34</sup> Criminal elements in turn have exploited this nervous reflex by wrapping themselves in the KLA banner.

General Mini, who commanded KFOR from October 2002 to October 2003, considered organised crime networks, Kosovo Albanian traditional social structures, the KLA and its successor structure the KPC, as largely interchangeable,<sup>35</sup> a view shared and promoted by Belgrade. His distrust of the KPC caused him to withdraw KFOR training officers from it in late 2002 and substitute an inspection and containment regime. After the bungled Albanian National Army (AKSh) bombing of the Loziste railway-bridge in April 2003, in which a moonlighting KPC member blew himself up, KFOR and UNMIK launched a sustained investigation of KPC personnel, resulting in Holkeri's December 2003 decision to suspend twelve for six months,

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influenza at the time, but viewers did not know that) and his walking out of an interview with the BBC's Jackie Rowland on 26 March, have not helped him.

<sup>34</sup> General Mini gravitated increasingly toward security accommodation with Serbia. In Summer 2003 he proposed that Kosovo's future security could be provided by a regional force, including Serbian troops. In September 2003 he appeared to brief incoming SRSG Holkeri from materials provided to him by the Serbian security services on alleged KLA-criminal networks.

<sup>35</sup> Fabio Mini: *La Guerra Dopo la Guerra. Soldati, Burocrati e Mercenari nell'Epoca della Pace Virtuale*, Einaudi, 2003.

though many Kosovar Albanians were unconvinced by the evidence. KPC chief Agim Ceku and Prime Minister Rexhepi initially refused to accept the suspensions, and Kosovo Ombudsperson Marek Nowicki characterised the suspended officers' treatment as a flagrant violation of their rights. The KPC was initially puzzled, then upset, and ultimately angered by KFOR's behaviour. In December 2003, its General Ceku reportedly told KFOR: "My men have started lying to you", since they could no longer trust how KFOR would use their information.

While Holkeri tried to soften the legacy of General Mini, UNMIK's limited ability to protect Kosovo institutional leaders with a KLA past from the long arm of Belgrade was exposed when Ceku was detained on Serbian Interpol warrants at European airports in October 2003 and February 2004. Kosovo Albanians took each brief detention of their most popular figure as a humiliation. The detentions demonstrated to them that what counted internationally was a warrant issued by a notorious Milosevic-era judge displaced since the war to the Serbian city of Nis, and that no Kosovo leader with a KLA past could be safe from similar embarrassment beyond the province's borders.

The fraying of the security partnership heightened Kosovo Albanian sensitivity to the internationals' use of language in defining the war, and solidified in them a cynical "score-keeping" attitude towards their dispensation of war crimes justice. When an UNMIK spokesperson stated in October 2003 that there had been no war in Kosovo, only an armed intervention, there was an angry reaction.<sup>36</sup> To Kosovo Albanians it appeared both to belittle their suffering and to downgrade them to passive beneficiaries of NATO's bombing campaign, as if the KLA had played no part. When an UNMIK court sentenced former KLA commander Rustem Mustafa ("Commander Remi") to seventeen years imprisonment in July 2003 for torturing and murdering Albanian detainees during the war, many compared the sentence to the seven years handed out by another UNMIK court to Kosovo Serb Veselin Besovic, convicted for wartime murders carried out while in a Serbian paramilitary group.<sup>37</sup> The ICTY's

February 2003 indictment of the popular deputy leader of the PDK, Fatmir Limaj, and several wartime KLA colleagues was seen by many Kosovo Albanians as a bid by the tribunal to gain Belgrade's cooperation. The crimes for which Limaj and colleagues were indicted were felt by Kosovo Albanians to be below the ICTY's usual threshold (lesser war crimes being left to domestic courts).

When the Prizren KPC commander Selim Krasniqi and several fellow officers were arrested on 16 February 2004 on an UNMIK indictment for war crimes, UNMIK's reassurance that this was not an assault on the organisation met with scepticism. One local activist commented: "It's like claiming you want to strengthen a house by removing bricks from its walls".<sup>38</sup> Demonstrations were convened by KLA veterans' associations in Prizren, Malishevo and Skenderaj/Srbica.

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<sup>36</sup> Izabella Karlowicz at the weekly UNMIK press conference, 21 October 2003. The comment may have been a slip of the tongue.

<sup>37</sup> Privately, UNMIK admitted "it is indefensible before the public" -- too much judicial independence had produced mismatches in sentencing. Some judges used ICTY

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precedents, others did not. The system was very new, and UNMIK hoped that the Kosovo Supreme Court might set more uniform standards through the appeals process.

<sup>38</sup> ICG interview with Bexhet Shala, Executive Director of the militant Kosovo Albanian "Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms" NGO, Pristina, 20 February 2004.

#### IV. FORESHADOWING THE VIOLENCE

If the beginnings of the violence of 17-18 March 2004 were spontaneous, its continuation, and even more so its suspension on 19 March revealed organisations that claimed a form of ownership and direction over what they euphemistically styled "protests". Groups that made a show of issuing statements on 19 March, such as the three associations that "emerged from war" -- of KLA veterans, KLA invalids, and families of martyrs -- and the University of Pristina Students Union (UPSUP), have been at the forefront of anti-UNMIK protests and agitation for many months.

Together with the small fringe political parties, LPK and LKCK, they raised their profile in the last quarter of 2003 by staging anti-UNMIK protests in the centre of Pristina. On 14 October 2003 they protested against the UNMIK-organised dialogue with Belgrade underway in Vienna that day. On 12 November 2003 they staged a more general purpose anti-UNMIK demonstration. Despite their persistence, they were never able to gather crowds of more than 3,000 to 4,000 to their Pristina demonstrations, and many of those were brought in from outside the city. Nor were the sponsors particularly cohesive. While UPSUP and the three "associations emerged from war" enjoyed close relations, the small political parties did not particularly like each other, yet neither wanted to be left out. LKCK exuded hostility towards UNMIK; the LPK emphasised anti-PISG credentials.

UNMIK and KFOR placed these groups under scrutiny, concerned that they represented the public face of a loose constellation of extremist networks, with radicalised students and aggrieved, marginalised rural communities at one end of the scale, criminals and violent extremists at the other end. Meanwhile, the LPK raised its profile by establishing a day to day presence in the centre of Pristina over many weeks in the last months of 2003, collecting signatures near the Grand Hotel for a petition demanding a Kosovo-Albania state union.

The last quarter of 2003 saw Kosovo Albanian politicians increasingly deploying the extremist bogeyman as leverage in their negotiation with the international community. Prime Minister Rexhepi noted of the 14 October 2003 Pristina demonstration: "We don't like to see those protests or those placards, but if UNMIK continues to ignore

our needs, if it refuses to transfer more power to us, then internationals here will face big demonstrations and everyone will be crying 'UNMIK go home'".<sup>39</sup> In late September, President Rugova warned that if the independence of Kosovo was not recognised, sooner rather than later extremists could be expected to try to form a unified Albanian state.<sup>40</sup>

The PISG's glance over its shoulder at the extremists revealed its growing insecurity at being seen to collaborate in UNMIK's continued domination of Kosovo, and the extent to which the November 2003 Contact Group initiative represented a lifeline of credibility.

One measure of growth potential for extremism in 2003 was the phenomenon of the shadowy Albanian National Army (AKSh). It was mainly active in northern Macedonia and southern Serbia,<sup>41</sup> but its one bungled act of destruction in Kosovo -- the April 2003 bombing of the railway bridge near Mitrovica - - gave a name, a slogan, and a focus for criminals and disaffected, rebellious youth to latch on to. The AKSh sprang up as graffiti on bus shelters, and as a threat used by criminals to extort money.<sup>42</sup>

##### A. VIOLENCE AND SECURITY

With or without a handy acronym, through 2003 and into 2004 violent extremists have continued every few months to target Kosovo Serbs, thus feeding the insecurities of that community against a backdrop of otherwise declining inter-ethnic and overall crime rates. The Serbian Orthodox community in Kosovo has claimed that its churches and monasteries have been systematically targeted. Many were destroyed during a period dating from the entry of NATO into the province in June 1999 until early 2000. Thereafter, until 17 March 2004, attacks were far more sporadic. Two days prior to the mid-March rampage on 15 March Archbishop Artemije -- in a letter to the UN Security Council -- mourned that Albanians had destroyed or seriously damaged 112 Serbian Orthodox Churches in Kosovo, 33 of which

<sup>39</sup> Helena Smith: "Angry Kosovars call on 'colonial' UN occupying force to leave", *The Observer*, 19 October 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Beta News Agency, Belgrade, 19 September 2003, quoted from an interview on Czech radio on 18 September 2003.

<sup>41</sup> See ICG Europe Report N°152, *Southern Serbia's Fragile Peace*, 9 December 2003.

<sup>42</sup> See ICG Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 February 2004.

dated to the height of medieval Serbia during the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>43</sup> Many Serbs felt that the Albanians were trying to remove all evidence that Serbs had ever lived in Kosovo.

Attacks against person also accompanied attacks against property. In early June 2003, an elderly Serb couple and their son were hacked to death and their home was set on fire in Obilic. Another shocking killing occurred on 13 August 2003, when probably two assailants hidden in bushes fired with Kalashnikov assault rifles on Kosovo Serb children and youths swimming in the Pecka Bistrica/Lumbardhi i Pejës River between the Serb village of Gorazdevac and the Albanian village of Zahac. Two were killed and four wounded. The killers almost certainly fled to pre-prepared refuge in Zahac. The attack played to Serb prejudices towards Albanians as child-killers,<sup>44</sup> received substantial Serbian media attention and created an enormous outpouring of emotion in Serbia. Another provocative murder occurred in the evening of 19 February 2004. Two Kosovo Serbs were killed near Lipjan/Lipljan when roughly 50 rounds were fired at their car. Reportedly, gunfire was heard from other nearby locations shortly before the double-murder, possibly as a tactic to draw away security forces. Both Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs complained loudly, urging KFOR to do more to improve the security situation.

Each of these killings has sparked angry demonstrations by Kosovo Serbs, and even retaliatory physical assaults upon Albanians passing through Serb enclaves. Tensions produced by such

murders have allowed any unexplained acts of violence to be assumed as ethnically motivated and to trigger public disturbances. Major clashes between neighbouring Albanian and Serbian villages were sparked when a Serb teenager from Suvi Do village near Lipjan/Lipljan was shot and injured during Orthodox New Year celebrations in the second week of January 2004. Although security agencies suspect he may have shot himself accidentally, he blamed his wound on a drive-by shooting. Serb villagers reacted by blockading a road, cutting off Albanian villages, which then fought to re-establish their road connection.

Rather as they have continued to cede the monopoly of violence to Serbian parallel security structures in northern Mitrovica and the municipalities north of the River Ibar, from mid-2003 KFOR and UNMIK police also began to send clear signals of acquiescence when challenged by Kosovo Albanian militarised groups. In summer 2003 regional KLA veterans associations descended upon Prizren and placed statues of KLA commanders killed in the war on two of the historic town's main squares. They did so in defiance of the elected LDK-controlled municipal authority, the police, and German KFOR troops, and in contrast to their first attempt in 2001, which was rebuffed by the police. The security forces have not dared to remove the statues, cowed by an implicit threat of violent rioting. The seeds of the defeat of the police and German KFOR in Prizren on 17-18 March 2004 were sown months earlier.<sup>45</sup>

The last months of 2003 and first of 2004 saw a creeping erosion of the taboo on violence against international peacekeepers. French KFOR had a near brush with disaster in the village of Prekaz when members of the militant KLA family, the Jasharis, pulled guns on them, after the soldiers repeatedly patrolled in and around its compound on 25 October. That compound is a shrine to the 56 men, women, and children killed in a two-day battle with Serbian security forces that marked the beginning of the war in March 1998. The French withdrawal symbolised a

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<sup>43</sup> The Coordination Centre has also put together a detailed document entitled "Spomenici kulture na Kosovu i Metohiji" that provides a detailed overview of each destroyed church.

<sup>44</sup> Depressingly, a stereotype that Serbs and Albanians hold of each other. Each community also sees the other as capable of engineering or instrumentalising the deaths of its own children to blacken the reputation of the other community. Too many Kosovo Albanians were ready to believe that Serbian security agencies were behind the killings at Gorazdevac. To his discredit, in the wake of the violence-inducing drowning of the three Albanian children in the Ibar River on 16 March, Covic wrongly claimed that two were the sons of Kadri "Luli" Veseli, the reputed head of the KLA-originated semi-clandestine SHIK security structure, and that Veseli worked actively to instrumentalise his sons' deaths. Writing in the Kosovo Albanian newspaper *Bota Sot* on 8 April 2004, "human rights" activist Halit Berani claimed that: "Serbs are talented, and even in the 1980s they disinterred their dead children and raped their old Serb women, trying to blame Albanians".

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<sup>45</sup> In January and February 2004 the Kosovo Serb community complained that German KFOR was giving into Albanian mobs by discontinuing its escorts of Serb monks after a 21 January incident in which a German KFOR vehicle carrying monks and a German TV crew was attacked by a crowd as they were filming a destroyed Serb Orthodox church in Gjakova/Djakovica. See ERP KiM Newsletter, 3 February 2004: *Monks of Holy Archangels Monastery pressured by German KFOR after reporting truth about Djakovica incident.*



loss of authority for KFOR, evidenced again on 13 November when a KFOR-escorted visit of displaced Serbs to their home village of Mushtishte was stoned by Albanian neighbours, and explosive devices were detonated in some abandoned houses. The next day a KFOR officer reflected: "I cannot stress how concerned I am that the IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] were attacked despite their KFOR escort and that we had to resort to firing in the air. The authority of our uniform has suddenly gone".<sup>46</sup>

Believing their own propaganda about a gradually improving situation, however,<sup>47</sup> KFOR and UNMIK continued "normalising" security in the divided town of Mitrovica. On 6 November 2003 French KFOR handed over responsibility for the "former" flashpoint, the main Mitrovica bridge, to UNMIK police and the multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service (KPS). With checkpoints, barriers, and the visible KFOR presence gone, UNMIK's narrative was that: "Kosovo's new police is able to take control....The people of Mitrovica, from both sides of the River Ibar, supported the handover".<sup>48</sup> The "normalisation" measures made many -- Mitrovica Serbs in particular -- actually feel less secure. For them the withdrawal of KFOR compounded the insecurities caused by the earlier disbandment of the Bridgewatchers<sup>49</sup> to the

extent that one Mitrovica Serb told ICG in November 2003:

I haven't dared take my son to the Dolce Vita [restaurant next to the bridge] for the last three months. I won't take him within 100 metres of the bridge now... The KPS in the north is like the Green Party in London. They have no power and can't even protect themselves. It's only a matter of time before a big crime or tragedy happens to North Mitrovica -- my Albanian friends are warning me about this.

Minor violence in North Mitrovica on 6 December 2003 both illustrated this insecurity and fed Kosovo Albanian sentiment that UNMIK was privileging Kosovo Serbs -- applying standards of behaviour to Albanians alone, and even humiliating them. Prime Minister Rexhepi had joined a delegation from the World Bank for lunch at a North Mitrovica restaurant. The local police seemed unaware, and Rexhepi's all-Albanian close protection squad stood guard at the entrance. Seeing Albanians with machine guns on "their" territory, the Mitrovica Serb aggressive-defensive reflex kicked in and a crowd armed with stones gathered. It attacked the restaurant from both sides. Neither the local police nor KFOR came to the rescue. Rexhepi escaped, but the melee continued, with the World Bank delegation and accompanying retinue chased in their bus into the grounds of the hospital. Regional UNMIK officials reacted with press releases suggesting Rexhepi was to blame for not giving sufficient notice, and identifying the target of the attack as the World Bank delegation rather than the prime minister. In response Kosovo Albanian media vented their fury on UNMIK for blaming Rexhepi and suggesting he did not have the right to go anywhere in Kosovo. The incident revitalised Kosovo Albanian resentment over KFOR's consolidation of the de facto partition of Kosovo along the line of the Ibar. Albanians also noted that no stone-throwers were arrested, despite video footage of the incident. By contrast, UNMIK police had gone back to Mushtishte to arrest three Kosovo Albanian

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<sup>46</sup> ICG interview, 14 November 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Even reversals such as the debacle of the September 2003 weapons amnesty failed to shake the authorities' faith in the narrative of improving security -- a narrative driven by KFOR and UNMIK's institutional needs and given plausibility by surface calm. Having aimed for a haul of many thousands, the amnesty netted merely 155 firearms, demonstrating both the Albanian and Serb communities' lack of faith in KFOR commander General Mini's claim that: "The guns belong in the museum". Televised endorsements of the campaign by Kosovo leaders had no effect. A measure of the contempt in which the initiative was held was the spurning of the U.S.\$650,000 prize on offer to the three municipalities that turned in the most firearms. As one of the project staff put it: "Our political leaders were just acting on camera. None of them mobilised the municipalities they controlled to collect weapons. U.S.\$9,000 would have been enough to collect 200-300 weapons and claim the reward".

<sup>48</sup> "KPS inherits the famous bridge", by Gyorgy Kakuk, in UNMIK's *Focus Kosovo* magazine, December 2003.

<sup>49</sup> A paramilitary structure created by Mitrovica and internally displaced Serbs in summer 1999 to defend the main bridge over the River Ibar against Kosovo Albanian incursions. Mitrovica Serbs credit the Bridgewatchers with preventing the ethnic cleansing of Serbs from the entirety of northern Kosovo, particularly in the first two months after the NATO takeover in 1999. The Bridgewatchers consolidated in following years, financed by both the Serbian Interior Ministry and local racketeering. They appear

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to have disbanded as an organised, regularised, paid structure in 2002-2003, following agreement between former SRSG Steiner and Belgrade's Kosovo envoy, Nebojsa Covic. Although the Bridgewatchers became notorious for their involvement in organised crime, most Mitrovica Serbs insist that the majority were "regular guys" in it to defend their families and community, and regret the passing of the organisation. See ICG Report, *UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross*, op. cit., for more background.

villagers identified by video among those who threw stones on 13 November.

Several key Kosovo Albanian leaders had condemned the stone-throwing villagers, while in a TV interview on 6 December Mitrovica Serb leader Oliver Ivanovic blamed Rexhepi for a provocation. The contrasting responses seemed to show that buying in to the UNMIK system put the Kosovo Albanian politicians in a position to receive constant blame while the distance Serb counterparts kept left them courted and with licence to behave badly without consequences.<sup>50</sup>

Kosovo Albanians were prepared to put up with what they considered disproportionate international criticism within a partnership that was leading somewhere where they wanted it to go. However, the more signs they read persuading them that the criticism masked a policy that offered little more than containment and appeasement of Belgrade, the greater was their propensity to rebel. The international community has walked a fine line between advocating security and inclusion for Kosovo's minorities, and allowing the mantra of multi-ethnicity to degenerate into a tool for disadvantaging the territory's 90 per cent Albanian majority. Having emerged from a decade when their ethnic identity was systematically suppressed and they were expelled from state institutions, and nearly two decades of portrayal by Serbian media as primitive, aggressive, terrorists, rapists, and even semi-human, Kosovo Albanians and their political representatives were all too capable of interpreting criticism as a new chapter of persecution.

In Pristina a gradual deterioration in the security environment found expression in explosive devices. In December 2003 grenades were rigged to the axles of two UNMIK police cars but failed to explode. Four kilograms of TNT with a timing device were

discovered near UNMIK headquarters on 6 March 2004 after a warning was phoned to police. This began a pattern that included a false bomb threat; two small explosions in Pristina on 9 March; a hand grenade thrown at President Rugova's Pristina residence on 12 March; and an explosive device found outside UNMIK headquarters in South Mitrovica on 13 March.

The annual cycle of KLA commemorative events on 3-7 March brought out large crowds in Pristina and Prekaz and refocused public attention on grievances that the "liberation struggle" was being insufficiently recognised. Speaking at a concert in Pristina's sports stadium, PDK leader Hashim Thaci catered to the mood of a crowd -- many of whom had made the day trip from the KLA's Drenica heartland -- stating that Kosovo could not be free until all former KLA generals were freed from prison (for whatever crime). *Zeri* devoted its 5 March front page to the question: "Has Kosovo disgraced itself in front of the Jasharis?" It debated whether enough had been given to establish a memorial complex in Prekaz to commemorate the Jasharis' sacrifices for Kosovo.

## **B. THE FUSE IS LIT**

With the clearing of the weather on Sunday, 14 March 2004, the week ahead was set for demonstrations: on KLA grievances on 16 March and on trade union demands for resumption of privatisation and the dismissal of Fucci on 18 March.

On the evening of 15 March, however, a Kosovo Serb teenager was shot and severely wounded in the Serb village of Caglavica, which straddles the highway south to Macedonia just outside Pristina. Allegedly, it was a drive-by shooting. For the Serbs it was yet another in a series of unsettling "terrorist" incidents, and they felt that KFOR and UNMIK were not paying sufficient attention. They reacted predictably, by blocking the highway.<sup>51</sup> In a show of solidarity, on 16 March Serbs in the enclave of Gracanica, straddling the Pristina to Gjilan/Gnjilane highway, also blocked their road, thus severing Pristina from the south of Kosovo.

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<sup>50</sup> The accommodation UNMIK reached with North Mitrovica Serb community leader Milan Ivanovic was a case in point. Video footage of the 8 April 2002 battle between the Bridgewatchers and UNMIK police, in which 26 police officers were wounded, showed him apparently throwing a grenade. After months of eluding and taunting the police, and Serbian Deputy Premier Covic's threat of curtailing contacts with UNMIK after an attempt to arrest him on 8 August 2002, Ivanovic surrendered in early October 2002 on highly lenient terms. He was bailed on a lesser charge of leading violent protests, was allowed to stay on the municipal election ticket, and in autumn 2003 received a three-month suspended sentence.

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<sup>51</sup> Blocking highways is a time-honoured and favoured tactic of demonstrators, striking workers and others with grievances throughout the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Often it is the only way citizens can attract the attention of otherwise inert and unresponsive bureaucracies and governing structures.

Albanian drivers who tried to run the blockade were beaten by Serb villagers<sup>52</sup>. In Caglavica, the Serb crowd set fire to a police car, and two KFOR soldiers fired warning shots when an Albanian's house was attacked. Kosovo Albanian anger was growing that KFOR and UNMIK police were effectively allowing several dozen Kosovo Serb villagers to cut off a capital city of more than 500,000 Kosovo Albanians with a violence that spoke of staggering self-assurance. To the Kosovo Serbs, their actions may have seemed the only way to get UNMIK's attention but in Kosovo Albanian eyes, they were showing that a minority of 5 per cent remained the dominant, favoured group in Kosovo.

Around midday demonstrations of the "associations emerged from war" went ahead in Pristina, Prizren, Peja/Pec and many other municipalities (still reproducing anger over the 16 February arrest for war crimes of senior KPC figures from Prizren). Anger against the internationals was palpable. The pro-KLA *Epoka e Re* reproduced on its front page the next morning a slogan that attracted cheers from the crowd in Peja: "UNMIK watch your step, the KLA has gunpowder for you too!"

During the evening of 16 March, RTK -- Kosovo's public television channel -- broadcast an interview with a twelve-year old boy from the Albanian village of Caber, on the north bank of the Ibar near Mitrovica. Journalists reported - although the boy did not explicitly say so in his interview - that Serb youths with a dog had chased him and three companions, aged nine, eleven and twelve, into the river. The companions were missing, presumed drowned (two bodies have since been recovered).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibrahim Makolli of the militant Kosovo Albanian Council for Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms has claimed that 68 Kosovo Albanians were beaten in Caglavica and Gračanica on 16 March. *Epoka e Re* newspaper, 3 April 2004.

<sup>53</sup> It is still too early to draw definitive conclusions about this highly emotive account. In interviews with ICG, both local and international sources have expressed doubt that Serb youths were involved as claimed. These doubts stem both from inconsistencies in the surviving boy's account before TV cameras on 16 March, and questions - -maybe fair, maybe not -- about the role played in the preparation of the boy for his television interview by a militant Mitrovica-based activist of the Kosovo Albanian Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms, Halit Berani. On 20 March French KFOR detained Berani for 27 hours, ostensibly for filming and noting the movements of personnel in the "confidence zone" near the main Mitrovica bridge, but also to confiscate his notes and video material.

Updates were provided throughout the evening, with RTK running a news ticker underneath other programming that provided a sense of crisis. In the news broadcasts, regional UNMIK police spokesperson Tracey Becker's twelve-second sound-bite appealing for people to reserve judgement was drowned out by local "human rights" activist Halit Berani's blaming of "Serbian bandits" for the children's deaths. The next morning, as *Koha Ditore* and *Epoka e Re* blared the news that Serbs had caused three Albanian children to drown, the stage was set for an explosion.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The OSCE has prepared a devastating critique on "The Role of the Media in the March Events in Kosovo", to be published in late April 2004, which analyses the presentation of the incident in Kosovo media in detail.

## V. SPONTANEOUS OR ORGANISED VIOLENCE?

During and immediately following the events of 17-18 March, international officials began to assert that the violence was more planned than spontaneous. Some even hinted at central organisation and planning, a claim made openly in Belgrade by media and government. The reality appears to have been a series of local outbursts and actions without central planning but with a high degree of local coordination.<sup>55</sup> There are also indications that in at least one area, outsiders may have been involved.

Understanding where the riots came from, how they spread, and how and why they ended when they did is important both to prevent recurrence and for shaping future policy. Elements of organisation by extremists and criminals certainly showed themselves during 17-18 March. But their impact and engagement could be partially seen as a fulfilment of the demand for direction coming from spontaneously gathering, angry crowds. Where hardcore, organised armed gangs showed themselves, their freedom of action depended upon the "cloak" provided by hordes of irate, confused, and partly unwitting foot-soldiers. Tension, fear and anger were the driving forces. In some cases organisation had to play catch up.<sup>56</sup>

Yet, there was another, more calculated side to the violence. There are reports of hardcore groups travelling long distances to join, some in buses: from the Drenica heartland to join riots in Pristina, Caglavica, Kosovo Polje, and Mitrovica; from west Kosovo too - groups from Gjakova and Decani appeared to be involved respectively in Mitrovica and Pristina. A 6 April police announcement that the bells of a South Mitrovica church damaged by a mob on 18 March had been found roughly 30 kilometres

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<sup>55</sup> Most such explosions of communal violence do feature surprisingly limited deliberate planning. Recently, ethnic conflict specialist Donald L. Horowitz has made a comprehensive study of such events, drawing upon comparative examination of 150 intense, sudden, lethal attacks by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group in 50 countries. He concludes: "Strong organisation is an easily over-rated resource in riots", and, "Paradoxically, it is harder to thwart unorganised or loosely organised riots". See Horowitz's *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley, 2001), p. 254.

<sup>56</sup> See the chapter: "The Deadly Riot as a Pickup Game" in *ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

away in Obilic also indicated "travelling". Some local mayors who tried to calm crowds reported that they did not recognise faces. There are indications that criminal elements from neighbouring northern Albania may have been involved in looting in Prizren. But rumours of several unclaimed corpses lying in the Rahovec police morgue, provoking speculation they may have been outsiders, have been scotched; all have been identified as Kosovo residents.<sup>57</sup> Crowds often featured a directionless, irate, uncertain majority, and a hard, aggressive, focused, determined and armed minority. When the minority attacked, most would peel away.

UNMIK police counted 33 major riots over 17-18 March, involving an estimated 51,000 participants, some of whom used military weapons. Early commentary from UNMIK police spokesman Derek Chappell was that the riots must have had "a degree of organisation behind them" to spring up in so many places at once. In Serbia an Interior Ministry (MUP) report released on 22 March concluded that: "The manner [in which] the violence and the terror of armed Albanian extremists were realised, simultaneously conducted in the enclaves populated by Serbs, their mass number and the logistics, indicate that the action was organised and coordinated from one centre".<sup>58</sup> By 22-26 March, international officials were veering towards this view. On a visit to see the damage in Obilic on 23 March SRSG Holkeri said the violence was the result of a premeditated "one huge plan for Kosovo" of extremists who had been waiting for an opportunity.

The attacks on Serbs, their property, churches and monasteries, exploded all over Kosovo south of the Ibar -- in both urban centres and villages. Were they mapped in advance, as part of Holkeri's "one huge plan for Kosovo"? Some observers have been quick to point out that in central Kosovo, a string of Serb settlements straddling the main north-south railway line linking them with North Mitrovica and Serbia proper were targeted. Or were the attacks haphazard, dependent upon local factors and happenstance? How can the absence of violence in some locales be

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<sup>57</sup> The LDK-affiliated newspaper *Bota Sot*, nevertheless, continues to insist on their existence, and that they were Albanian secret service agents sent by Prime Minister Nano. The LDK regards Nano's Socialist Party with animosity. *Bota Sot* appears thereby to be attempting to blame Kosovo's post-KLA parties -- the PDK and AAK -- for the violence, since they enjoy cordial relations with Nano's Socialist Party.

<sup>58</sup> V.I.P. Daily News Report, 23 March 2004.

explained? KPS sources made debatable claims that where they were permitted to run police stations and devise their own approaches, such as Kacanik, Glogovac/Drenas, and the Pristina districts of Kodra e Trimeve/Vranjevac and Lakriste, they headed off violence more successfully than at police commands where CIVPOL merely used them as subordinates.<sup>59</sup>

Intriguingly, three Serb villages (Dobrotin, Donja Gusterica, Gornje Gusterica) surrounded by six Albanian villages in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality reportedly experienced no problems, although there is considerable animosity between them dating from 1999. Plenty of road-blocking and stoning of vehicle incidents took place prior to the withdrawal of a static KFOR presence in July 2003, and there was a spate of similar incidents from 8 to 16 September 2003, when Serb villagers alleged two attempted kidnappings.<sup>60</sup>

The international NGO CARE has been running a program on inter-ethnic conflict management in 30 villages throughout Kosovo which are either ethnically mixed or different ethnicities exist in close proximity. Preliminary information suggested that conflict was avoided in virtually all these. It is too early to judge whether that can be put down to the program or, as an international official dismissively suggested, it was because the villages had not been included in an extremist master-plan.<sup>61</sup>

The nearly synchronised appearance of many of the attacks launched from mid-afternoon to evening of the first day in locations such as Kosovo Polje, Lipjan and Obilic -- just as KFOR and the police committed forces to Caglavica -- speaks to a degree of command and control. There had clearly been premeditation and reserve-planning by extremist

and criminal groups. However, such evaluations appear too tied to a military perspective and risk losing sight of the social explosion aspect. Without the build-up of the tensions and frustrations described above (and without security lapses by KFOR and UNMIK), such planning as there was would likely have remained ineffectual.

The two precipitating "transgressions"<sup>62</sup> by Kosovo Serbs on 16 March -- the Caglavica road blockade and the alleged responsibility for three Albanian children drowning -- respectively stoked and detonated collective Kosovo Albanian anger. They provided sufficient fuel for outrage that coded and directed the violence of the next day, doing much of the mobilising and organizing work and substituting for the absence of formal organisation.<sup>63</sup> The (alleged) killing of their children played to the hate stereotype Kosovo Albanians have nurtured since the 1998-1999 war of Serbs as child-killers.<sup>64</sup> The location of the drowning incident -- the Ibar and a Kosovo Albanian village stranded on its "wrong" side -- both played to Kosovo Albanian wounds about the post-war de facto partition and coded for where the first violence would explode: the Mitrovica bridge.

The behaviour of mobs around Kosovo on 17-18 March was a whirlwind mix on the one hand of incoherent anger searching for direction and outlets,<sup>65</sup> and on the other of determined groups

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<sup>59</sup> At Glogovac and Kacanik there are no Serb communities to protect. Kacanik has an Orthodox church and Lakriste district a Serb Orthodox cemetery. There are a couple of Serb villages outside the city limits covered by the Kodra e Trimeve/Vranjevac police station.

<sup>60</sup> ICG interviews with Albanian and Serb villagers, police, and KFOR, 19 April 2004.

<sup>61</sup> As a comparative guide, and to gauge the potential of approaches emphasising the construction of local-level, horizontal, inter-ethnic ties, see Ashutosh Varshney's *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven, 2002). Through data collection in six comparable mixed Hindu-Muslim Indian cities, Varshney demonstrates how dense civic ties binding the two ethnic groups contain or prevent ethnic violence in some cities, while their lack or paucity in other cities make explosions of inter-ethnic rioting more likely.

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<sup>62</sup> That is, displays of what ethnic strangers are not to be allowed to do with impunity; see Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, op. cit., p. 268.

<sup>63</sup> See Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 90. He argues that a precipitating transgression acts as a signal that sends a message to every member of the transgressed against community and provides assurance that every other member of that community will be angry enough to act violently, thus enabling mobilisation for violence with confidence of enjoying safety in numbers.

<sup>64</sup> The killing of children by Serbian forces in 1999 is a particular mental wound among the Kosovo Albanians. RTK public television occasionally airs a chilling documentary entitled: "When children are killed", detailing the stories and showing the bodies of children killed in the war. The August 2003 murder and wounding at Gorazdevac of Kosovo Serb children by (in all likelihood) Kosovo Albanian gunmen met choruses of denial: "It is not Albanian tradition to kill children". The story that Serbs had caused the drowning of three Kosovo Albanian children on 16 March was a direct emotional hit for Kosovo Albanian society.

<sup>65</sup> In some locations there were few or no Serb targets for crowds to vent their anger on, which either caused them to aim for "second best" UNMIK targets, or to disperse. For example, on 17 March a crowd in Istog did not bother to head for the nearest Serb village -- it is a very long walk

displaying cohesion and calculation.<sup>66</sup> Both tendencies would manifest themselves at the same locations. In Prizren local witnesses reported that the crowd that gathered in the main square around 3 p.m. on 17 March first displayed confusion, walking out of town along the road towards Pristina and Mitrovica, 80 and 110 kilometres away, but then returned to stone the UNMIK building and afterwards followed the lead of a small group in attacking the Orthodox seminary building<sup>67</sup>. But from the perspective of German soldiers unable to prevent the Prizren Orthodox churches, seminary buildings, and monasteries from being laid waste, the mobs acted systematically (*planvoll*). A battalion commander noted that "they knew exactly how far they could go" in attacking without provoking the soldiers into shooting.<sup>68</sup> Crowds and deliberate traffic jams blocked German KFOR reinforcements from reaching the beleaguered detachments.

Similarly, during the protracted battle at and around Caglavica, senior KFOR sources interpreted the mass of Albanians pushing on the village over two days as a determined military-style opponent. A KPS officer on the front line, who alternately fought and tried to reason with the crowd, saw it differently: "Most of them were not aggressive. There was a minority that was really pushing and fighting. But when they threw stones at us, the other people in the crowd berated them. Believe me, if the whole mass of them had been determined to break through into Caglavica, they could have done it easily".<sup>69</sup>

The two days of violence were not centrally organised, but were a vortex which different radical, extremist, and criminal structures poured in and out of, an impromptu market place of violence to which each brought their wares and found their niche.<sup>70</sup>

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from the town. Instead, it satisfied itself with burning an UNMIK car by the municipality building and went home. ICG interviews, Istog, 30 March 2004.

<sup>66</sup> For details see chronology in Appendix A.

<sup>67</sup> ICG interviews, Prizren, 28 March 2004.

<sup>68</sup> Oberleutnant Mirko Rupp in "Rekonstruktion einer Niederlage: Wie die deutschen Kfor-Soldaten in einer dramatischen Nacht die Grenzen ihrer Macht erfuhren", by Joachim Kaepfner, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 March 2004.

<sup>69</sup> ICG interview, 29 March 2004.

<sup>70</sup> The eruption at points all over Kosovo was reminiscent of the province-wide emergence of the KLA in March 1998. That mobilisation was also many-headed, built on a patchwork of local resistance cells and militias in various states of readiness, without a central command. And it was

Organisations such as the three "associations emerged from war" that featured strongly in war grievance demonstrations and by issuing declarations and ultimatums on 19 March appeared retrospectively to claim ownership of the riots did not uniformly incite and direct events. In some locations they back-pedalled frantically to stop their demonstrations from turning into pogroms.<sup>71</sup> One is still left to guess at the possible role, if any, taken by the parallel security structures associated with Kosovo Albanian political parties, and tolerated by KFOR and UNMIK, -- the KLA-originated SHIK<sup>72</sup> and the LDK's ZKZ. One real possibility is that once the violence started, these organisations needed to become involved and provide direction in order not to lose street credibility to each other or other, spontaneous leaders.

The rioting's rapid spread can also be seen as a rapidly mutating, highly infectious disease - a sudden, runaway, self-reinforcing moral collapse and hysteria. While cells of extremists were most definitely exploiting, feeding and sustaining the hysteria and its violent products, they were doing so with organisation that was loose, multi-headed, often catching up and supplementing actions that were being driven by feverish copycatting and rivalry both between different locations, and among different contestants for leadership.

This interpretation is actually more frightening than the stylised version supported by the Serbian Interior Ministry and, increasingly, by international military and civilian officials. It is grimmer in its implications for the future safety of minority populations and the

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similarly driven by an outrage-inducing, precipitating act, in that case the indiscriminate killing of dozens of men, women and children by Serbian forces attempting to crush KLA cells in Drenica villages on 2-5 March 1998.

<sup>71</sup> In Decani, after organising a protest demonstration on 17 March in which five UNMIK cars were burned, the associations gathered another demonstration the next day. Young men within the crowd whipped it up to attack Decani monastery. The local head of the KLA Veterans Association, Avdyl Mushkolaj, tagged along with municipality president Ibrahim Selmanaj when he headed off the crowd, and almost came to blows with its more vociferous young members, before succeeding in turning it back to Decani town. UNMIK police arrested Mushkolaj on 10 April, presumably for his role on 17 March. Members of the Associations emerged from War were among local dignitaries who made a last ditch failed attempt at the edge of Skenderaj/Srbica on 18 March to stop a crowd of high school children from leaving the town to burn down the nearby Devic convent.

<sup>72</sup> See ICG Balkans Report N°88, *What Happened to the KLA?*, 3 March 2000, pp. 13-14.

international presence than the notion that the whole thing was masterminded and prepared in advance by a unified clandestine extremist group. The notion of a meticulously pre-planned scenario by a single extremist coordinating centre, if true, would offer a reliable prospect that by arresting a small group the danger could be eliminated. It also makes more tempting the dangerous idea that there is a military-security short cut to achieving stability in Kosovo, or that the failure to chart a credible course of constitutional and economic development for Kosovo is secondary. This is not to say that such groups were not drawing up plans of this nature, but it is to over-rate their importance and ability to achieve their ends without riding the social forces produced by inadequate international policies and Kosovo's own lacklustre political leadership. The moving force behind the descent into violence -- and the danger of its recurrence -- lies in an unstable society, pregnant with the possibilities of collapse, rather than in conspiracy and grand design.

Why did the riots fizzle out on the third day, 19 March? During the first two days, rioters had a critical mass of social licence, approval or at least acquiescence within which to act. News staff of the three Kosovo Albanian television channels; civil society organisations such as the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms and Kosova Action Network; and Kosovo Albanian politicians aligned themselves with Kosovo Albanian grievances and victimisation and were slow to acknowledge the horror of what the "protests" had quickly turned into. By the evening of 18 March, the tide began to turn. Prime Minister Rexhepi plunged into the crowd at Veterinik to urge an end, and PDK leader Thaci made a strong television appeal. The hysterical energy of the first day was palpably ebbing, and within the formal organisations involved in the demonstrations -- UPSUP and the three war associations -- the consensus was turning to a halt. The restraint shown by Mitrovica Serbs also avoided new incitements. Local leaders of the KLA Veterans Association stopped attempts to resume demonstrations on 19 March in several locations. In Prizren a man bearing a large Albanian flag who attracted several teenagers to his standard was seen off by members of the Association.

Cashing in their chips for the time being, UPSUP and the three war associations issued formal notices of suspension on 19 March, albeit with lists of demands for UNMIK and the international community. The mood for calling a halt to see what

concessions the international community would offer was echoed in an open letter published by a Kosovo Albanian newspaper from one "Sniper Abazi", a self-avowed AKSh member and fresh veteran of the fighting at Caglavica: "The world has understood the message that something is not going right, further escalation is totally unnecessary".<sup>73</sup> The announcement of KFOR reinforcements, and the quick arrival in particular of a British infantry battalion that was already patrolling Pristina streets on the morning of 19 March strengthened the atmosphere of restraint.

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<sup>73</sup> *Koha Ditore*, 19 March.

## **VI. A SECURITY SYSTEM NEAR COLLAPSE**

On the night of 17 March UNMIK and KFOR came within a hair's breadth of losing Kosovo. With forces either stretched to the limit or out of the command chain throughout the province, the 40 officers left to secure UNMIK and police headquarters in the centre of Pristina found that the Swedish troops detailed to guard the rear of their compound had been redeployed; if attacked, they would not have been able to resist the rioters flowing back into the city from Caglavica. The public order challenge over the two days -- 33 major riots, 51,000 rioters, some using military weapons -- would have stretched even the most coherent security structure to the limit. The violence revealed that KFOR and UNMIK did not have such a structure. The lack of centralised leadership became sorely evident.

On 30 March UNMIK announced that a Crisis Management Review Body would examine how it had dealt with the challenges of 17-18 March and how it might do better.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, at the same time UNMIK is intimidating police officers throughout the chain of command into acquiescence in a cover up and sanitising of the record. Frank discussion about the woolly security thinking and political and economic failures that allowed the violence to erupt is being suppressed. Those who have either spoken out about incompetent commanders or who resisted their bizarre orders have been removed from their posts ("re-assigned") or told to keep quiet. Commanders who allowed mobs carte blanche to raze villages within hundreds of metres of major KFOR bases, who failed to issue ammunition to their troops, or who threw the police out of their city headquarters and ordered them to fire their regional headquarters<sup>75</sup> receive the plaudits of visiting dignitaries.

The two days of violence were a sad demonstration of limited determination by the security forces. KFOR stood revealed as a paper tiger, and will have difficulty redressing its credibility deficit. It really resisted only at Caglavica, but even there, by committing most of Multinational Brigade Centre's troops to a last ditch defence, it left the rest of

Pristina region virtually unprotected. Although security and police officials claimed to have been "putting lives before property" -- and to their credit fatalities were low -- that phrase papered over actions that in too many locales was abject capitulation. Serbs, Roma, or Ashkali were evacuated only for their homes, churches or monasteries immediately to be ceded to mobs intent on arson. KFOR was caught without a contingency plan. Its troops often appeared to lack a coherent use-of-force continuum, caught between ineffectively attempting to stop mobs with their bare hands and firing live rounds at them -- a last resort which, again to soldiers' credit, was used sparingly. KFOR did a creditable humanitarian job, but a terrible military one. Except at Caglavica, it was defeated.

Each of the two ignition points -- the main bridge dividing Mitrovica and the Caglavica highway blockade -- could have been suppressed if KFOR and the police had been more alert. KFOR had vigorously interdicted previous attempts by angry crowds of Kosovo Albanians to force the Mitrovica bridge, notably in February 2000. The blockade at Caglavica was reportedly maintained at points by a mere dozen Serb villagers. With proactive responses, much of the conflagration of 17-18 March could have been prevented.

The peacekeeping mission's security system lacked the capacity to anticipate. Even though individual UN police officers did sense the rising tension on 16 March, system inertia ruled. Individual KFOR officers foresaw bloodshed on the morning of 17 March but no troops were sent to beef up security at the flashpoint bridge.

The chain of command was exposed as disjointed. Over two years a process of "normalisation" saw the gradual decrease of international troops, from an original 45,000 to 17,500 with a further drawdown planned, and KFOR's move away from manpower-costly fixed positions towards "area security". At the same time, many duties previously fulfilled by the UN police (CIVPOL) were being turned over to the KPS. On 17 March responsibilities were divided -- and obscured -- between KFOR, CIVPOL and KPS. As afternoon wore into evening, coordination and force coherence began to fall apart. CIVPOL, for example, was reduced to creating a crisis management system ad hoc as the crisis unfolded, with a small cell of officers from the Northern Ireland Police Service taking the reins.

<sup>74</sup> The review will not cover KFOR, which is a separate entity.

<sup>75</sup> See below.



But the most visible failure was KFOR's. In west Kosovo, the main Italian army base is a kilometre from the Serb village of Belo Polje, to which heads of families returned in 2003 to rebuild their houses. When a mob descended on 17 March, and the villagers took refuge in the church, Italian KFOR troops did not dare approach in their vehicles but instead obliged the Serbs to run to them through a gauntlet of young Albanians who attacked them with bricks and knives. If an UNMIK policeman had not shot dead one rioter, causing the mob to pause momentarily, the Serbs would have been caught in the open and possibly killed.<sup>76</sup> Nearly all houses were damaged or destroyed.

French KFOR's failure to defend the village of Svinjare, a few hundred metres from its major logistics base at Camp Belvedere, was the most widely reported on 18 March.<sup>77</sup> UNMIK police reportedly gave KFOR two-hours warning that a mob was assembling.<sup>78</sup> When it arrived, walking hundreds of metres along the camp perimeter and then burning the first house it reached, French troops and Polish riot police evacuated the Serb inhabitants. Looting and burning then proceeded throughout the evening and night, and all Serb-owned buildings were destroyed and livestock and pets slaughtered. Troops within the camp, including a company of Greek soldiers whose weapons had already been shipped home,<sup>79</sup> did not oppose the mob. The arsonists appeared so confident of impunity that many scrawled their names and villages on the houses they gutted. A French KFOR spokesman justified troops' failure to emerge from the base to challenge the burning - saying they were too few in number.<sup>80</sup>

In Prizren, local people said a more determined effort by German KFOR could have prevented the destruction of churches, monasteries and seminaries. There were reports of soldiers stepping away from

their checkpoint positions as mobs approached. According to one persistent rumour, troops guarding one of Prizren's religious buildings asked a mob for time to remove their own equipment from it before the mob burned it down. The violence left "the pearl and Jerusalem of Kosovo" a disfigured, mutilated and blackened remnant.

KPS officers were left rudderless, without coherent orders. Nevertheless, many acquitted themselves bravely, rescuing beleaguered Serbs, Roma, and Ashkali from mobs (often simultaneously persuading besieged householders not to shoot at them while they held off the attackers), despite not having the riot control equipment of CIVPOL and KFOR and little body armour. CIVPOL and KFOR often called for KPS help to defuse dangerous situations, and it was better able than CIVPOL to shield evacuees from hostile crowds. There were some reports of CIVPOL officers donning KPS uniform. However, there were also plentiful accounts of KPS officers shying away from confronting rioting fellow Albanians. Some stood by as mobs torched houses or physically attacked Serbs. Worse still, some actually joined the rioters. ICG has heard of at least two instances in which KPS officers threw petrol bombs.

The different nationalities of CIVPOL officers and their short acquaintance with each other had prevented any real esprit de corps from developing, and the deficit was apparent as lieutenants and sergeants had difficulty galvanising unfamiliar subordinates into decisive but dangerous action. Several CIVPOL commanders appeared to restrict their actions to protecting their own police stations. On the evening of 18 March, school-age children were able to set fire to a Serbian Orthodox church in the centre of Pristina because despite the availability of at least 120 UN and KPS officers and the KPS dog unit at the nearby UNMIK police HQ, nobody with rank mobilised them to take on the crowd. Among the exceptions was the CIVPOL commander of North Mitrovica police station, photographed leading from the front on the Mitrovica bridge, facing a stone-throwing mob without body armour.

It was in the divided town of Mitrovica that coordination between troops and police reached both its highest and lowest point, depending on which side of the river. Quick rallying of the police in Mitrovica on day one helped prevent fighting across the river bridges from escalating. From 18 March onward, KFOR, CIVPOL, and KPS in the Serb north of the

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<sup>76</sup> ICG information from two reliable researchers who independently interviewed Belo Polje IDPs and Italian soldiers inside the "Villaggio Italia" KFOR base.

<sup>77</sup> See media reports including "Smouldering Serb village in Kosovo gutted in sight of NATO peacekeepers", Agence France-Presse, 21 March 2004; "Des militaires francais 'organisent' l'exil des Serbes de Svinjare", *Le Figaro*, 22 March 2004; "Kosovo Smoulders After Mob Violence", *The New York Times*, 24 March 2004; the details are confirmed by ICG interviews with eyewitnesses.

<sup>78</sup> ICG interview with a police source.

<sup>79</sup> Many UNMIK staff had been evacuated to the base and were witnesses.

<sup>80</sup> ICG interview, 14 April.

town operated from a joint headquarters at Mitrovica North police station, and coordinated closely.

It was, however, in south Mitrovica that the breakdown of coordination between troops and police reached its nadir. During the initial melee at midday on 17 March, police learned that French KFOR troops would not protect them or interdict snipers, saying they had no ammunition. Instead of coordinating, French KFOR treated CIVPOL and KPS at best as impediments. On 18 March, acting on "totally untrue"<sup>81</sup> intelligence from KFOR central command that 5,000 armed Albanians were on their way from Drenica, and 7-10,000 from Peja/Pec (phantom forces that did not materialise),<sup>82</sup> French KFOR ordered UNMIK and the police (CIVPOL and KPS) out of their respective regional headquarters in south Mitrovica. The French KFOR commander's brusque instruction to the police was: "Leave the building. Burn it down. Take away or destroy the computers".<sup>83</sup> CIVPOL withdrew across the river to North Mitrovica and Zvecan, taking computers or hard drives with them, but sensibly refraining from razing their headquarters. That refusal protected the premises of other inhabitants of the building, including shops on its ground floor and offices of the

Mitrovica centre for social work, the pensions administration, the regional institute for public health, a private construction consultancy company, and the local youth wing of the PDK party.

The next day, French KFOR attempted to disband the KPS in South Mitrovica, demanding from KPS commanders a complete list of its officers' home addresses and telephone numbers. Once this was handed over, KFOR rang officers to tell them not to come to work. KFOR then took over the Mitrovica south city police station and drove the police out with rifles at the ready. An eyewitness reported seeing troops push a protesting American female CIVPOL officer against a wall.<sup>84</sup> According to one report, troops aimed their guns at one group of KPS who tried to come back into the centre. The next morning, French KFOR checkpoints on the road south of Mitrovica refused to let KPS officers who live in the town's southern hinterland go to work. On 23 March, UNMIK and the police were still trying to get back headquarters occupied by French and Belgian troops. When UNMIK did re-assume control of its building in the final week of March, its staff found that valuables, electronic equipment, even furniture were missing. UNMIK staff were not impressed by notices KFOR had taped over the interior that read:

To the UNMIK employees in YUGOBANKA: Because of last week events in Mitrovica, KFOR soldiers have had to live temporarily in this building for a few days. Some furniture or assets may have been removed during this emergency situation. You know the great job we perform and we were pleased to take care of the Regional UNMIK building. Thank you.

The police reassumed control of their South Mitrovica city station, but on 31 March French KFOR troops were seen making KPS officers wait in a queue at a checkpoint outside it. A witness

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<sup>81</sup> ICG interview with a French KFOR spokesman, 14 April.

<sup>82</sup> Rumours and fears also grew of a possible imminent invasion by the armed forces of Serbia-Montenegro, rolling across the border and annexing northern Kosovo to the line of the River Ibar. With heightened traffic from Serbia into northern Kosovo, what appeared to be groups of Serbian security or paramilitary personnel were becoming visible on the streets of Northern Mitrovica -- dark green Mitsubishi four-wheel drives with Belgrade number plates, packed with men, some apparently in uniform.

<sup>83</sup> When ICG put this to a French KFOR spokesman he initially dismissed the story as "rubbish", but later opined that it was "not completely untrue" since the Brigade was preparing what it thought would be a desperately outnumbered defence of north Mitrovica from what it believed to be an amalgamated force of 12-15,000 armed Albanians heading towards the town. While most of French KFOR's forces were concentrated north of the town bridges the Brigade had detached one or two companies to hold the regional UNMIK building as a small bridgehead in the south of the town. The regional police headquarters was outside the defensive perimeter drawn around the UNMIK building. The order to burn the regional police headquarters has only fitfully surfaced in the public domain in Kosovo to date, notably in an article written by Baton Haxhiu for *Java* weekly magazine (8 April), reprinted a week later in *Epoka e Re* newspaper. The fact that the order was given has not been officially acknowledged. Speaking off the record, several independent police and UNMIK sources have confirmed its veracity to ICG and others.

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<sup>84</sup> ICG interview with KPS sources. Once the KPS were ejected from their Mitrovica South city police station, more than 100 officers fell back to the regional police headquarters nearby. Meeting in its conference hall, they resolved to continue working, in defiance of KFOR's orders to disband and go home. At this time three KFOR representatives came and asked them all to leave the building. Reportedly they were carrying bottles with an unspecified liquid, causing the KPS and an accompanying CIVPOL officer to fear that they intended to burn down the building to deprive the KPS of an operating base in south Mitrovica. The KPS in the south continued to operate, nevertheless, mounting patrols in and around the town, where not prevented by KFOR.

reported: "While I drove through unchallenged in an OSCE car, the French soldiers were yelling at these four-five KPS and pushing them around".<sup>85</sup> A competent source summed up the feelings of some police about French KFOR: "The only people they are actually prepared to fight against are us -- just like they did in April 2002".<sup>86</sup>

Despite displays of bravado, such as visiting NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's congratulatory message on 22 March that: "KFOR was on top of the job",<sup>87</sup> bitter recriminations got underway behind the scenes between the different security and law enforcement bodies. Within a few days the infighting was brought under control by UNMIK silencing its police officers, particularly their criticism of KFOR. Before the clampdown, those officers had speculated aloud: "What is the point of an army that runs away at the first sign of trouble"?<sup>88</sup> Pointing to Kosovo Serb villages that were razed despite being close to major French and Italian KFOR bases, they asked whether any senior army officers would be held accountable. They talked of a "Srebrenica syndrome" ("if you don't have enough troops you just give in, instead of being prepared to stand your ground and fight to the last") in KFOR, and of the difficulty they will have in ever again relying on the NATO-dominated force for support.

KFOR holds a diametrically opposing view. Privately it speaks of a police collapse which

obliged it to take over practically from the start. Its trust has been shattered in the KPS, which it feels shirked its responsibilities, and it mutters about that organisation's lustration or dismantlement. KFOR has moved to take back responsibilities it had devolved to the police and generally to assert itself over UNMIK. Within the security community, its interpretation of events and reaction is beginning to dominate.

In a symptom of the backstage convulsions, on 24 March UNMIK summarily removed ("re-assigned") CIVPOL's chief spokesman, Derek Chappell, and gave all regional UN police spokespersons new terms of reference that clamped down on "impromptu" comment and instituted a new restrictive information policy. In the struggle for interpretation and scapegoating, the KPS is at the bottom of "the food chain" and the likely loser -- suspect by ethnic association with the rioters and without powerful voices to speak on its behalf. Morale among the police, especially KPS, is being shredded when it needs to be strengthened. ICG interviews with KPS sources in early April revealed anger and humiliation nearing a dangerous level: "If this blows up again and the internationals treat us like they are doing now, then KPS officers will simply throw away their uniform". The widespread feeling is that the KPS is being provoked to fail and to be disbanded, as its predecessor was by Milosevic at the beginning of the 1990s.

By contrast with the international political damage the Kosovo Albanians have inflicted upon themselves, on the ground the two days of violence have dramatically changed some relationships in their favour. Although only a sizeable minority took direct part in the violence and demonstrations, most are not unhappy that Albanians have forcefully reminded both the Serbs and the foreigners that they are the dominant community. Until 17-18 March, the contest for dominance appeared to be an unresolved three-way affair, with Albanian anxiety growing that they were being compelled to submit to what they considered the arrogance and assertiveness of both UNMIK/KFOR and the Serbs. KFOR was being seen as less a partner, more a quasi-occupier. UNMIK's condescending tutelage was not leading anywhere. By mounting roadblocks and beating Albanian motorists, Kosovo Serbs were still behaving as if they owned the place. Kosovo Albanians perceive they have now reversed these relationships. UNMIK's confidence is punctured, its staff concerned for their security. Some international police started hiding behind KPS

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<sup>85</sup> ICG interview, Pristina, 1 April 2004.

<sup>86</sup> When CIVPOL officers were attacked with grenades and small arms fire by Bridgewatchers just north of the main Mitrovica bridge on 8 April 2002, French KFOR troops stationed at the bridge failed to intervene on behalf of the (mainly Polish) CIVPOL officers (26 of whom were eventually wounded) and instead drew their guns on (mainly U.S.) CIVPOL police officers who were trying to cross the bridge from the south to rush to their colleagues' aid. UNMIK police later designed T-shirts commemorating French KFOR's role in the melee, which were sold around the force to raise money for the wounded, mainly Polish police officers. See ICG Report, *UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross*, op. cit., for background. The disconnect between French KFOR and CIVPOL was already evident in the handling of the violence in Mitrovica in February 2000. See Amnesty International report, "Setting the Standard? UNMIK and KFOR's Response to the violence in Mitrovica", 13 March 2000, available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR700132000?open&of=ENG-YUG>.

<sup>87</sup> Press conference at UNMIK headquarters, 22 March.

<sup>88</sup> ICG interview with a competent police source, 23 March 2004.

colleagues on 17 March. Kosovo Serb communities are cowed and worried.

KFOR's multinational brigades have reacted in different ways to the challenge to their authority. The varied relationships with local counterparts each developed during the violence in their respective regions have left KFOR a much less unified force. The violence consummated a form of security cantonisation in which KFOR's differing national traits and priorities burst to the surface. In early April a senior KFOR source quipped: "If there's a next time, maybe we'll go a step further and start shooting at each other". On 17 April his concern was realised in the most appalling way, as a gunfight between CIVPOL officers of Jordanian and U.S. nationality left 3 dead and 11 wounded.<sup>89</sup>

During the riots and their aftermath, at one end of the scale, French KFOR was thrown together with the armed Serb civilians of North Mitrovica. Their respective leaderships held several crisis meetings. At the other end, the crisis consolidated a close partnership between U.S. KFOR and the KLA successor organisation the KPC, which saw them mounting joint patrols for nearly a week in some areas, with U.S. KFOR effectively granting the KPC the public security role it has coveted and been denied by UNMIK and central KFOR command.

Overall, 17-18 March has highlighted the question whether KFOR should go further down the road of confrontation with the KPC or reach an accommodation with it. Indeed, the dilemma is beginning to form of a stark choice between aligning with or against the Kosovo Albanians' "liberation struggle".

Among KFOR's regional brigades, the strongest and most determined to hang on to its security primacy at all costs has been the European-Scandinavian dominated Multinational Brigade Centre. The pitched battle it fought at Caglavica was testimony to this, as was its categorical refusal to call upon the KPC for assistance, which it rejected as a confession of weakness that would hand over security, probably irretrievably, to former KLA cells. One KFOR source commented,

"We did not want it to appear that we could not handle the situation ourselves".<sup>90</sup>

U.S. KFOR, leading Multinational Brigade East, by contrast, has a history of partnership with the KPC and relationships with Kosovo Albanian resistance cells.<sup>91</sup> On 18 March it called upon KPC officers to help defuse confrontations in Ferizaj/Urosevac and Gjilan/Gnjilane. Imri Ilazi, the Zone 6 KPC commander, was brought to Ferizaj/Urosevac where a mob was besieging U.S. troops in an Orthodox church for a second day. The mob heeded Ilazi's call to leave (but continued attacking Serb houses and churches elsewhere in and around Ferizaj/Urosevac). In Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mayor Lutfi Haziri, KFOR, KPS, and KPC together tried to calm crowds. From 18 March, the KPC was detailed to guard the Serb Orthodox church there. For five days following the rioting, KFOR, KPS and KPC mounted joint patrols in Vitina/Vitia municipality, including the border with Macedonia. In Prizren, the German troops of Multinational Brigade Southwest also sought KPC help to persuade crowds to disperse on 18 March.

French KFOR, leading Multinational Brigade Northeast and fed wildly exaggerated intelligence about large bands of Albanians, acted on its latent distrust of the Albanian side of the KPS. Its tradition of cordial relations with the Serbs of North Mitrovica also came through. While French KFOR and the police took responsibility for defending the town and the Mitrovica Serbs did not embarrass them by massing, armed on the streets, all parties understood that they were prepared in reserve, and moreover that a number of Serbian regular special forces in plainclothes had arrived and mingled with them. One observer reported to ICG seeing Serb civilians digging and manning a fall-back line of trench positions in the Zvecan hills immediately

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<sup>89</sup> The dead include two Americans and one Jordanian; the wounded, ten Americans and one Austrian.

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<sup>90</sup> KFOR interview with IWPR journalist Jeta Xharra on 19 March, confirmed by later ICG interview with the KFOR source.

<sup>91</sup> U.S. KFOR is widely believed to have offered support to the KLA successor organisation, the Liberation Army of Presevo Medvedja and Bujanovac (UCPMB), in its armed incursions from Kosovo into Southern Serbia until October 2000, as a means of undermining President Milosevic. In May 2001 the chief suspect in the bombing of the Nis Express bus (in which eleven Kosovo Serbs had been killed three months before) escaped from detention in the main U.S. Army Kosovo base, Camp Bondsteel; his escape from such a high-security environment has not been explained. See Anthony Loyd's article in *The Times*, "A Very Dirty Little War", 14 May 2002.

overlooking Mitrovica to the north. General Michel had been told by KFOR central command that it had no troops with which to reinforce his Brigade. If armed Albanian mobs had broken into North Mitrovica, KFOR would have lacked both the forces and the moral case to prevent Serbia's army from crossing the border at Merdare to save the Serbs of northern Kosovo.

For extremists and criminals, 17-18 March demonstrated that KFOR was beatable and opened up giddy new possibilities. The level of hostility to UNMIK so unnerves its staff -- particularly with the UN's Baghdad experience in mind -- that the possibility of a final push to tip the mission into closing down and evacuating has become imaginable. UNMIK and KFOR are now operating in something akin to hostile territory.

For Belgrade, the message that KFOR cannot necessarily hold Kosovo and guarantee Kosovo Serbs' security is also not lost. During and after the events, many politicians called for Serbian forces to return to Kosovo to protect the Serbs. These included representatives of the newly ascendant Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), and Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia. The recent changes in Serbian politics,<sup>92</sup> coupled with the dismissal of reformist Defence Minister Boris Tadic, indicate that hard-line elements in the army wishing for a return to Kosovo are now ascendant. Should KFOR demonstrate the same impotence before a future ethnic cleansing riot, or perhaps even lesser violence against Serbs, Belgrade politicians might face strong pressure for military intervention.

KFOR no longer has adequate forces in Kosovo to oppose a determined Serbian military incursion. It has replaced most of its heavy armour with lighter formations. Many in KFOR and NATO assume that Serbia would not jeopardise its EU future by a military move. They may not appreciate the shift in the political winds in Belgrade, and that returning at least some of Kosovo to Serbian control may increasingly be taking precedence over pro-European policies.

## VII. REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

With too few honourable exceptions, Kosovo Albanian leaders, media and society have failed adequately to grasp and confront the evil done on 17-18 March. They and the internationals risk retreating into separate understandings of the brutal events and thereby opening a chasm of mutual incomprehension and disgust. PISG and UNMIK are in states of denial, dangerously detached from reality. The violence revealed Kosovo Albanian society as dangerously unstable. Within hours, virtually all the domestic institutions built up over five years with international tutelage and money to act as bulwarks of "democratisation" gave way and joined the baying pack.

Most of the PISG still do not get it. They are in denial about their society's sudden fall from grace, unable to comprehend that in two mad, bad days the Kosovo Albanians have lost forever the cherished image of victimisation accrued from ten years of oppression and a year of atrocities and have acquired pariah status. Too many political leaders continue to pander to and second guess their ethnic constituents' sensitivities, terming the attacks "protests", a "revolt", or other euphemisms that obscure their essential quality: "one of the most swinish forms of human behaviour: the murder of strangers by crowds".<sup>93</sup> Where violence is acknowledged, accent is put on apologies for attacks upon the internationals but explicit recognition that Serbs and Serb religious and cultural monuments were attacked still trips on the tongue.

For its part, the self-reproducing, self-maintaining reflexes of UNMIK are tending to eliminate the possibility of radical thinking and critical appraisal from within the mission. This critical lack of review capacity is allowing the inertia of the old policy to reassert itself. The violence of 17-18 March is beginning to be boxed and packaged as a blip, and UNMIK is indulging in a reckless fantasy of continuum, imagining that it can proceed as before -- "get back on track" -- after a spot of tidying up. International civil and military officials have seized on an orthodoxy that the violence was pre-planned and organised by a coherent, unified, clandestine group of extremists, a notion that massively accelerates the

<sup>92</sup> See ICG Europe Report N°154, *Serbia's U-Turn*, 26 March 2004.

<sup>93</sup> Donald Horowitz's opening definition in *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, op. cit, p. xiii.

process of containing and disposing of 17-18 March as an anomaly that can be divorced from ongoing processes. Instead of acknowledging, even protesting, that the policy and mandate the international community gave them to work within is explosively inadequate, UNMIK is starting again to paint reality to fit the policy. It is a recipe for disaster.

## **A. KOSOVO ALBANIANS**

Kosovo Albanian media, civil society and politicians alike were surprised by the explosion in Mitrovica and its rapid spread. They were overwhelmed by events they did not understand. At first, TV news reports about the Mitrovica violence came slowly and sketchily, but the channels soon began to alternate broadcasts of classical music concerts -- a classic East European code for events of dire gravity -- with war mobilisation-type reporting: heady, exultant, totally partisan and without moral bearings. Even the Kosova Action Network (KAN), a "liberal" civil society organisation that until 17 March prided itself on building relations with the minority communities, came out with a communiqué that read like a bellicose ultimatum to UNMIK.<sup>94</sup>

Politicians were left to catch up with the fact that young Albanian men of fighting age, who had seen violence in Kosovo in 1998 and in Macedonia in 2001 achieve within months results that years of patient politics and diplomacy had failed to procure,

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<sup>94</sup> The KAN communiqué said, *inter alia*: "It is not the first time after the war that Albanian citizens, especially in the north of Kosova, but also the citizens of other communities have been the target of criminals. This has been enabled since Kosova is being governed by the undemocratic regime of UNMIK. Tolerating of the parallel structures and the Serbian secret service, that only harm the Serbs too, has become unbearable. The citizen of Kosova has become strangled by the hegemonic power of UNMIK and disappointed with the puppet power of the institutions of Kosova. The Kosovar institutions are built and act according to frameworks that do not protect the interests of the citizens and do not represent their will. Such a political system, while not giving a chance to democratic institutions, becomes repressive and cannot count on the loyalty of the citizens for which it does not show respect. Consequently, those that have the power (UNMIK) and those that pretend to have the power (Kosovar Institutions) are the main responsible for the tragic events and for the difficult situation that we face. Overcoming of this situation and the overall progress in Kosova, before anything, depends on respecting the will of the citizens of Kosova that includes also the independent sovereign state of Kosova. Not understanding or not accepting this will only deepen the crisis".

were pronouncing a verdict upon the failure of five years of UNMIK rule, and two years of PISG collaboration, to deliver tangible progress towards independence. The lower ranks took a sudden decision on 17-18 March to switch their allegiance from the patient compromising of their post-war political leadership to a more elemental form of bargaining.

In the Kosovo Assembly, politicians made ritual, formalised calls for calm, yet reeled off their own list of demands and grievances against UNMIK, such as the failure to curb parallel structures and "criminal gangs from Serbia". Only Prime Minister Rexhepi reacted quickly, by travelling to Mitrovica to appeal for calm. However, he appeared to lack confidence in his own message when he delivered it on television. UNMIK and the diplomatic offices of the key states, "The Quint" (U.S., UK, France, Germany, Italy) convened with PISG and political party leaders in late afternoon to agree on an appeal for people to return home, which was telecast. However, Minister of Public Services Jakup Krasniqi, representing the PDK party in the absence of Hashim Thaci, who was in the U.S., refused to sign the statement and stormed out, saying that Albanians had collaborated too long with UNMIK without result, and he chose to stand with the people. During the afternoon hope flew around UNMIK that KPC chief Agim Ceku would go on television to tell people that the drowning of the children had been an accident, with no Serbs involved.<sup>95</sup> In the evening Ceku he did appeal for calm but he tempered his message with criticism of Serbian parallel structures. In late evening TV discussion shows amid the hackneyed justifications proffered by most local politicians, only the PDK's Xhavit Haliti stood out. He praised the good UNMIK had done for Kosovo and blamed his own political class for contributing to the breakdown by taking cheap declaratory shots at UNMIK.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> This reflected a misunderstanding within UNMIK. On Tuesday evening an initial rumour had it that Serbs themselves had drowned three boys with their own hands. An international official asked Ceku to check this out with KPC members who were at the scene trying to locate the three boys reported missing in the river. Ceku was told that this wilder rumour was without foundation, which still left open the question of whether the boys were chased or not into the river.

<sup>96</sup> This was particularly noteworthy given Haliti's past as one of the KLA's chief weapon smugglers. Haliti is one of the most paradoxical figures in Kosovo Albanian politics. Rumoured to have retained his weapon-smuggling connections and to be a leader of the shadowy KLA-

Late afternoon and evening TV news broadcasts on 17 March reflected the street hysteria. Their overwhelming message was of mobilisation, that Kosovo's ethnic Albanian nation was under attack, and people were rushing to defend it. Field correspondents identified with, and took the side of demonstrators. The next morning's papers shied away from revealing the riots' true gravity, targets and victims. Attention was focused on Albanian casualties.

On day two, with the Kosovo Assembly reconvening, instead of focusing on stopping the violence, Kosovo Albanian politicians apportioned blame and made explanations. They concluded that fault rested with UNMIK, and the only solution for the accumulated frustrations of Kosovo Albanians was accelerated independence. In a live TV studio debate 18 March, as children rampaged in the streets around the TV building, trying and ultimately managing to burn the nearby Serbian Orthodox church, leading politicians from each of the major Kosovo Albanian parties, LDK, PDK, and AAK, argued with UNMIK's strategy coordinator, Carne Ross, that the PISG had no responsibility for the violence because it lacked competencies, but it should be given more power. Prime Minister Rexhepi's decision to face the mob at Veterinik that evening (and that of the ministers who accompanied him) was belated but brave. A close observer said: "We weren't sure he would come back". Later that evening PDK leader Hashim Thaci appeared on television, having cut short his visit to the U.S.. He was the first Kosovo politician to attempt to address the public directly in authoritative tones ("with full mouth", as an Albanian expression puts it) -- reminding it of what NATO had done for Kosovo. His message did not go far enough -- it shied from explicit acknowledgement that Serbs were the main victims -- but was a step further than other politicians were prepared to go. Most seemed to calculate their stances from an awareness of their limited authority with the electorate, and hedged their bets.

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originated SHIK parallel security structure (which some suspect of involvement in the violence of 17-18 March), Haliti has become notable in recent months for his level-headed, constructive and tolerant approach on a range of issues. In February 2004, for instance, he took a lonely stance among Kosovo Albanian politicians in openly criticising the crass murals depicting scenes from Albanian history with which the renovators of the Kosovo Assembly building adorned its interior, and which prompted both SRSB Holkeri and Kosovo Serb Assembly members to boycott the Assembly in protest at the mono-ethnic message.

On 18 March TV news programs were still broadcasting grotesquely distorted reports, such as RTK's dwelling on KPS confiscation of two guns from Serbs in Obilic while the true story was the systematic attacking, looting and burning of Serb and Ashkali homes. A report on the burning of the Devic convent apparently focused on the mob's "kindness" in handing over an elderly Serb nun to the police unharmed. But calming statements also began to increase.

From 19 March onward, reporting remained muted. Kosovo Albanian newspapers and broadcast media gave only a partial impression of the scale of the violence and largely blanked out the plight of the Serbs. A week after the events, Albanians ICG interviewed in Pristina remained wholly ignorant of the almost total destruction of the mainly Serb village of Svinjare. The shocking sight of 125 to 140 destroyed houses there did not get onto TV or into newspapers until 28 March, when the Kosovo Albanian *Koha Ditore* at last wrote an article. But even that account was generalised and dwelled on how Albanian houses in the village were burned by Serbs in June 1999. With 30 Serb Orthodox churches and two monasteries destroyed or damaged, Minister of Culture Behxhet Brajshori's first trip out of Pristina to survey the loss to Kosovo's cultural patrimony was to examine what an Albanian mob had done by mistake to the house and grounds of an Albanian sculptor in Caglavica. RTK television covered the visit reverentially.

Such apologies as there were tended to be slanted toward the internationals, not Kosovo's Serbs. On 19 March, the three institutional leaders, Prime Minister Rexhepi, President Rugova, and Assembly President Daci, issued the following joint statement:

We reiterate that attacks against the international presence in Kosovo, both civil and military, are totally unacceptable and in contradiction with the vital interests of Kosova. Hereby, we once more emphasise that destruction of cultural and religious objects, public property and homes, are unacceptable for the population of Kosovo and blameworthy.

On 2 April Kosovo Albanian institutional and political leaders issued a joint letter, appealing to all citizens of Kosovo to put the cycle of hatred and fear behind them, and build a Kosovo in which all will be welcome. In vaguely worded terms, it proposed a series of contracts, between Serbs and Albanians, and between the people and their

political and religious leaders, to effect this. However, while acknowledging that: "Serbs were driven out of their homes and churches were burnt", it stopped short of issuing an apology.

At a level just below the surface there was a discernible sense of hopeful expectation, among both politicians and the public, about the possibilities the violence might have opened up for breaking the Kosovo status logjam. The new LDK-affiliated newspaper *Pavarësia* let this into full view on 24 March, publishing an interview with Arian Starova, former foreign minister and now a member of Albania's parliament, entitled: "[The latest events] shortened Kosovo's road to independence". The LDK's leader in the Kosovo Assembly, Sabri Hamiti, denounced pressure for better behaviour coming from such senior international visitors as EU High Representative Javier Solana: "This is diktat. The PISG should not accept this. Some so-called representatives of the international community come and tell Kosovo institutions how to lead Kosovo and its citizens. They should restrict their role to cooperating with the PISG".<sup>97</sup> Hamiti added that Kosovo's image had not been damaged.

On 20 March the government made a good decision, on its own initiative, to accept responsibility for financing repair of the destroyed homes and other buildings, allocating € million. On 27 March clearing work began at the site of the YU housing complex in Pristina's Ulpiana neighbourhood. Although this dispatch was laudable, it has hesitated to make the repair drive a public instrument for involving wider Kosovo society in expiation. The contrast is considerable with the government/media/show business mobilisation in 2003 to raise donations for the legal defence of ICTY indictee Fatmir Limaj. But an appeal to the Kosovo Albanian public to raise money for Serb victims is a leap beyond the courage of institutional and party leaders. Kosovo's thin, largely Pristina-based, donor-funded civil society NGO community has spoken against the violence, and the Kosova Womens Network set up a fund to support both the families of the drowned children and a Serb family whose home was burned down in Kosovo Polje/Fushe Kosove.

On 24 March an ad hoc group of NGOs called a demonstration in the centre of Pristina to mark both the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the NATO bombing and to summon solidarity against the

violence. It attracted only about 3,000 people, who brought flowers -- a nicely judged symbol that could be made into a leitmotif for a more sustained campaign. To date, however, government and civil society have failed to provide an avenue for mobilisation in opposition to the mobs that now risk shaping and defining society. "Say it with flowers" has failed to displace "say it with murder".

Remarkably, the Kosovo Albanians celebrated the 24 March 1999 beginning of NATO's bombing of the Serbs on their behalf on auto-pilot. Pre-prepared TV footage was broadcast of 1999 liberation scenes just days after mobs had launched sustained attacks on NATO soldiers, injuring dozens of them; street billboards and full-page newspaper advertisements pronounced the anniversary message: "Thank you NATO"! President Rugova delivered a solemn congratulatory address. The obituary pages of the 24 March newspapers printed row upon row of portraits of Albanian children (especially children), women and men killed by the Serbian forces in 1999. This was a society in denial, clinging desperately to its own sense of victimisation and the heady days when it was briefly the world's darling.

Broadcast media have closed ranks, rejecting critiques of their behaviour on 16-18 March and alleging the internationals are trying to scapegoat Kosovo Albanian media to deflect blame from themselves. RTK Deputy Director Astrit Salihu, for example, in a 2 April TV debate, poured vitriol on Temporary Media Commissioner Robert Gillette and cast aspersions on his professionalism.

## **B. THE INTERNATIONALS**

In a mirror image, UNMIK and KFOR have held Kosovo Albanian politicians and institutional leaders culpable for their failure to condemn the violence adequately, their finger-pointing at UNMIK, and lethargy in trying to stop violence in progress. UNMIK has been propelled into a defensive mindset by disappointment with most local leaders, the explosion of hostility against it, and an awareness that its own performance in the lead-up to the violence is under the spotlight. A determination not to be seen to make concessions in the face of violence has sat uneasily with a gnawing realisation that the existing policy was inadequate and contributed to the frustration that led to the explosion.

On 18 March, condemnations and appeals for calm rained in from governments, regional organisations,

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<sup>97</sup> Kosovo Assembly session, 25 March 2004.



and the UN Security Council. Most were couched in general terms, neither assigning blame nor applying labels to what happened beyond "large-scale inter-ethnic violence". The UN Security Council statement left the PISG feeling a little more comfortable than it should have. In Serbia the violence generated round-the-clock TV coverage, emotions somewhat comparable to the U.S. reaction to the 11 September 2001 attacks, and mirror-image rioting and burning of mosques.<sup>98</sup> Visiting Pristina on 19 March, the NATO Southern Europe commander, U.S. Admiral Gregory Johnson, advanced a more emphatic definition of the violence: "This activity represents ethnic cleansing, and it cannot go on". Two days later SRSG Holkeri attracted anger in Serbia when he told U.S. NPR radio that the ethnic cleansing label was "too strong", and moreover that only "a couple" of churches had been burned. In fact, Holkeri's characterisations of the violence swung up and down the scale erratically, to the bafflement of his staff. On 23 March, he described the violence as "a crime against humanity", yet later backtracked, explaining that this was his emotional response rather than a legal definition.

UNMIK continued to labour under a major over-estimation of the extent to which local leaders had "delivered" the violence and could "deliver" its cessation. Cynics noted how quickly Prime Minister Rexhepi had been able to calm the mob at Veterinik ("within two minutes"). A security source complained that Rexhepi had merely "redirected" the mob (to targets inside Pristina) rather than pacified it. Harsh statements stressing PISG culpability came from NATO's de Hoop Scheffer and the EU's Solana, who both visited Pristina in the week of 22-26 March. They emphasised that violence was organised and coordinated and placed responsibility on Kosovo Albanian political leaders. The NATO secretary general noted: "If certain Albanian leaders believe that violence is a way to achieve independence, they must know that they are farther away from their objective, as violence will not be rewarded in any way".<sup>99</sup> While praising Rexhepi, Solana said, "those who organised the violence by all chances belong to political parties in Kosovo. But

the leaders of those political parties must deny it publicly and prove it is not true".<sup>100</sup>

Concentration on Pristina's political elite and the alleged prior organisation, command and control and clandestine conspiracy has had the effect of downgrading the importance of social pathologies, tensions and fears in triggering the explosion -- and of the international community's own shortcomings. A de Hoop Scheffer statement was telling:

I don't believe the unresolved status has anything to do with this. This has to do with people who think wrongly, who have illusions that by carrying out these criminal acts of ethnic violence they get closer to their ambitions. But they must understand that the international community will never accept this.<sup>101</sup>

The tendency of international civil and military officials to locate the epicentre of the violence in a centrally organised conspiracy directed from the top in a way replicates the artificiality of the international administration's construction of its counterpart, the PISG. But Kosovo Albanian society has no unified central command chain. Each component organisation of the Kosovo peacekeeping mission has an internal momentum that drives it to construct from the rioting a distinct core organising element. Synchronisation of riots and elements of organisation within them brought the military minds of KFOR to imagine a military opponent, a central organising intelligence. UNMIK has a bureaucratic, organisational inertia need to package 17-18 March for disposal, separating and quarantining it in the meantime, in order to resume operating as before. The idea that the violence can be reduced to the product of a criminal extremist plot and that those responsible can be isolated and removed has immense attractions. In this vein, on 22 March SRSG Holkeri assured Serbs in Lipjan that UNMIK knew nearly all the perpetrators of the violence, the police were tracking them down, and society should isolate them<sup>102</sup>. In his address to the Kosovo Assembly on 9 April he went further. In the context of a bid to renew political partnership with the PISG and to dissociate his audience from responsibility for the

<sup>98</sup> See ICG Report, *Serbia's U-Turn*, op. cit.

<sup>99</sup> VIP Daily News Report, "Kosovo at a Glance", 26 March 2004.

<sup>100</sup> Kosovo TV news broadcasts 25 March 2004, summarised in OSCE Pristina Media Highlights bulletin, 26 March 2004.

<sup>101</sup> "Nato Secretary General accuses Kosovo politicians", *Koha Ditore*, summarised and translated in UNMIK Media Analysis report, 23 March 2004.

<sup>102</sup> VIP Daily News Report, "Kosovo at a Glance", 23 March 2004.

violence, he ascribed it to a small clique of "others": "I know that this violence was not the work of a whole society. It was the work of a small group of people with their own scheme for Kosovo". A corollary is that UNMIK sees and interprets the violence too politically, because this is the level at which it operates. There is still too little understanding of the yawning chasm of under-development that 17-18 March exposed. UNMIK has not "read" that, because as an organisation it is not pitched at a developmental level.

It is only dawning very slowly that among Kosovo's majority population, UNMIK has run out of credit and acquiescence. In 1999 the Security Council put it in place as a big and expensive pacifying device, until such time as it was ready to determine Kosovo's final status - something the international community has shown little inclination to address since. On 17-18 March UNMIK became the object of hostility. Its flags were removed, its buildings attacked, and at least 70 of its cars were burned -- a very specific targeting that passed by EU, OSCE and UNHCR cars. At the very least, this indicates that some drastic re-branding of the mission is needed.

UNMIK has heeded some local advice and began to engage more squarely with the populace, rather than relying on the usual mixture of short exhortations and pressure on the PISG. In a 24 March "Personal Letter from SRSJ Harri Holkeri to the People of Kosovo", praise was allocated as well as blame. It attempted to soften UNMIK's local image, replacing its usual imperiousness with a rhetorical acceptance that it may have made mistakes:

We can only move forward if we learn from this episode. We must all reflect on what we could have done and what we should do now to prevent further violence and trouble, [and] that includes UNMIK. I recognize the frustration with the slow progress in Kosovo. The UN makes mistakes. We shall reflect on how we can do better.

But it remains an open question whether this was more than a transient public relations ploy. UNMIK's clampdown on its police officials' ability to give out information is indicative of a blocking rather than a blossoming of debate, reflection and enquiry. Moreover, insiders complain that the forces of inertia within the organisation are such that even eking out small steps of policy change requires the coordinated expenditure of prodigious amounts of energy. If acknowledgement of mistakes is not followed by any move to address those mistakes, the result might only

be a further inflaming of the situation. For example, it remains to be seen what will come of Holkeri's 9 April decision to replace Marie Fucci as head of the KTA. The move appears to be an olive branch offering to the Kosovo Albanians, but the crucial aspect is whether it will actually result in a change of policy on privatisation. Her departure was organised less than elegantly, and only on 22 April did UNMIK clarify that she was no longer working in her old position.

Now more than ever (with the security of its own personnel an acute consideration), UNMIK needs to report Kosovo realities back to New York and the Contact Group capitals, and advocate a more adequate policy framework and mandate. SRSJ Holkeri was much criticised for his travel outside Kosovo during the first months of his tenure, but right now it is sticking in Pristina that would be inappropriate. This is the moment when he should visit all the important capitals, sound the alarm, and push for a new mandate. It would be ironic if recent rumours in the Kosovo Albanian press of his possible resignation were to make staying in Pristina now a matter of "face" for him.

Kosovo's brief re-emergence after the riots as a major world news story did not initially appear to have generated enough momentum within Contact Group governments to spur new thinking at high levels. The dying down of the violence after three days and the despatch of 3,000 KFOR reinforcement seemed at first to have satisfied the capitals that enough has been done for the time being. Kosovo's fate is still subject to an international politics of minimum expenditure of energy. The sense of urgency demonstrated by the EU Council in appointing on 29 March a special envoy to Kosovo was not reflected among individual EU member states.<sup>103</sup> However, there are some indications that this may change. The organisation of a "Support Group" for Kosovo by the Contact Group, involving the EU and others, that will visit the province every six weeks from now on, offers at least a hope of continuing focus and a possibility that Kosovo might now begin to rise up the policy agenda. Some Contact Group countries are beginning to consider ways in

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<sup>103</sup> At an informal meeting of EU and accession state foreign ministers in Ireland on 16-17 April, the EU Council Secretariat presented a non-paper on Kosovo, urging in particular better minority protection, and re-energizing the "standards before status" policy. Reportedly only Slovenia, Hungary and Luxembourg called for a rethink of policy, with Contact Group members notably reluctant to concede (at least in front of smaller countries) that a change of course might be necessary. ICG interview with Brussels source, 19 April 2004.

which the options for Kosovo's status might be narrowed - in order to try to remove some of the destabilising uncertainty from the Kosovo equation. A hint of such thinking could be read in the pronouncements of the UK Minister for Europe, Denis MacShane, at his Pristina press conference on 21 April: "There is no return to 1999, no return to 1989".

Meanwhile, the Contact Group has reaffirmed the course it set in 2003 -- implementation of the standards plan, with a review of progress in mid-2005. U.S. Under Secretary of State Grossman visited Pristina 29-30 March to convey this message, in fact jumping UNMIK into launching the detailed implementation plan sooner than it was ready for, on 31 March, although the sections on returns, the rights of communities, and ensuring freedom of movement were admitted to need revision in the wake of the violence. But the wind has been knocked out of the sails of this policy. The riots have so violated the principle and idea of "standards before status" that it is hard to imagine a favourable review of Kosovo's progress in mid-2005. The program of legislation and action outlined in the plan of course remains welcome and useful, but in the big picture, the part of the policy that represents yet another round of time-buying is more unsightly than ever. The behaviour of Kosovo Albanian journalists at the launch press conference illustrated the policy's lack of any public attention. Given the chance to quiz the joint coordinators, UNMIK's Carne Ross and the PISG's Ilir Deda, they asked only about arrests and fatality figures.

The standards project for multi-ethnic unitary governance of Kosovo now has serious competition. If Belgrade's various ethnic partition or cantonisation proposals for Kosovo were previously dismissed out of hand by the international community, the violent rampage against the Kosovo Serb minority has given these proposals new credibility and impetus. Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica was rebuffed in Brussels on 23 March when he officially presented a plan to EU officials for dividing Kosovo into several ethnically-based cantons. But both EU and Contact Group officials have signalled that a milder "decentralisation" of Kosovo is possible. On its face decentralization of local government may indeed be a tool to improve performance. A much debated Council of Europe blueprint was published in late 2003. However, the concept was introduced by former SRSG Steiner in 2002 to encourage Kosovo Serb participation in elections with the sub-text that it offered a route to ethnic-based local territorial

autonomy. Since then Albanians have viewed decentralisation with suspicion as a precursor to a partition of Kosovo's territory; while Belgrade has viewed it with that hope.

By the end of March 2004, senior international officials within Kosovo were quietly and increasingly acknowledging that pressure from Kosovo Albanian society is such that further delay in resolving Kosovo's ultimate status could have catastrophic consequences -- the status quo will not hold. Most of this comment remained private. Yet, the inadequate responses of Kosovo Albanian politicians, media and society to the violence have also demonstrated Kosovo's lack of readiness for final status. With their calls for more competencies and independence, most Kosovo Albanian politicians have shown a shabby haste to get their hands on power, but a negligent abandon about the necessary infrastructure. Moreover, any resolution of status under the continuing influence of the anti-Serb violence would likely feature territorial division or partition on an ethnic basis and thus possibly spark new violence and attempts at ethnic cleansing.

### **C. ON THE GROUND**

In the immediate week or two following the riots a breakdown of communication between international personnel and Kosovo Albanians appeared to be proceeding apace in the micro-detail of their social interactions. Sullen, aggressive sentiment was palpably growing at street level. Much of it remains, just below the surface. As internationals pass local young men on the street, the looks exchanged often reveal mistrust. UN cars that until mid-March 2004 received a certain deference now get rough and rude treatment from other drivers. Kosovo Albanian society's resistance reflex, honed through many decades of Serbian domination, shows signs of resurfacing with application to the internationals. These are all alarming signs that a process of dehumanising may be in train, that perhaps at a subconscious level, many Kosovo Albanians have been psychologically preparing themselves for the possibility that international staff might be the targets of any new wave of violence.

The outward symptoms of distrust risk provoking its further increase. International staff and structures are quietly dusting off and revising contingency plans for evacuation. At night in the centre of Pristina, the streets leading to UNMIK and police headquarters are sealed off to road traffic. This and new static

police guard patrols have signalled to Kosovo Albanians that internationals are the sovereigns of the centre of Pristina and are guarding themselves against the locals. It carries an unhealthy echo of the Kosovo Serb road blockades that so attracted Kosovo Albanian fury and aggression on 17 March.

Instead of bolstering relations of mutual trust with the locally recruited security structure, the KPS, international military and police in instances -- particularly in Mitrovica -- are openly demonstrating their disregard for it. The KPS has been stripped of its spokesman in Mitrovica "until things calm down".

Amid the new uncertainty, gloom, disruption and renewed enclaving, one wellspring of tension -- Kosovo's economic plight -- is worsening. The riots have accelerated the downturn, further deterred investment, and caused business opportunities to be lost. Pristina's Grand Hotel told ICG that 5000 advance bookings have been cancelled since the riots.

Meanwhile, the Kosovo Consolidated Budget is being asked to carry the burden of repairing over 700 destroyed or damaged homes, 30 churches and 2 monasteries. The government has already supplemented its initial allocation of €5 million with a further allocation of €1.6 million, yet even this will not cover rebuilding of the homes, let alone replacement of property, and the extensive, specialist, hugely expensive work of restoring the churches and monasteries that lies ahead. The sums the government has found are funds derived from customs duties and taxes raised within Kosovo, which it will not now be able to use to increase the wages of teachers, healthcare workers, miners and others who threatened or took strike action in Autumn 2003. In weeks to come, the tension between the demands on the budget could become high - all the more so while the usual outlets for social protest are blocked. In the wake of the violence a ban on mass gatherings and rallies has been extended to the beginning of May.<sup>104</sup> This has explosive potential, especially if PISG leaders are tempted to amplify resentment with comments such as those of Assembly Speaker Nexhat Daci, who decried "criminal pressure" being applied upon the PISG to fund the re-building of Serb homes, drawing

comparison with the PISG's failure to fund the re-building of any Albanian homes after the war.<sup>105</sup>

Far from returning to normal after the violence, Kosovo is now a highly unpredictable place, and in danger of spiralling downwards in freefall.

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<sup>104</sup> Pristina regional CIVPOL spokesperson Malcolm Ashby, interviewed by UNMIK *Blue Sky* radio, 19 April.

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<sup>105</sup> Televised comments made at the "For a New Agenda for Kosova" roundtable event, Pristina, 13 April.

## **VIII. KOSOVO ALBANIAN SOCIETY - THE NEED FOR RENOVATION**

The explosion of 17-18 March has suddenly revealed the extent to which this society is damaged -- economically, politically and psychologically. Suppressed and resistant for most decades of the twentieth century, with just the one "good decade" of the 1970s to look back upon, Kosovo Albanian society has had few opportunities to regard itself in the mirror. Emerging from the repression of the 1990s and the convulsions of war, this society has been slow, and even reluctant, to face up to its own visage.

It is a society in a lot of trouble, seemingly unable or unwilling to protect neighbours, minorities, or even itself from its own extremists and criminals. In its present condition, Kosovo Albanian society contains insufficient checks and barriers to prevent it from gradually expelling all foreign bodies within its midst or in its path -- whether they be Serbs, other minorities, or internationals. Ultimately, there is a risk that it will destroy or expel its own Albanian non-conformist minorities (the Kosovo Albanian Catholic minority is already much reduced by emigration) and tiny liberal elites. As one young Kosovo Albanian put it: "Once the Serbs are gone, and then the Bosniaks, the Ashkalis and the Turks, we will look inwards for enemies. We need to hunt for enemies".<sup>106</sup> Granting Kosovo's institutions full powers of government will not by itself be enough to head off this danger.

Kosovo Albanian society is relatively closed, tries to keep secrets to itself, and does not like to show weakness. Until 17-18 March so much was bottled up: the vast numbers of people still traumatised by their experiences; a broken-down health and social care system; secondary traumatising of children by parents and an unreformed, decayed and overwhelmed education system that, in the words of a local observer: "is built with the wrong history, the wrong message, and a lot of poetry and music about heroes. It produces hate: hate speech and hate diplomas".<sup>107</sup> The acquiescence of many teachers in their students' involvement in the riots, and even their direct participation, ripped open for all to see the failure of post-war education to heal fractures,

and its continuing role instead in mobilising inter-ethnic division and fear.

The collapse into mob violence conforms to previous patterns of alienated Kosovo Albanian youth suddenly sweeping aside the fragile, failing institutional solutions pursued by their elders. Seven years into Kosovo's autonomous provincial government, continuing poverty and unemployment saw student demonstrations explode into violent rioting in April 1981, dozens of deaths and the imposition of martial law. On 1 October and 30 December 1997, Kosovo Albanian students marked the failure of six to seven years of passive resistance to Belgrade's revocation of the province's autonomy -- resistance led by Rugova's monolithic, middle-aged LDK party -- with mass demonstrations again, ignoring Rugova's disapproval. Posters produced by UPSUP in 1997 to mobilise support for a planned demonstration showed a picture of the 1981 rioting, with an exhortation: "Time to take action". Though the 1997 demonstrations themselves were peaceful and disciplined, they were violently dispersed by Serbian security forces and led directly to the growth of the KLA and the descent into war from March 1998. Almost five years after NATO ejected Serbian forces from Kosovo, four years from establishment of the Joint Interim Administrative Structure, and two years from the establishment of the PISG, Kosovo's children, teenagers and young adults have rebelled again. The demography of Kosovo Albanian society -- 70 per cent is estimated under 30 and 50 per cent under twenty -- ensures that generational change occurs with the rapidity of a runaway train. Those who joined the KLA six or seven years ago are already being bypassed by an aggressive, disaffected and rudderless successor generation.

In parallel, the values and populations of Kosovo's underdeveloped villages have overrun its capital since 1999. Within the last five years Pristina's Albanian population has possibly tripled, to more than 500,000, as inhabitants of the rural Llap and Drenica regions have moved in. Drenica in particular bore the brunt of the war, yet remains Kosovo's poorest region - its inhabitants have looked to Pristina with a sense of grievance and entitlement. Kosovo's uneven modernisation since the 1960s, interrupted and thrown into reverse during the Milosevic interregnum of the 1990s, was concentrated in urban populations, leaving the villages languishing effectively decades behind. Now, instead of modernity's spread into the rural hinterland, waves of poorly educated, low-skilled rural migrants are overwhelming Kosovo's

<sup>106</sup> ICG interview, Pristina, 2004.

<sup>107</sup> ICG interview with Baton Haxhiu, 20 October 2003.

fragile repositories of modernity. For a city of its size and function, Pristina is culturally and educationally underpowered - its bookshops and the range of literature in translation are pitiful. The political scene is now divided up between the younger, newly ex-rural elites of the KLA parties (PDK, AAK) and the older, psychologically unreformed ex-Communist urban elites of the LDK. With the rural influx the influence of criminality and extremism has grown. Since 1999 Pristina businesses and retailers have had to reckon with protection rackets that began as offshoots of the Llapi and Drenica KLA operative zone commands. Semi-literate extremists feel confident to dictate their terms with threats to prominent Albanian intellectuals who have spoken out against attacks on minorities. A website associated with the AKSh obliquely threatened the only world-renowned Albanian novelist, Ismail Kadare, with assassination for his "scribbling" and "vampirism" after he published articles on the need to make amends for the Kosovo rioting. TV and newspaper proprietor Veton Surroi, against whom the KLA news agency issued an oblique death threat in late 1999 when he spoke out against the wave of ethnic cleansing of Serbs and gypsies then in progress, has written that if Kosovo keeps allowing itself to be held hostage by such extremist cells then: "there can, of course, be no talk of any kind of real institutional life".<sup>108</sup>

Under the pressure, since the 1960s, of its own rapid population growth and an unrestrained freelance thug element, Kosovo Albanian society has demonstrated some recurring patterns in displacing other ethnic communities and vulnerable groups -- including fellow Albanians. This is not to diminish the fact that at several points since World War II, Yugoslav state policy has pressurised many Albanians to emigrate, most recently in the 1990s. However, Serb accounts from the 1980s of low level harassment and intimidation aimed at forcing strategic property sales to Albanians that undermined the integrity and confidence of Serb neighbourhoods to the point of tipping them into minority flight are mirrored by OSCE and UNHCR reporting of similar patterns since 1999.<sup>109</sup> Since the war rural Kosovo Albanians

have also taken many homes belonging to urban Albanians, this was an especially widespread and threatening phenomenon in the wild summer of 1999. Similar motivations could also be divined among the carnage of 17-18 March -- with its graffiti the mob that burned Svinjare signalled at least a rhetorical desire to take and occupy the houses. Some see Kosovo Albanians' invocation of the international community's policy of "integration" and a multi-ethnic Kosovo as nothing more than a waiting game, a tactic to trap Kosovo Serbs into a shared space, where they will be vulnerable to eventual gradual expulsion once international attention fades. Kosovo Albanian pain about the de facto partition at the line of the River Ibar can partly be read as anger and frustration at an impediment to their ability ultimately to cleanse the entire territory of foreign bodies -- perhaps most acute among elements of the rural poor who might benefit most from the pickings.

Kosovo's thin layer of civil society is inadequate to absorb and dissipate shocks, instead, such shocks are liable to transmit immediately into violence. Much of civil society is urban, international donor-driven and unable to make a real grassroots impact. Some groups with wider, deeper grassroots networks actually amplified the shocks on 17 March -- the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms, and the three associations "emerged from war". An acquiescent majority allows itself too easily to be led and dominated by a violent minority. A Kosovo Serb journalist commented: "There is a fundamentalism among the Albanian rural masses. They are always taught that Serbs are killers. Many Albanians don't think like that any more, but they fail to counter the ones who still do. This is the fatal flaw in Albanian make-up. Individuals are afraid to make

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politicised, with Serbs tending to blame intimidation and pressure from the Albanian majority, and Albanians insisting that Kosovo's backward economy and better employment prospects elsewhere were the main driving force. It is probably fair to say that both factors played a role. See: (with caution, bearing in mind the chauvinistic atmosphere of the time in which it was produced) Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Department of Social Sciences Demographic Studies Volume III, Ruza Petrovic, Marina Blagojevic: "The Migration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo and Metohija: Results of the Survey Conducted in 1985-1986"; Julie Mertus: "Kosovo: how myths and truths started a war" (chapter 2, "Impaled with a Bottle" The Martinovic Case', 1985), University of California Press, 1999; and Joint OSCE/UNHCR Assessments of the Situation of Ethnic Minorities in Kosovo, ten of which have been published since 1999 - see for example the June-September 2000 report, point 104, page 29.

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<sup>108</sup> "Now all Kosovo is a Hostage", published in *Koha Ditore* 19 March, republished in translation in IWPR Balkan Crisis Report, 23 March. Available online at: [http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/bcr3/bcr3\\_200403\\_48\\_8\\_4\\_eng.txt](http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/bcr3/bcr3_200403_48_8_4_eng.txt).

<sup>109</sup> The causes of emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo since the 1960s have been hotly contested and

a stand - against the crimes, against the killings".<sup>110</sup> From field-work performed in the early 1990s, anthropologist Janet Reineck elicited analogously that Kosovo Albanians: "felt helpless in combating the social stigma attached to non-conformity. No one could be the first to change".<sup>111</sup> Present Kosovo Albanian society has not yet convincingly opened up arteries of introspective debate. There is a dominant monoculture in public expression, and deflection of difficult issues onto the outside world: onto UNMIK, the international community, Kosovo's unresolved status, Serbia. Despite -- in the wake of 17-18 March -- now being faced with an incipient street-level leadership challenge from extremists and criminals, Kosovo Albanian politicians have still failed to wake up to the internal challenge. At a well-attended and televised debate held on 13 April to discuss ways forward after the violence not one of the civil society or PISG figures present seriously addressed the extremist threat, and instead concentrated all their fire on UNMIK and the international community.<sup>112</sup>

The threads of experience linking Kosovo's regions and different constituencies into solid relations with a national centre are tenuously thin. State experience, habits and skills are lacking at all levels. Regional loyalties and local patronage networks take precedence. Even organised crime groups of the different regions appear to specialise in different styles of criminality that only loosely complement one another.<sup>113</sup> The KLA was never a coordinated national body -- only the charismatic personality of Agim Ceku near the end of the war gave it a veneer of coherence. The slow and fitful work of consolidation of loyalties of former KLA men from regional to national level has continued through the KPC. From early on UNMIK sought to simplify Kosovo's fractured mosaic and to imagine national-level partners who could "deliver" the entirety of Kosovo Albanian society's diffuse constituencies and resistance cells. This started with the co-option of warlords into the Joint Interim Administrative Structure and arrived at the current political system

of the three "national" Kosovo Albanian parties with stakes in the coalition provisional government. An artificial political elite has been the result -- bobbing uneasily on the surface of Kosovo Albanian society rather than with roots deep into it. SRSG Holkeri's recent unfortunate decision to hold 23 October 2004 Assembly elections with closed party lists controlled by the three party leaderships in Pristina will further consolidate the artificial shoe-horning of political power into this system and feed international policymakers' illusions.

The diffidence and ambivalence shown by Kosovo's political hierarchies towards extremists is worthy of inquiry. To an extent, extremists and criminals stand guard at, preserve and harden the borders of the present political dispensation -- the tri-opoly of control over resources exercised in uneasy truce between the LDK and the post-KLA parties. The three political parties have essentially consumed the government, divvying up and factionalising the ministries, subjecting government to their patron-client networks, leaving little space for an independent civil service ethos to emerge.<sup>114</sup> Once embarked on such a course it is not easy to create such space and to steer in a different direction. While some of Kosovo's brightest NGOs place faith in elections implemented with open lists as a tool to prevent the current tri-opoly from consolidating unchallenged dominance they could find that a primary effect of open lists might merely be to change the flow of client-patron relations, from centralised to regional hierarchies. Some observers have made the comparison with southern Italy and its chronic administration problems, low levels of civic trust, and client-patron relations.<sup>115</sup> Kosovo Albanian society's path dependency exhibits some similar features, and its more unfortunate dynamics may be of such long vintage that considerable, concentrated effort will be required to change them.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> ICG interview with Branislav Krstic (originally from Gjakova/Djakovica and a fluent Albanian speaker - not the eponymous author of "Kosovo Pred Sudom Istorije"), North Mitrova, 14 December 2003.

<sup>111</sup> "Seizing the Past, Forging the Present: Changing Visions of Self and Nation Among the Kosova Albanians", *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 11, Nos. 1-2, Autumn 1993.

<sup>112</sup> Forum 2015 roundtable: "For a new Agenda for Kosova".

<sup>113</sup> Crime figures show different profiles peaking in each of the regions. ICG interview with an UNMIK police source.

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<sup>114</sup> UNMIK must share some of the blame for this, having failed to establish a civil service training college and a civil service oversight board prior to the formation of the PISG.

<sup>115</sup> See Robert Putnam, "Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy", Princeton University Press, 1993.

<sup>116</sup> Some of Albanian society's most admirable features also appear long-rooted. The entrepreneurial dynamism with which Kosovo Albanians quickly created a private parallel economy in the early 1990s that in many respects superseded and won out over the failing state sector that Milosevic had expelled them from can also be discerned in earlier accounts. Edith Durham noted in 1908 of Podgorica that through trade and business acumen: "Albanians have been slowly and peacefully

There need to be far-ranging changes and improvements in the media and education to give social change a chance of success. The post-1999 education system has failed to move on from and break with the resistance and nationalist mobilisation orientation of the Kosovo Albanians' "parallel" or "underground" education system of the 1990s -- which they set up after Milosevic pushed Kosovo Albanian teachers, pupils and students out of the state education structure. Instead of opening up to international influence and input since 1999, the education system has closed in on itself, even though its resources are exhausted: consisting largely of methodologies, knowledge and skills surviving in decayed form from the 1980s. The University of Pristina in particular has resisted change, as a mediocre academic leadership has attempted to shore up its position and privileges. Education now needs an internationally-oriented revolution of equivalent magnitude to that of the early 1940s, when under Axis occupation Albania sent its best teachers to Kosovo, swiftly diffusing literacy and a "national" consciousness.

Kosovo Albanian media also need to drastically improve and re-orientate. On 17-18 March the media switched into nationalist mobilisation mode and effectively fanned the flames of the riots. Even during the quieter preceding weeks and months they failed to take a position against extremist views. One Kosovo Albanian observer noted: "Whenever those KLA grievance demonstrations took place, TV covered them as if they were reporting from a carnival. Everyone they interviewed was saying the most outrageous, inflammatory things and the reporters never challenged it".<sup>117</sup> As with the education system, the media, and especially the public broadcaster RTK, has to be re-orientated away from resistance and mobilisation, and towards an educative, non-partisan, morally-rooted set of reporting, editorial and programme-making principles. To date, the media have displayed little in the way of introspection and acknowledgement of their failings on 17-18 March. The board and management of RTK are in need of a shake-up, and the international donors who, in the name of democratisation, have supported much of Kosovo's

media for the last four and a half years, need to demand something better for their money.

Resistance-orientation continues to shape Kosovo Albanian society's sense of self, to the detriment of building reliable state-like institutions. Anthropologist Janet Reineck concluded in the early 1990s that after the watershed of the 1981 riots, which marked a demeaned status for Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia (further exacerbated by the revocation of autonomy in 1989), society seized upon tradition and social symbols derived from the past for its psychological security. That orientation on traditional customs and values -- such as honour, oath, hospitality, and correct conduct -- persists today, as does a romantic ethnic Albanian nationalism rooted in an imagined heroic past.<sup>118</sup> When in mid-February 2004 both UNMIK and Kosovo Serb Assembly members protested about the placing of murals depicting epic scenes drawn exclusively from Albanian history in the renovated Kosovo Assembly building, the Kosovo Albanian polity dug its heels in, with the Assembly President arguing that their removal: "would hint at a dishonourable and dubious compromise."<sup>119</sup>

Although primary responsibility for ensuring that their society develops and matures through institutions rather than descends into mob rule lies with Kosovo Albanians themselves, the international community has to offer tangible support. Re-orientation of Kosovo Albanian social identity towards state-building is only likely to consolidate if there is a reliable prospect that a Kosovo state will be permitted. Orientation on resistance and the continuing draw of resistance/extremist cells will only ultimately subside when the root causes of resistance are removed. Potentially liberal, constructive forces in Kosovo society that could rally people against extremism and mob violence are only going to feel able to do so if offered solid cover by the international community, i.e. a clear way forward

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re-conquering their lost town...The conquered is eating up the conqueror". "High Albania", reprinted by Virago, London, 1985, page 152.

<sup>117</sup> ICG interview, 8 April 2004.

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<sup>118</sup> Janet Reineck, "Seizing the Past, Forging the Present: Changing Visions of Self and Nation Among the Kosova Albanians", *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 11, Nos. 1-2, Autumn 1993.

<sup>119</sup> Assembly President Nexhat Daci's letter to Holkeri, summarized in *VIP Daily News Report Kosovo at a Glance* 16 February 2004. Daci's position was supported by his LDK colleague President Rugova and others. Some Kosovar Albanian politicians did speak out against the murals, notably Xhavit Haliti of the PDK: "It is not a mono-ethnic parliament...There is no need for us to be expressing nationalism in this way."



and roadmap for Kosovo's self-determination aspirations through cooperation with the international community. Extremism needs to be deprived of the trump card it is currently able to flash in front of Kosovo's disaffected and frustrated Albanian population -- its monopoly over the "direct" route to self-determination.

## **IX. RESHAPING THE INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE**

UNMIK is no longer an efficient or a stabilising factor. Both because it is the embodiment of a policy of containment and because of its own implementation failures, tone, personnel and organisational inadequacies, it is attracting dangerous levels of hostility. Therefore, while preserving continuity of institutional knowledge, it would be wise to introduce a successor organisation, with a different identity and mandate.

The present "pillar" structure<sup>120</sup> was created in the immediate post-war situation in 1999, as much to reconcile the ambitions of different international actors as to meet Kosovo's needs.<sup>121</sup> The new UN mission, unlike UNMIK, should have Kosovo's social, economic, and institutional development as the core of its mandate, with the EU taking a lead role in the process. It should not need a pillar structure; social and economic matters should be the sole responsibility of the PISG, with the European Union and its member states playing a mentoring and monitoring role. The role of current SRSB Harri Holkeri should be divided between a Chief Administrator to oversee the development of Kosovo's economy and institutions, integrating the remaining governance functions of the UN mission with the PISG, and a Chief Negotiator to prepare for and handle the resolution of Kosovo's final status (discussed in more detail in the next section).

### **A. THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE ECONOMY**

Since the initial post-war reconstruction drive the international community has neglectfully cast Kosovo's economy adrift. In a December 2001 report ICG argued that the international community should maintain substantial assistance to Kosovo so long as its progress towards economic self-sufficiency was stunted by the lack of a final status settlement.<sup>122</sup> Instead, disengagement has occurred without reaching such a settlement. For example, European Union assistance to Kosovo has tailed off at an

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<sup>120</sup> See footnote 28 above

<sup>121</sup> ICG warned of this at the time; see ICG Balkans Report N°66, *Kosovo: Let's Learn from Bosnia*, 17 May 1999.

<sup>122</sup> See ICG Balkans Report N°123, *Kosovo: A Strategy for Economic Development*, 19 December 2001.

annual 55-60 million Euros for the years 2004-6, down from 336 million in 2001 and 147 million in 2002.<sup>123</sup> As a result, Kosovo's economy has begun once again to contract -- economic pessimism has grown steadily since July 2003<sup>124</sup> and import growth is confirmed to have gone into reverse in 2003.<sup>125</sup> That decline is explained by reduced purchasing power rather than increased domestic production -- agricultural and industrial activity and investment remain very low, as money and energies cluster in a private sector consisting mainly of trade and services.<sup>126</sup>

As a peacekeeping mission UNMIK is not designed for the delivery of economic development -- neither structurally nor by inclination. UNDP was left outside its pillar structure, and UNMIK's senior staff have a short-term political focus. One senior international official complained that whenever he tries to raise development issues in the SRSG's office: "their eyes glaze over".<sup>127</sup> A Western European diplomat serving in Pristina acknowledged: "The rule of diplomats is killing Kosovo. Development doesn't come about through decreed standards, but from economics."<sup>128</sup>

While UNMIK in recent months made standards its priority project, its EU-led Pillar IV was simultaneously dashing Kosovo Albanians' economic hopes. Pillar IV chief Nikolaus Graf Lambsdorff's abrupt 6 October 2003 decision to suspend privatisation came as an insensitive hammer blow. A more subtle news management approach could have been taken, less abrasive to public and investor confidence. Echoing the signalling of weakness in the security field, the months of dithering and deadlock over privatisation that followed have only solidified the impression of an international administration that is a hollow shell, both lacking muscle of its own and unable -- perhaps

unwilling -- to summon the outside support, in the form of indemnities and political determination, to push through a key policy that it spent three years designing and agreeing on. From the viewpoint of investors, UNMIK has little credibility as a guarantor of the future. While widespread Kosovo Albanian conspiracy theories about EU Pillar and KTA officials blocking privatisation in defence of interlinked continental European-Serbian business interests are perhaps only to be expected, it is alarming that even senior UNMIK officials have in private joined this chorus.<sup>129</sup>

As a vehicle for steering Kosovo's economic regeneration, the EU Pillar has problematic aspects. Allegations and rumours of corruption have swirled around it for the last two years. Whatever the truth of the rumours, the Pillar lacks developed internal procedures and the oversight of a higher authority that might together lessen the risk of corruption. As one EU official confided: "UNMIK's Pillar IV is a strange creature, without a mother or father".<sup>130</sup> The EU merely pays its bills. It has no institutional link with EU headquarters in Brussels, and no European Commission officials serve in it. Moreover, the Commission has been wary of the Pillar's aspirations for adoption, preferring to keep it at arm's length.

But the PISG's approach to economic planning has equal shortcomings. Corruption, scarcity of skills and vision, together with political factionalism, have all impeded the PISG in playing a pro-active and leading role in economic planning. The PDK controls the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the LDK the Ministry of Finance and Economy. Their interaction is characterised more by rivalry than coordination.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> E-mail communication to ICG Pristina office from the European Commission, 19 March 2004.

<sup>124</sup> Riinvest/UNDP Fast Facts on Kosovo Early Warning Report #6, April 2004 - the results of quarterly opinion polls.

<sup>125</sup> Down from 988.7 million Euros in 2002 to 971 million Euros in 2003. "Trade Policy for Kosovo 2004", joint paper by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the UNMIK EU Pillar, 8 April 2004.

<sup>126</sup> Banking and Payments Authority of Kosovo data for commercial bank lending in 2003 show trade and services, tourism, hotel/restaurants dwarfing lending for agriculture and industry. See December 2003 monthly statistics bulletin, page 11.

<sup>127</sup> ICG interview, Pristina, 30 March 2004.

<sup>128</sup> ICG interview, November 2003.

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<sup>129</sup> ICG interview, January 2004.

<sup>130</sup> ICG interview, December 2003.

<sup>131</sup> The first attempt to break this logjam within the PISG displayed all the usual weaknesses -- in December 2003 the (PDK-dominated) Office of the Prime Minister gave backing to the circulation of Trade and Industry Minister Ali Jakupi's plan for Kosovo's medium term economic development. Its central idea of developing Kosovo's economy through a further program of mass construction was heavily criticised by local economists. Both in its proposed modalities and genesis the plan lacked necessary angles of collaboration -- although it posited nearly 5 million Euros of investment over a 4-5 year period, it presupposed that it could all be done without foreign help. The plan was developed without inter-ministerial consultation, without linking it to budgetary planning, or any process of examining what new legislation might be required to support it.

Moreover, both the PISG and UNMIK have so far proved unable to turn around several massive failures in key economic areas that threaten to cripple Kosovo's ability to develop. Revenue collection is failing -- the majority of Kosovo Albanian individuals and businesses fail to pay their utility bills and consumer taxes. The only revenue collection success is the simpler task of collecting customs and excise duties at the borders. As of December 2003 consumers owed the Kosovo Electric Corporation (KEK) nearly 150 million Euros<sup>132</sup> and the Ministry of Finance and Economy estimated that 200 million Euros of internal tax revenue went uncollected in 2003.<sup>133</sup> Together, these sums amount to over half of the present annual Kosovo Consolidated Budget.

Economic policymaking therefore remains fragmented, visionless, and hobbled by failures in both Kosovo's internal and external environments. Pleas from the Kosovo Albanian business community to impose different import duties on raw materials and consumer goods are currently unheeded, both because policy responsibility is split between UNMIK and the PISG and because differentiating the duties would require a new layer of administration, vulnerable to abuse and corruption.

The extra spike of uncertainty and instability inserted by the 17-18 March riots has only added to the existing disincentives. The absence of clarity over Kosovo's final status has stunted investment at all levels. Kosovo banks cannot attract long-term deposits, therefore cannot lend long term. Until the final status equation becomes visible, private finance is highly unlikely to flow freely into Kosovo. The continuing uncertainty makes it impossible to know which laws and regulations might remain and which might change, and thus to take sober investment decisions based on known factors of risk. The mainly Kosovo and diaspora investors behind the 180 bids for the 18 SOEs tendered in the second wave of privatisation that amounted to 137 million Euros (winning bids amounted to 25 million Euros) are now highly unlikely to approach further tenders with the same confidence.

In addition to uncertainty, the lack of status definition keeps Kosovo out of the many clubs for which the entry ticket is statehood. It restricts the finance and banking sector considerably. Kosovo's ineligibility for membership of the international SWIFT bank transfer system reinforces its marginalised, enclave status -- outside international financial networks. It makes Kosovo too fiddly for foreign banking groups to get involved with. Very few will distort their procedures for the sake of dealing with such a small territory, where a predominantly cash economy fuels concern about vulnerability to money laundering -- making for a self-reinforcing vicious circle. Even the Banking and Payments Authority, Kosovo's IMF-managed nascent central bank, is unable to diversify its foreign deposits, because it cannot persuade foreign banks (other than the two or three that had already ventured into Kosovo's banking sector) to accept its money.<sup>134</sup> Kosovo's lack of state sovereignty restricts its access to funds from the development banks for the revamping of its infrastructure.

The Contact Group and EU member states must offer their full-blooded engagement and support for Kosovo's economic development. In the immediate term that support must be deployed to plugging and repairing the gaps and making up the negligence deficit brought about through international diffidence and ambivalence over Kosovo's final status -- privatisation must be fixed and club memberships must be fixed. The Contact Group's newly announced Kosovo Support Group initiative, under which the Contact Group will visit Kosovo and monitor progress every six weeks, should be harnessed to this.

Missing a fixed state abode, Kosovo has to make do with plugging its club membership gaps through a haphazard and flimsy patchwork of borrowed or rented temporary addresses -- a mobile phone code rented from Monaco, an airport identity borrowed from Iceland. But most gaps remain unfilled. Pending resolution of Kosovo's final status, EU member and Contact Group states should share out responsibility among themselves to act as guarantors for Kosovo's missing club memberships -- the SWIFT scheme, the international Green Card car insurance scheme, and so on.

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<sup>132</sup> "KEK at a glance", quoting KEK spokesperson Betty Dawson, in the newsletter on European Union Activity in Kosovo, November-December 2003, Issue 18.

<sup>133</sup> IWPR interview with Andreas Wittkowsky, EU Pillar, 16 April 2004.

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<sup>134</sup> ICG interview with Donat Branger, Managing Director of the Banking and Payments Authority of Kosovo, 5 December 2003.

Likewise, they should give their backing, insistence and support to a return to the activist policy on privatisation pursued by the previous leadership of UNMIK and its EU Pillar, prior to autumn 2003. Privatisation has been derailed by a combination of factors, all of which need to be addressed and rectified -- an EU Pillar and KTA leadership that appeared obsessed with finding reasons and mechanisms for delaying privatisation; and a disengagement and denial of support by the UN Secretariat since October 2003, specifically manifested in its refusal of two key KTA requests: for KTA officials to be granted the immunity that UN mission employees would normally enjoy, and a simple formula that would invalidate the highly dubious ownership transformations effected upon the SOEs under Milosevic in the 1990s (the KTA's suggestion was for UNMIK to be able to rule invalid three Serbian laws under which the SOEs were transformed in the 1990s).

If the latter two blocking points can be removed, the legal framework UNMIK created by summer 2003 for privatisation is favourable enough for the privatisation program to proceed. Instead of the UN's present unworkable compromise whereby the 1990s ownership transformations of each of the roughly 400 Kosovo SOEs must be exhaustively researched and invalidated -- either on the grounds that the transformations took place with violations of the law of the time or with elements of discrimination -- before they can proceed to privatisation, UNMIK should formally present to the UN Secretariat and Security Council the researches the KTA has managed to complete on a sample of roughly 30 SOEs, which reportedly demonstrate that in each and every case the 1990s ownership transformation was conducted either in violation of the law (e.g. money was not paid) or with discrimination (e.g. the company records showed a stable, mainly Albanian workforce, suddenly replaced with Serbian names circa 1990-1), and these researches should be used as the basis for a UN-level decision to invalidate the Milosevic-era ownership transformations.

Business and investor confidence has taken a considerable further knock from the 17-18 March rioting. This makes even more urgent the need for new, vigorous international community engagement on Kosovo's economy. Together with the announcement of action on privatisation and Kosovo's "club memberships", new international donor resources need to be allocated to aid Kosovo's economic and educational development.

Reform should be undertaken within Kosovo to unify the parallel, disjointed authorities responsible for economic policy and planning.

## **B. PARALLEL STRUCTURES**

The international community should use the current situation to bring parallel structures within the wider UNMIK system of government -- to secure on one hand PISG recognition of them and on the other hand Belgrade's agreement that they should become part of the UNMIK structures. Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs should enter a sustained dialogue with UNMIK and the Contact Group countries on such regularisation. The Kosovo Serbs should take a lead role in this, with Belgrade supporting rather than leading and marshalling them. The Kosovo Serbs should make resource requests to UNMIK, Belgrade and PISG jointly for funding of structures.

Such regularisation of parallel structures should be for the purpose of paving the way for decentralisation of local government authority along the lines of the Council of Europe (Civiletti) plan -- leading towards a looser and less "integrated" mode of co-existence than imagined in UNMIK's present unitary administration model. UNMIK should institutionalise dialogue between Kosovo Albanian leaders and civil society and their Kosovo Serb counterparts on the means of co-existence in Kosovo.<sup>135</sup>

The PISG should be encouraged to take the initiative in proposing a social infrastructure for the Kosovo Serb minority: a dedicated Kosovo-wide TV channel; support for what have hitherto been parallel structures in education, healthcare and other areas; an affirmative action amendment to the public procurement law; and crucially, modes of territorial decentralisation to guarantee the security and viability of Kosovo Serb communities. The PISG should appreciate and the international community should make plain that their failure to take the latter initiative will result in it being taken entirely out of their hands.

Belgrade is reported to be pressuring Kosovo Serb leaders to prepare for the "hard" separation envisaged under its cantonisation agenda -- using the present

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<sup>135</sup> The process of dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade is restricted to the areas of missing persons, returns, energy and transport/telecommunications.

international openness to "decentralisation" in order to further a destabilising agenda of biting the largest lumps possible out of Kosovo for incorporation into Serbia proper. Belgrade should reflect long and hard on whether this is really in Kosovo Serbs' interests, or whether such tactics, and concern for territory above people, is simply repeating the mistakes made in Croatia and Bosnia that ultimately resulted in the forced exodus of Serb populations.

Just as the Contact Group should apply pressure to the PISG to offer modes of territorial decentralisation to the Kosovo Serbs, it should apply pressure upon Belgrade to desist with preparations for a destabilising cantonisation of Kosovo. Aid conditionality should be used as a lever. Currently, the international community is allowing its financial aid to Serbia to be diverted for the financing of parallel structures in Kosovo, to the tune of at least 80 million Euros per year.

Ultimately, if Belgrade wishes to aid the long term viability of Serb populations in Kosovo, particularly south of the River Ibar, it must begin to work for stability in Kosovo rather than against it, and become a partner of UNMIK and the PISG, rather than an adversary. Belgrade should work to change the tone of racist disdain for Albanians that emanates both from its officialdom and media, and to do much more than its present perfunctory accounting for war crimes. It would be a gross mistake to pass up on the present possibilities for negotiating local self-governance for Serb communities in Kosovo in favour of an over-ambitious territory-driven agenda that risks dooming those communities and tipping the region once again towards armed conflict.

### **C. SECURITY COORDINATION**

Even if the perpetrators of the March 2004 violence can be brought to justice (which will itself require an estimated 100 extra international investigators and six more international prosecutors),<sup>136</sup> serious gaps remain in Kosovo's security apparatus.

The police response to the riots revealed serious shortcomings both within the UNMIK police force and in its coordination with other security bodies. It has also posed difficult questions over the future of the KPS. KFOR's uneven approach to use of the KPC in response to the riots begs questions about

the peacekeeping mission's future relationship with that body. UNMIK police needs to develop together with KFOR a security contingency plan, prioritising the defence of ethnic minority communities in the event of future violence. Its failure to have in place such a plan on 17 March and the poor level of coordination with KFOR must not be repeated.

The leadership and organisation of UNMIK police should be overhauled. Even without the appalling incident of 17 April, in which three officers were killed and eleven wounded in a gunfight between U.S. and Jordanian members of the force, the response to the riots made it clear that the multinational and transitory nature of the UNMIK police force makes it barely cohere. It is currently an amorphous force, without shared values or a sense of identity. Strong, energetic leadership is required to impose a sense of direction and identity that is currently lacking. Political rather than police values are being allowed to lead the force, and that is ultimately destructive and corrupting. As such, the UNMIK police force is a poorer tutor to the KPS than it should be.

The UNMIK police force should be strengthened by restricting its contributors to national police forces from developed countries with good human rights records, and tours of duty must be of increased duration in order to reduce the transitory nature of the force.

KPS morale is dangerously low in the wake of the rioting and steps must be taken to raise it. Many KPS officers feel they are being blamed for the actions of a few, or that they were not allowed sufficient operational autonomy to tackle or prevent riots in the ways they thought most appropriate. The elements of the KPS that responded well to the crisis need to be built up, recognised and boosted. It is important that there should not only be investigation, removal and punishment of KPS officers who failed to do their duty and showed complicity with the rioters, but there should be parallel investigation and reporting of good performance. The program of gradual transition to KPS control, which has been frozen in the wake of the riots, should be redesigned to take account of the results of such reporting. The transition should probably proceed at a slower pace than originally planned, but with deeper preparation and training, and priority given to police stations and units that performed well during the riots.

KPS morale will not only be affected by UNMIK's direct treatment of it, but also by perceptions among

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<sup>136</sup> According to the EU Council Secretariat's non-paper.

the general population. There is anecdotal evidence that in some locations KPS officers are already experiencing difficulties, being derided as UNMIK lackeys and the like. An important bellwether for determining popular Kosovo Albanian attitudes towards the security set-up henceforth, and KPS's position within it, will be the treatment of the KPC.

If the KPS represents the state-oriented side of Kosovo Albanian involvement in the security system, the KPC represents the resistance-oriented side. As such, the international community has sought to confine it to a civilian emergency relief and rescue role, blocking the KLA-successor structure from attaining its aspirations for a military or public security role in the new Kosovo. Opinion polls consistently show the KPC to be Kosovo Albanians' most popular organisation, precisely because of its origin as a resistance structure and its latent security potential. In the heat of the riots, on 18 March, two of KFOR's multinational brigades broke the taboo of involving the KPC in public security.

That precedent should neither be institutionalised nor discarded. Every KFOR multinational brigade should instead establish strong bonds of partnership with the KPC in their region, helping them with training for the emergency relief tasks within the KPC mandate and building up their self-esteem. For a Kosovo Albanian society standing at a crossroads between resistance and state orientation, such signalling of partnership with the KPC will go some way towards binding the former to the latter orientation, easing the position of the KPS.

The wider security implications of the March 2004 violence are serious. Both KFOR and NATO have now lost their aura of invulnerability and invincibility. This could make them subject to further attacks, not only in Kosovo, but also in Bosnia. With its low levels of troop strength in the Balkans, NATO's ability to decisively project force in Kosovo and Bosnia simultaneously is now in question. The Balkans are an unforgiving political environment: the perception of the international community's weakness and lack of resolve will not be lost on nationalist extremists in Kosovo and elsewhere, including newly resurgent nationalists in Belgrade.

Belgrade's newly ascendant nationalists may have taken all the wrong lessons from mid-March. In both the army and the police, right-wing nationalist elements that were marginalised under the DOS government have been emboldened by nationalist gains at the polls in December. The removal of DS

party president Boris Tadic as Minister of Defence may signal an end to the few internal military reforms to date. It is certain that some Serbian military formations participated inside Mitrovica on 17 March.<sup>137</sup> The government came under strong pressure from nationalist elements -- within the army and Interior Ministry -- to intervene openly militarily. Certain nationalist elements inside Serbia's parliament also favour this solution. In the event of another security breakdown in Kosovo, Serbian security forces may well decide to re-enter the province openly. This would present the UN and NATO with a new and dangerous situation: not only would Belgrade openly challenge the perceived failure of a UN protectorate, but it would also risk igniting a wider conflict with Kosovo's Albanian population. In this case, KFOR and UNMIK would be caught between two sides, both of whom view them with hostility.

Renewed ethnic violence in Kosovo could spill over into Serbia proper, not just in the neighbouring Presevo valley with its ethnic Albanian population, or in Serbia's south-western Sandzak region, where the majority are Muslim Slavs, but also in the northern ethnically-mixed province of Vojvodina, where ethnic Croats and Hungarians have reported an alarming increase in incidents both during and since the mid-March events.<sup>138</sup> All of these ethnic minority populations fear that Serbia's newly ascendant nationalists will use violence in Kosovo as an excuse to cleanse Serbia of its remaining minority populations. There is also potential for renewed violence in Kosovo to embolden Bosnian Serbs to attempt to secede from Bosnia.

None of NATO, the EU, the UN, or the international community are prepared for the possible regional security fallout of renewed ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. An outbreak of violence in several places at once would tax international diplomatic and security resources to the limit. To signal that it is serious about regaining the initiative in setting the security agenda, KFOR must not only increase its visibility generally in Kosovo but also strengthen its presence at all Kosovo's border crossings -- both to the south, to signal to ethnic Albanian trouble-makers that they cannot expect to wander in and out of Kosovo with impunity; and to the north, to deter Serbian security forces from future adventurism.

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<sup>137</sup> ICG interviews with Serbian sources in Belgrade and northern Mitrovica, March-April 2004.

<sup>138</sup> ICG interviews with Serbian and Vojvodina human rights groups, March-April 2004.

## **X. LOOKING AHEAD**

It would be wrong to reward the violence of March 17-18 by moving straight into negotiations on final status, or by making precipitate decisions about redrawing borders or cantonisation. However, the "standards before status" policy is in urgent need of recalibration. To date, the message from international officials has been that no discussion of the shape of Kosovo's eventual final status is to be allowed before it is determined that Kosovo has sufficiently fulfilled the standards; and that determination will take place only in mid-2005 at the earliest. This attempt to stifle discussion, though intended to encourage Kosovo politicians to channel their energies elsewhere, has in fact allowed pressure to build up, and encouraged suspicion among Kosovo Albanians about the international community's real intentions.

But before internationally-brokered negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia on final status can begin, there is real preparatory work to be done which should begin sooner rather than later. As argued above, ideally this should be done by a senior UN representative who, unlike the current SRSG and his predecessors, is not also burdened with the duties of administrative oversight of Kosovo. In the interim, the United States should follow the example of the European Union and appoint a special representative on Kosovo to demonstrate commitment to the process and ensure high-level coordination.

In advance of the beginning of talks, the international community can do much to prepare the ground, in particular by making absolutely clear that their legal basis will be UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which mandates the UN to facilitate a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status. This is important because Kosovo Albanians prefer to believe that their 1991 declaration of independence and the subsequent war are the basis for their claim to statehood; while Serbs prefer to declare that Kosovo remains an inalienable part of Serbia.

The potential of a chaotic Kosovo to destabilise the region has been discussed above. In order to reassure its neighbours, some means of involving the other countries of the region in the final status process should be found. They should not be full participants -- this is essentially a deal between the UN, Serbia and Kosovo, and to pull in all the regional states as equal players will increase suspicions that the process is "really" one of redrawing the regional map as part of a bigger international plan. There are

strong memories of the Congress of Berlin in 1878, and subsequent interventions by the Great Powers, which arbitrarily redrew the borders of the Balkan countries with little reference to the wishes of the local population.<sup>139</sup> But other measures to build regional confidence can be found, ranging from enhanced consultations with the participants in the Kosovo negotiations, to observer status at the negotiations themselves.

More thought needs to be given now to the agenda of the talks as well, in particular to the position of Kosovo's Serb community. Albanian assurances that minorities will be secure once independence is granted are very unconvincing in the light of the violence of March 2004 (and before) and the failure of most of Kosovo's leaders to react to it appropriately. This is a clear case where standards will be linked to status -- if the PISG does succeed in repairing the physical damage rapidly and openly, if it does make good faith efforts, as proposed above, to win the confidence of Kosovo Serbs, then the need for special provisions will be correspondingly less. The international community should however make it clear that some special provisions will have to be made; the question is, how many?

It is certainly premature to signal either the redrawing of Kosovo's boundaries with Serbia or any internal cantonisation of Kosovo. Any redrawing of borders, in either of these contexts, would risk opening further new ethnic partitions in the region. Moreover, at a practical level, it would leave Kosovo Serb communities south of the Ibar isolated in a new truncated Kosovo whose identity would be wholly ethnic Albanian, with no hint of a civic identity, and no urban centre within Kosovo from which Serbs could draw support and sustenance in healthcare, education, media and other spheres. It would require considerable reinforcement of KFOR to prevent locals from once again trying to create de facto partition on the ground by violence.<sup>140</sup> Cantonisation, which to many international observers has positive connotations from its association with Switzerland, is understood by Balkan actors in much the same way as the word "Balkanisation" elsewhere -- a division

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<sup>139</sup> It is worth reflecting that the Great Powers of a century ago are in fact the same six states that constitute today's Contact Group, except that we have lost Austria-Hungary and gained the United States.

<sup>140</sup> This of course does not preclude the possibility of an independent Kosovo freely agreeing to redraw its border with Serbia, in line with the Helsinki principles.

of territory into small, feuding, ethnically defined units, with no effective central government, the *locus classicus* being the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For now the watchword is "decentralisation", though as argued above,<sup>141</sup> flesh must be put on the bones of this concept.

ICG has long argued that the most likely and desirable way of resolving final status is for Kosovo to receive a form of conditional independence. The conditions should include insisting that proper standards on minority rights be met for a period of time before all the benefits of international recognition are awarded. In light of recent events, the importance of this dimension is all the more apparent. The conditions could also include Kosovo renouncing any future merger with Albania, and a transitional form of international trusteeship with veto powers.<sup>142</sup>

All of this will require hard work. If the international community reacts conservatively, opting for a policy of containment, and treating the March 2004 ethnic cleansing as reason to further postpone consideration

of Kosovo's final status beyond summer 2005, more violence from the Kosovo Albanians can be expected -- against both Kosovo Serbs and the UN Mission and international security forces. The situation would gradually deteriorate into a low-level war, pitting the international presence against a hostile, resentful majority population, with potential destabilising effects across the region

Indecision is not an option. The extremist and criminal elements that took over, sustained and spread over two days what started as a spontaneous outpouring of violence in Mitrovica on the morning of 17 March will now be consolidating and organising for a possible further explosion. With the partnership between the international community and Kosovo Albanians dissolved, gloom, tension and worsening economic prospects may trigger a spiral into complete social and institutional collapse. Time is running out.

**Pristina/Belgrade/Brussels, 22 April 2004**

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<sup>141</sup> And previously by ICG; see ICG Balkans Report N°143, *Kosovo's Ethnic Dilemma: The Need for a Civic Contract*, 28 May 2003.

<sup>142</sup> The concept of conditional independence was first put forward in "The Kosovo Report", Independent International Commission on Kosovo (Co-Chairs Richard Goldstone and Carl Tham) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and considerably refined in ICG Balkans Report N°108, *After Milosevic: A Practical Agenda For Lasting Balkans Peace*, 26 April 2001, pp 127-128.



## APPENDIX A

### A CHRONOLOGY OF VIOLENCE: 17-19 MARCH 2004

#### DAY ONE -- 17 MARCH

##### Mitrovica

Demonstrators were out, in and around South Mitrovica, before 9 a.m. One group blocked the highway south of the town. Meanwhile, Kosovo Albanian teachers and other adults organised a demonstration of several hundred high school pupils (joined by employees of the nearby healthcare centre) outside UNMIK headquarters in South Mitrovica to protest the drowning of the three children.<sup>143</sup> Local media immediately broadcast the first demonstration as news, so that when a second demonstration of younger schoolchildren assembled in front of UNMIK circa 9.30 a.m. a group of up to 50 local men (recognised by police as Mitrovica habitual hooligans and criminals) arrived, too. They wandered towards the bridge, but KPS had erected metal barriers. The men chanted slogans for about ten minutes then turned back -- as it turned out, to collect reinforcements.

Shortly before 11a.m. the same group, now larger, reappeared, led by a man bearing an Albanian flag. A hard core within this crowd of now several hundred Albanian men egged on their companions towards the main bridge. The line of KPS in their way tried to calm and contain them until weight of numbers broke their line and swept aside the metal barriers after two-three minutes. Nearer the bridge, a unit of Jordanian riot police huddled ineffectively and the crowd swirled round it as it did round three UN police APCs, which did not completely block the road. Up to 100 Kosovo Albanian rioters who made it onto the bridge palpably faltered for a moment, clearly amazed to find themselves there without a KFOR soldier in sight.

Once over the bridge, they attacked cars and the Dolce Vita restaurant<sup>144</sup> with stones and petrol

bombs. UN police fired tear gas, the three APCs reversed onto the bridge, and the Jordanian riot police rallied, which convinced most Albanians to withdraw. Within minutes hundreds of Serb men had gathered on the north bank and threw stones at the remaining Albanians, who then also retreated across the bridge. This initial melee lasted about fifteen to twenty minutes. KFOR did not arrive until the police had already stabilised the bridge. From the fifth floor of the UNMIK regional headquarters overlooking the bridge, all senior regional international staff had gathered to watch. Among them was KFOR Multinational Brigade Northeast commander General Michel. One of those present later commented: "During those twenty minutes he watched like a spectator. I did not see him take a phone call".<sup>145</sup> Halit Berani, the local "human rights activist", was also seen overlooking the melee, talking on a mobile phone from the top of the cultural centre, a building directly next to the bridge.<sup>146</sup>

Some of the Albanian mob on the south bank began to attack and burn parked UN cars, and a drawn out battle ensued between them and the Polish riot squad around the adjacent pedestrian promenade, with the latter firing their tear gas cannon and plastic bullets, and the former lobbing bricks and petrol bombs.

Meanwhile, moving west through the city park, 200-300 Albanians crossed a narrow footbridge to an enclave of three largely-Albanian inhabited apartment blocks on the north bank, which are permanently guarded by KFOR. Although KFOR's presence and checkpoints at the three towers had been scaled down just a fortnight before, it should nevertheless have been possible for soldiers to stop the mass incursion across the footbridge, where there is room only to walk in single file.

At the towers, a stone-throwing duel between the invading Albanians and Serbs ensued, the two sides separated by UN police and French KFOR troops. A grenade was thrown, wounding several Albanians and French troops. To the astonishment of UN police, French soldiers at the towers declined to use their stun

<sup>143</sup> The South Mitrovica children's demonstration was mirrored by a similar one outside the government building in Pristina. That demonstration also appeared to be marshalled and organised by adults.

<sup>144</sup> The Dolce Vita gained notoriety after 1999 as the hang-out of the now formally disbanded Bridgewatchers paramilitary group.

<sup>145</sup> ICG interview.

<sup>146</sup> ICG interview with an UNMIK official.

grenades, saying they had no permission, and when asked to interdict two Albanians who emerged on the south embankment to fire Kalashnikov assault rifles wildly at the Serbs on the opposite river bank, replied that they could not because they had no ammunition.<sup>147</sup> In response to the Albanian gunmen, disciplined Serb small arms fire that had had been aimed over the heads of the Albanian crowd on the south bank became direct, and international security force sharpshooters also fired from the vicinity of the main bridge on the Kalashnikov-wielding Albanians. Four Albanians were shot dead and dozens wounded on the south bank.<sup>148</sup>

By 1 p.m., all Albanians had been pushed back across the river, and the police began to reassert control in the city park. Within North Mitrovica itself, a tense calm set in. The crowds of Serb men dispersed, and only observers were kept posted. In the south, sporadic street fighting between Albanian rioters and police carried on until dark.

### **Pristina and Caglavica**

Once news and rumours of the clashes in Mitrovica started reaching Pristina at midday, Kosovo Albanians in the capital had a ready-made focus for anger and aggression just three kilometres south of the city: the roadblock mounted by the Serb villagers at Caglavica.

The first crowd gathered at "the circle", a transport junction on the southern tip of the city where minibuses and taxis pick up and set down passengers near the hospital and main KPC base. Taxi drivers blocked the road, thus attracting people from nearby apartment blocks and some of the minibus passengers. The growing crowd summoned others by mobile phone. Once about 400 had accumulated, they began to walk the highway towards Caglavica.<sup>149</sup> A portion of the participants in a demonstration convened by the LDK party outside the National Theatre at midday to protest the recent grenade attack on President Rugova's residence also moved in the same direction once the demonstration was over. In the Albanian village of Ajvalija near Caglavica teachers reportedly released children from class to march on Caglavica. Word spread, and the flow of young Albanians out of Pristina toward

Caglavica continued all afternoon, while shops in Pristina began to close.

The second crowd consisted of students from the University of Pristina dormitories in the southern Sunny Hill district. The 20,000 students at the university come primarily from provincial towns and villages. They tend to be more radicalised and militant than their city-born counterparts. Roughly 4,000 live in the dormitories. The Independent Union of Students of University of Prishtina (UPSUP) has a history of nationalist mobilisation, having organised October 1997 protests against the Serbian regime over the head of President Rugova's leadership of the LDK, which was then the main channel of Kosovo Albanian resistance to Milosevic. The union has been at the forefront of recent anti-UNMIK protests. Yet student leadership has become contested in recent months. Since Autumn 2003, the new *Tjeterqysh* ("Something Different") student movement had campaigned against political control, corruption, and stagnation in the university's rectorate. A student union election campaign had been underway for several weeks prior to 17 March.

When students returned to their dormitories in the afternoon of 17 March, they found leaflets inviting them to demonstrate. On behalf of an "organising council", someone was addressing the dormitories through a megaphone, summoning students out and telling them they would be traitors if they refused. The official leadership of UPSUP was left to play catch-up. Gani Morina, its president, told ICG he tried to contact the Organising Council but there were 100 people declaring themselves as such. From 3,000 to 5,000 students began marching through the centre of Pristina. They stopped in front of the government building where different speakers competed for attention. Zejnel Kelmendi, the rector of the university, appears to have seen an opportunity to establish his nationalist credentials. Morina spoke also. Both alternated between exhorting and placating the crowd's emotions. By 5 p.m. the students marched to UNMIK headquarters, chanting: "UCK, UCK" ("KLA, KLA"). As twilight set in they marched to the southern edge of the city. Morina reported that when they reached "the circle", he was amazed to see no blocking security forces, only a burnt-out police car. The crowd flowed onto the highway, and agitators and its own momentum turned it into an aggressive mob the closer it came to Caglavica.

KFOR sources described the first day at Caglavica as "a medieval battle" -- hand-to-hand fighting from

<sup>147</sup> ICG interviews with CIVPOL and UNMIK sources.

<sup>148</sup> ICG interviews with eye-witnesses; television news footage; photographs; police sources.

<sup>149</sup> ICG interview with an eye-witness, 20 March 2004.

early afternoon to late evening. Caglavica became a battle of wills between mob and security forces.

In early afternoon, the initial crowd was prevented by the police from reaching the assembling Kosovo Serb crowd at Caglavica. The Albanians started taking side roads. Few were armed but they grabbed sticks and bricks and stones to throw. The first clashes were with Serbs on the west side of the highway, the smaller part of Caglavica. The Albanians set fire to the houses there. A police line on the highway tried to prevent the mob breaking through into the larger, eastern portion of the village. Shots were fired by both Serbs and Albanians. Agitators got in among the Albanian crowd, encouraging them to further attacks, and more firearms also appeared.<sup>150</sup> Desperate hand-to-hand fighting ensued, with the police and KFOR trying to hold their line, using water cannon, tear gas, and stun grenades, while themselves being attacked with sticks, stones, petrol bombs, and occasional small arms fire. KFOR shot dead an Albanian who tried to ram his truck into their line.

As light faded, the security forces appeared to be pushing back the mob. However, by shortly after 6 p.m. the students were drawing near, burning cars as they proceeded along the highway. They clashed with a defensive line of CIVPOL and KPS trying to hold a section of the highway a kilometre short of Caglavica, where a joining road led east at Veterinik toward Ajvalija and the large Serb enclave of Gračanica beyond. The police were overwhelmed and retreated toward the Ajvalija-Gračanica road. They radioed for reinforcements but none were available. Both they and two Swedish APCs that had guarded the mouth of the road fell back to a Swedish army base (a section of Slovak troops that earlier stood guard higher up the road had also gone), apparently leaving the road to Gračanica unguarded.<sup>151</sup> Fortunately, the mob did not test that road. U.S. marines reinforced the line at Caglavica from the south. Fighting intensified as the evening went on. The mob set a Swedish APC on fire. But the security forces' line held, and the mob failed to break into east Caglavica.

Mobs returning to Pristina in the evening rampaged through its southern districts, setting fire to UN cars

and attacking the "YU" housing complex<sup>152</sup> in the Ulpiana district where many Serbs who work for UNMIK live. Elements in the crowd directed the mob there, and Albanians from neighbouring apartment blocks reportedly came out to exhort the crowd to attack the Serb residents. A smaller hardcore group (possibly from outside Pristina, perhaps west Kosovo) did attack the housing complex. Cars in the courtyard were torched, apartments were broken into. At least one Serb resident was killed, another was stabbed seven times but survived. Police and KFOR trying to rescue the residents were beaten back three times by stones, petrol bombs, and sniper fire from concealed gunmen. Kosovo police broke in on the fourth attempt, rescuing residents, who were "crawling on the floor, with smoke everywhere"<sup>153</sup> and were ferried away in KFOR APCs as the mob rained down missiles and overturned rubbish containers.<sup>154</sup>

### **Elsewhere in Kosovo**

From the initial inciting points in Mitrovica and Caglavica, demonstrations flared in most urban centres, many turning violent. By mid or late afternoon news was coming in of attacks in Peja/Pec, Prizren, Lipjan/Lipljan, Kosovo Polje/Fushe Kosove, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Novo Brdo, Vucitrn/Vushtri and other locations.<sup>155</sup>

In the south-western town of **Prizren**, "unknown" men drove around telling shopkeepers to close. By 3 p.m. a large crowd had assembled in the main square. After initially displaying confusion, marching about hunting for a direction (and briefly throwing stones at the UNMIK building and burning UNMIK cars),<sup>156</sup> crowds attacked and burned the historic Serbian Orthodox seminary, church and monastery buildings in the town centre and periphery, overwhelming and

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<sup>152</sup> One of several such housing complexes controversially built around Kosovo during the 1990s to house Serb refugees from Croatia and Bosnia.

<sup>153</sup> ICG interviews with police and other sources.

<sup>154</sup> ICG directly observed one KFOR APC speeding away with a metal rubbish container stuck under its front fender, grinding on the road and showering waves of friction sparks in front of it.

<sup>155</sup> Since 17-19 March 2004, ICG has conducted several field trips around Kosovo, and gathered information from witnesses, officials, journalists, and local and international media reports. The accounts that follow are, therefore, representative but not necessarily complete.

<sup>156</sup> Targeting appeared highly selective. A German journalist told ICG he saw that while an UNMIK car was torched, a UNHCR car next to it was left untouched.

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<sup>150</sup> ICG interview with local residents.

<sup>151</sup> Direct observation by ICG researchers, overlooking Caglavica from the southern edge of Veterinik, on the Ajvalija road.

isolating pockets of German troops detailed to guard them. Houses of the town's reduced Serb community were also attacked and set on fire (several elderly Serbs were beaten, one died in the burning seminary building), as were several Albanian houses. Fire crews either refused to answer emergency calls or were stopped by crowds and traffic jams that also prevented German reinforcements from reaching their isolated detachments. An Argentine riot squad tried to disperse mobs with tear gas,<sup>157</sup> but the rampage continued until midnight. A mob attacked and burned the Monastery of the Holy Archangels in the Prizrenska Bistrica/Lumbardhi river gorge outside Prizren, sending its German KFOR guards and monks fleeing in armoured vehicles along the river bed.<sup>158</sup> After the mob found sacks of bones in the monastery, Prizren television broadcast an interview with a local official from the directorate for the protection of cultural and historical monuments, who claimed they were the remains of Albanians killed by Serbs in 1998-1999. Refutation had to wait until the next day, when local historian-archaeologist Muhamet Shukriu went on air to show a book he had published in 1992 on his studies of the very old bones.<sup>159</sup>

In **Gjakova/Djakovica**, student teachers formed the core of a protesting crowd of several hundred that came together in mid-afternoon. Circa 5 p.m. they attacked a CIVPOL officer (who was hospitalised) and burned an UNMIK police car. In the evening the crowd attacked the Orthodox church which survived 1999. Italian KFOR troops opened fire to protect the church and four elderly Serb women living there. Nine rioters were wounded. KFOR escaped with the Serbs, after which the crowd further damaged the church and burned down the women's homes.

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<sup>157</sup> According to some reports, the supplies of tear gas were soon exhausted. The crowds became seized of the belief that the German troops were not using tear gas because Holocaust-guilt forbids gas use by the German military.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with German soldier "Mark Schneider" (name changed to protect his identity) in "Rekonstruktion einer Niederlage", by Joachim Kaepfner, op. cit.

<sup>159</sup> ICG interview with local journalist Bashkim Susuri, 28 March. While the 17 March 2004 evening broadcast fed the rage of some of Prizren's Kosovo Albanians, others' memory of another recent Prizren myth about bones made them sceptical. Nearly three years ago, a collection of bones appeared in Prizren's medieval Turkish baths, prompting speculation and myth both that their origin lay in the 1998-1999 war and that poisonous mushrooms were growing from them, constituting a lethal health risk to anyone entering the baths. Subsequent forensic examination of the bones, in Germany, disproved both myths.

Demonstrations in the western Kosovo city of **Peja/Pec** started around noon, when some people gathered in the centre of town. A megaphone was used to invite others. A crowd of about 100 soon grew to several thousands. It marched towards the UNMIK and local municipality building, and then attacked the village of Belo Polje, as previously described. Italian troops evacuated residents into their nearby base, and one of the mob was shot dead by an UNMIK police officer. In Pec/Peja itself, another crowd attacked UNMIK vehicles and the UNMIK building. A further wave of assaults on UNMIK broke after the evening news: having seen that UNMIK was attacked elsewhere in Kosovo, many decided to take advantage of the new licence.<sup>160</sup>

A more sudden and premeditated pattern was reported in **Fushë-Kosovë/Kosovo Polje**, just west of Pristina. In the early afternoon the situation appeared calm, with no signs of anything out of the ordinary. However, at 3 p.m. cars, buses and vans arrived. Albanians emerged and attacked carefully chosen buildings that were bastions of Belgrade-sponsored Serb parallel structures: the health house, an administrative building next to it, the post and telecommunications building<sup>161</sup> and a primary school. A KPS unit was seen standing by and watching as the attacks started. Serb houses were also set on fire. Witnesses reported seeing other cars turn back after passing the hot spots, their occupants joining the attack. Local Serb residents were caught by surprise.<sup>162</sup>

In the southern town of **Ferizaj/Urosevac**, a protest about the three drowned children was called in the afternoon by the local branches of the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms, the three "associations emerged from war", and the association of former political prisoners. Until 6 p.m. the protest was peaceful. But then the crowd's mood turned angrier, and it closed in on the Serbian Orthodox church of St. Uros in the centre of town, guarded by Greek troops. Stones were thrown at the soldiers, and a grenade followed. For three or four hours, hundreds of Albanians besieged the Greek detachment, with stones, bricks, petrol bombs and grenades. Seventeen

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<sup>160</sup> ICG interviews with journalists.

<sup>161</sup> An Albanian flag was left on the building. The Kosovo Albanian weekly *Java* later splayed over its front cover a photo of an Irish soldier throwing the flag down. Kosovo Albanian newspapers -- particularly *Epoka e Re* -- have republished it several times since.

<sup>162</sup> ICG interview with an eye-witness.

soldiers were wounded, one with second degree burns to face and neck. The Greeks refrained from firing. Some local notables, including Shukri Buja, a former regional KPC commander, appealed for calm without result. U.S. reinforcements arrived circa 9-10 p.m. and began evacuating the Greeks, receiving gunfire and more thrown petrol bombs in the process. It required helicopters dropping tear gas to compel most of the crowd finally to disperse, reducing its numbers from over 1,000 to some 150. A curfew was declared, and U.S. military police and KPS units secured the church site.<sup>163</sup>

In **Lipjan/Lipljan**, seventeen kilometres south of Pristina, a crowd incensed by confused news coming in from Mitrovica gathered in the town centre around 3 p.m. It tried to advance on a nearby Serb village, Suvi Do, but KFOR troops blocked the road. Circa 6 p.m. the crowd returned to town and attacked Serb houses in the mixed Bestin neighbourhood. Security forces evacuated Serbs to the mono-ethnic Serb neighbourhood of Kisha and sealed it off with razor wire. Throughout the evening, mobs rampaged through Bestin, with minimal intervention from security forces. Gunfire was heard, at least thirteen Serb houses were burned, and at least one Serb and possibly two Albanians were killed. Dozens were injured. Having moved on from Ferizaj/Urosevac, Shukri Buja was seen among the crowd. It remains unclear whether he was attempting to calm or incite the protestors. KFOR later arrested him..

Demonstrations in the eastern city of **Gjilan/Gnjilane** began around 3 p.m., after a small crowd of Albanian youths had initially gone to occupy a crossroads outside the city to block off two Serb villages. The demonstrators gravitated towards a street where Serbs live and where the Orthodox Church is. Some Albanians reportedly gave shelter to their Serb neighbours, and there were clashes between the crowd and local Albanian residents. A 52-year old Serb was caught and killed by the crowd outside his house. U.S. KFOR intervened and pushed the crowd towards the centre of town. At one stage a man reportedly drove a tractor pulling a trailer-full of stones into the town centre. The crowd attacked the UNMIK building, throwing stones and burned

vehicles belonging to Serbs.<sup>164</sup> The riots lasted until 7 p.m. Several houses were burned. Recent immigrants to Gjilan/Gnjilane from Presevo in Southern Serbia, who had been involved in the 2000-2001 insurgency of the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac (UCPMB), were identified by Gjilan/Gnjilane residents as prominent in the riots.<sup>165</sup> Arrests of prominent former UCPMB figures followed two weeks later. On 29 March, as part of an operation directed against organized crime in the Gjilan/Gnjilane area, police arrested Sheqir Sheqiri, who is now the deputy chairman of the Gjilan/Gnjilane branch of the KLA War Veterans Association. On 1 April US KFOR detained Jonus Musliu at his family home in Gjilan/Gnjilane. Musliu is the head of the Movement for Democratic Progress (LDP) in Southern Serbia's Presevo Valley.<sup>166</sup>

In **Novo Brdo**, explosive devices were thrown at the municipal building and home of the Serb president of the municipality - both of which are located in the village of Bostane. No other incidents were reported.<sup>167</sup>

People within a crowd assembled in **Podujevo** by the local "associations of war" agitated for them all to move upon Mitrovica. This move was apparently prevented by the protest organizers.

Overnight, throughout Kosovo the security forces were in considerable disarray, overstretched and exhausted. Many small Serb villages and enclaves were left unprotected. The centre of Pristina was abandoned to mobs of angry young Albanian men, who roamed around finding UN cars to torch and baiting the occasional police cars and APCs that sped by without stopping. After midnight, the mobs' energies began to dissipate and by circa 2 a.m., the streets had emptied.<sup>168</sup>

## **DAY TWO - - 18 MARCH**

The mass hysteria of the previous day had partially ebbed by the morning of 18 March. Many of the foot soldiers of the demonstrations that had mutated into

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<sup>163</sup> ICG interview with local journalist Afrim Demiri, and U.S. Army News Service article, "Rioters Attack Allied Soldiers in Kosovo", 23 March 2004.

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<sup>164</sup> Many Kosovo Serbs still use Republic of Serbia car licence plates, rather than those issued by UNMIK, so their cars are identifiable.

<sup>165</sup> ICG interviews with local residents and Mayor Lutfi Haziri.

<sup>166</sup> See ICG Europe Report N°152, *Southern Serbia's Fragile Peace*, op. cit.

<sup>167</sup> ICG interview with a local journalist, 21 April.

<sup>168</sup> Observation by ICG and IWPR researchers.

pogroms likely woke up with a dawning realisation of the damage they had done to Kosovo, their community's image and its future. The agitators and criminal groups that had large, incensed crowds to work among and behind on day one had fewer people to work with on day two and a much reduced reservoir of angry energy to draw upon. The smaller number of violent attacks featured teenagers looking for adventure and more visible hardcore groups of determined armed men. Targeting was more systematic, extensive and cynical, and the volume of destruction was far higher. Most of the hundreds of homes destroyed during the violence were burned on 18 March. Some towns where no or comparatively mild violence had flared the first day experienced extensive ethnic cleansing.

### **Multinational Brigade Centre**

The day began peacefully, but by noon **Caglavica** had become a renewed focus for mob probes. KFOR was better prepared, blocking access by drawing a strict cordon across the highway at the top of the hill just outside Pristina with razor wire, backed by troops and APCs, and more robust rules of engagement. Many teachers reportedly failed to show up for classes at Pristina schools, leaving children unsupervised, many of whom went up the hill. Students from the University of Pristina dormitories again marched a circuit through the city, stopping by the National Theatre to hear speeches from, among others, KLA War Invalids Association leader Faik Fazliu, and the surviving daughter of Adem Jashari, Shqipe. The afternoon saw a confused mix of schoolchildren treating the scene as a day out; KFOR firing tear gas to push back the crowd, and a hard core of extremists who sniped at the troops and reportedly did not let demonstrators without a weapon proceed up the hill. Medical staff from the hospital were present on the hill to tend to those affected by tear gas, serving almost as paramedics for the mob. Eye witness told of armed men sporting the AKSh insignia, and of ambulances being driven up the hill with small arms for distribution. KFOR shot four Albanians.

Come evening, the more militant, armed spearhead of the mob that was battling the KFOR highway cordon at Veterinik, the top of the hill south of Pristina leading to Caglavica, was still testing KFOR. In Pristina, at an emergency session of the provisional government, Prime Minister Rexhepi decided to go there and appeal to the mob to stop. Accompanied by ministers Jakup Krasniqi, Ethem

Ceku, and Behxhet Brajshori, he drove up the hill and went into the crowd. Within two minutes, fighting stopped.

Some of the mob that then drifted away from the Veterinik cordon came back into **Pristina** and selected the Serb Orthodox church in the old town market area as the next target. Most appeared to be teenagers. Small contingents of KPS officers struggled to stop their progress into the narrow streets of the old town. They were not warned when tear gas was fired in to disperse the young mob. The gas left the KPS officers reeling, but had limited ultimate effect on the rioters as it drifted out to central Pristina. KFOR sources have suggested that some KPS officers sided with the rioters. In the confusion, as an Italian UNMIK riot police detachment arrived, one riot policeman was shot in the leg, possibly by a KPS officer, while another KPS officer was mistakenly shot three times by an Italian. When the Italian riot squad arrived at the church, the teenagers scattered. However, the security forces simply evacuated the priest and departed, leaving them to return unopposed for their next and ultimately successful attempt to set the church and priest house on fire.

The town of **Obilic**, some kilometres north west of Pristina, which like Kosovo Polje/Fushe Kosove to its south has a significant Serb and Roma/Ashkali minority, had been spared violence on day one. However, by late morning on 18 March mobs were attacking, burning and looting Serb houses. Security forces were absent. A unit of twenty to 30 KPS hovered uncertainly on the fringe of the trouble. Reportedly, they rescued several Serbs, yet the only arrests they made were of one or two Serb men who carried firearms to protect themselves. The bulk of the burning and looting was perpetrated by aggressive bands of teenagers and younger children, who also prevented fire engines from reaching the scene. Serb houses and apartments were hunted out all over the town. By the end of the day 90 houses, 40 apartments, and 30 annexes were in flames.

In **Lipjan/Lipljan**, the day started calmly, but by 6 p.m. Bestin neighbourhood was again under attack. As in Obilic, the mob identified Serb homes and burned as many as it could. In the evening several loud explosions were heard, one near the municipal building. In **Kosovo Polje/Fushe Kosove** rumour spread that gangs were going to descend upon the town at 4 p.m.. Mobs appeared and targeted Serb, Roma and Ashkali homes, destroying more than 100.

The organization of day two's demonstration in **Podujevo** was more anonymous than day one. Leaflets were posted up and left around at the town's main street junctions and at schools. A crowd gathered at midday and determined to walk the 6 kilometres to the boundary line with Serbia at Merdare. Members of the local associations of war and KPS officers tried to head the crowd off and convince them not to take such provocative and dangerous step. The crowd instead turned its anger on Podujevo's Serbian Orthodox church. A detachment of Czech and Slovak troops guarding it were ordered to retreat when the 500-strong mob broke through the outer wall. Having broken into the church, the crowd smashed everything it could, and made a bonfire of it all outside, including the KFOR soldiers' communications centre. In the cemetery the mob knocked over the headstones and made a special effort to dig up and scatter the remains of a local Serb killed in the 1998-9 war, known to have been a Serbian state security official. By some means the crowd managed to detach and drag away the 1200 kilogram church bell, reportedly believing they could sell it for precisely 32,000 Euros. It was later recovered in a nearby house. The smoke rising from the church was reported visible from the Serbian side of the boundary line at Merdare.<sup>169</sup>

### Multinational Brigade East

In **Ferizaj/Urosevac**, around midday, a crowd again began to build up near the St. Uros church, now guarded by U.S. troops. U.S. KFOR brought in the regional KPC commander, Imri Ilazi, and other KPC personnel to speak to the crowd, which departed, but only to attack and burn the home of two elderly Serb women (whom Greek troops evacuated) and several neighbouring Albanian-owned shops. It then desecrated an Orthodox cemetery, attacked Serb communities in nearby villages, and burned three outlying Orthodox churches.<sup>170</sup>

In **Gjilan/Gnjilane**, also in the U.S. zone, KPC were deployed with less success. Demonstrations started in the town centre shortly after noon. Around 1 p.m., notables, seemingly with KLA liberation struggle credibility, addressed the crowd

-- Gjilan's popular Mayor Lutfi Haziri,<sup>171</sup> together with the representatives of local branches of the PDK and AAK parties, and representatives of the KPC -- but they were booed, and the crowd became unruly. KPS and KFOR intervened and pushed it out of the town centre, through the main square, and west towards the outskirts. Tear gas was used at 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., and a curfew was imposed. The Orthodox church was saved and subsequently guarded jointly by KFOR and the KPC.<sup>172</sup>

In the southern, mountainous, predominantly Serb **Strpce** municipality, a crowd of Albanians arrived at the edge of the village of Drajkovac in the evening. They knocked at the first Serb house, shot dead a father and son, and withdrew.<sup>173</sup>

### Multinational Brigade Southwest

In west Kosovo, demonstrations hovered uneasily between remaining peaceful or collapsing into violent mob action. A substantial crowd assembled in **Decani** but was dissuaded from marching on the historic monastery by municipality president Ibrahim Selmanaj, joined by local KLA Veterans Association chief Avdyl Mushkolaj (who was arrested by UNMIK on 10 April for his alleged role on day one), and then by a telephone address relayed by loudspeaker from AAK leader Ramush Haradinaj in Pristina. In **Peja/Pec** the LDK municipality president Ali Lajci put himself at the head of the assembling crowd, which again went out to Belo Polje, where Lajci and others laid flowers at the spot where a CIVPOL officer had shot dead one of the crowd the day before (as they were attacking Serbs).

In **Prizren** large scale violence continued. Student teachers were reportedly inspired by the example of their peers in Pristina the previous day and formed the core of a mob that rampaged around the streets, smashing any shops that they found open. Two police stations were pelted with stones, and both police and UNMIK cars were burned. Perhaps reflecting the several-years-long conflict between the LDK-controlled municipal authorities (none of whom dared to try to come out and mollify the crowd) and the KLA veterans associations over the

<sup>169</sup> ICG interview with a local journalist, 21 April, and "Czechs hold line in Kosovo", by Eva Munk, in *The Prague Post*, 25 March 2004.

<sup>170</sup> ICG interview with local journalist Afrim Demiri, TV news reports.

<sup>171</sup> Haziri is perceived to have better war-time credentials than most of his fellow members of Rugova's LDK party, as he was imprisoned by the Serbs during the 1999 conflict.

<sup>172</sup> ICG interviews with local residents, Lutfi Haziri, and police sources.

<sup>173</sup> ICG interview with a Strpce resident.

statues issue, the municipality building came under sustained attack - from stones, petrol bombs, and gunfire. At one point assailants broke into the building, attempting to set it on fire. KFOR and KPS were evident on the streets, but CIVPOL reportedly had melted away from mounting a visible presence. Late in the day KPC members were brought in to talk to and calm the crowds. This appeared to have effect, with crowds dispersing towards evening.

### **Multinational Brigade Northeast**

In **Mitrovica**, security forces prevented small groups of demonstrators from converging on the city centre, driving them off with tear gas. There were minor clashes throughout the day and into evening: stoning of UN cars and KFOR vehicles, and some explosions. Sniper fire on KFOR and Serbs in North Mitrovica caused casualties. KFOR identified some as coming from the three towers, and fired into the suspected apartment, reportedly killing an Albanian. A group of Albanians with outsiders from either Gjakova or Drenica at its core attacked a Serb Orthodox church in South Mitrovica. Just days before, French KFOR had scaled back its protection of the church, leaving a handful of Moroccan guards, who were unable to prevent considerable damage. The church's position next to a KFOR compound, with which it shares a wall, also afforded no protection.<sup>174</sup>

In late afternoon, elements of the same mob that attacked the South Mitrovica church descended upon the Serb village of **Svinjare**, within 600 metres of Camp Belvedere, the principal French KFOR logistics base outside Southern Mitrovica. Several UNMIK police vehicles tried to get ahead of the mob and block its progress, as did a truck with Moroccan soldiers who were guarding the northern entrance of the village next to the base. The mob set fire to several houses at the north end of the village before the makeshift police/military roadblock deterred it from advancing. It pulled back, and security reinforcements arrived: twenty more soldiers and 50 Polish riot police. However, instead of consolidating their position, they were ordered to evacuate the villagers to the base and depart. During the evening and night, Albanian mobs were able to

return unimpeded, and loot and burn every Serb house and annexe in the village.<sup>175</sup>

South of Mitrovica, in the town of **Vucitrn/Vushtri**, two mobs converged to lay waste the Ashkali neighbourhood. A crowd that included KLA veterans attacked and burned the St. Elias Orthodox church, whose Moroccan KFOR guards departed. The mob desecrated the cemetery, even disinterring human remains and joined with another mob, led by local criminals, that was attacking, looting and burning Ashkali houses. KPS officers reported they evacuated an Ashkali butcher who was firing a gun at the mob and his family. Ashkali representatives later claimed the KPS arrested them, acting in complicity with the mob. Later in the afternoon, the local CIVPOL commander sent KPS to evacuate all Ashkali (more than 200) into the grounds of the police college (the OSCE facility at Vushtri/Vucitrn that trains the Kosovo Police Service). More than 70 Ashkali houses were burned.<sup>176</sup>

To the south west of Mitrovica, in Drenica, the medieval convent of Devic was destroyed. When shifts of schoolchildren changed around midday<sup>177</sup> at the high school in **Skenderaj/Srbica**, a large crowd of them began to walk west, through and out of the town. Reportedly, teachers, municipality officials, local activists and journalists made attempts to convince them to turn back, but were swept aside. In advance of its arrival, KFOR evacuated all but one of the Serb nuns and departed. The children looted and set fire to the convent, holding the remaining nun as a hostage until TV cameras arrived to record their "humanitarian" gesture in handing her over to the police.

### **19 MARCH**

Overnight, a fresh battalion of British soldiers was flown in and by the morning was patrolling Pristina streets vacated by Swedish KFOR the day before.

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<sup>175</sup> ICG interviews with UNMIK officials; Nicholas Wood, "Kosovo Smoulders After Mob Violence", *The New York Times*, 24 March 2004.

<sup>176</sup> European Roma Rights Center, "Ethnic Cleansing of 'Gypsies' in Kosovo", 24 March 2004; ICG interviews with KPS sources, two local researchers.

<sup>177</sup> Many of Kosovo's overwhelmed schools have to work on a shift system to accommodate the large numbers of children. Depending on the numbers, schools work in two, three, or even four shifts, and some pupils receive as little as two or three hours of class time per day.

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<sup>174</sup> ICG interviews with KPS, UNMIK and CIVPOL sources.



Shops opened and Pristina appeared to return to its normal bustle.

Attempts by agitators in several locations around Kosovo to resume the violence fizzled out. Organisations whose members were prominent in the riots -- UPSUP and the three "associations emerged from war" (KLA veterans, invalids, martyrs' families) -- announced suspension of the "protests" and published lists of demands, threatening to

"protest" again if these were not met within eight days. The demands included a complete transfer of governmental competencies to the PISG, the release of all former KLA fighters from prison (no matter what crime they had been convicted of), and the "removal" of Serb enclaves.

The most notable confrontation on 19 March was between French troops and the police in Mitrovica, as described above.

## APPENDIX B

### MAP OF KOSOVO

# Kosova / Kosovo

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The boundaries and names displayed on this map do not imply official recognition by the United Nations

Source: NIMA, WEU