



The American Council for Kosovo

**Hiding Genocide
in Kosovo
A Crime against God and Humanity**

Iseult Henry

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Table of Contents

Publisher's Foreword	Page 5
Introduction	Page 9
I. The Diary of Miomir Savic	Page 13
II. The Story of Novo Brdo	Page 25
III. Julka: A Mother of Devet Jugovica	Page 31
IV. The Case of Bozidar Ristic	Page 39
V. The Croats of Letnica	Page 47
VI. "Wrong Judgement or the Bells that Won"	Page 55
VII. The Cleansing of Kosovo Polje	Page 67
VIII. The Death of Vitina	Page 77
IX. The Plum Trees of Banjska	Page 83
X. The People of the Mountains	Page 87
XI. "Gotovo Gotovo- It is all over"	Page 93
XII. Old Habits Die Hard	Page 97
A Final Thought	Page 101



Publisher's Foreword

*Violence can only be concealed by a lie,
and the lie can only be maintained by violence.*

Directed in their time at the lies and violence that lay at the heart of the communist system, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's words are today no less applicable to the international mission in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. Beginning in June 1999, and continuing up to the current push by the western powers for imposing Kosovo's "final status" – the province's illegal and forcible detachment from Serbia and creation of an independent Muslim Albanian state – there has only been one argument for Kosovo independence: the Albanians' violence and threat of violence. First, violence against the Serb and other communities: Roma, Croats, Jews, Gorani, Ashkali, even against other Albanians. And, if the Albanian Muslims don't get what they demand, violence against the international bureaucrats and military personnel who have been their benefactors.

Predictably, the response from the self-congratulatory governments styling themselves the "international community" has been to cloak with a blanket of lies the violence they have helped to unleash. Lies about the purported Serbian genocide against the Albanians that served as pretext for the 1999 attack on Serbia, proof of which is as plentiful as Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons turned out to be. Lies about the claims of the occupying powers of their intention to protect all of Kosovo's residents, while smugly presiding over the chasing out of two-thirds of the non-Albanians after the supposed end of hostilities. (When such crimes occur during a conflict, we call them "war crimes." What do we call them when the fighting has stopped – "peace crimes"?) Lies about the nature of the *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* (UÇK; or the "Kosovo Liberation Army" (KLA)) and its leaders, armed and trained by the West as supposed freedom fighters, but who really are jihad terrorists and gangsters. Lies about the purported absence of Islamic fanaticism among the Kosovo Albanians to mask their baleful hatred for the Christian faith of

their Serbian victims. Lies about the expected treatment of the Serbs and their holy places – a people and a millennium-old Christian civilization marked for destruction.

The biggest lie: the internationals claimed they were coming to stop a genocide. In reality, they are facilitating one. For the Serbs in Kosovo “final status” can only mean a final solution.

At a time when the Western powers – foremost among them the United States – prepare what they hope will be an endgame for their predetermined solution to the Serbian question, now comes a searing ray of truth that cuts through the fog of lies in which Kosovo has been shrouded. *Hiding Genocide in Kosovo: A Crime Against God and Humanity* is a book that should never have been written – or more properly should never have needed to be written. The work of “Iseult Henry,” a member of the international mission in Kosovo, *Hiding Genocide in Kosovo* is not a typical book of the current events or international affairs genre. Nor is it a journalistic exposé. It is simply a book of stories, true stories of what has taken place in Kosovo since the end of the 1999 war: shooting, beheading, burning, bomb attack, maiming, rape, abduction, torture, desecration, theft, mutilation, and harassment.

Perhaps most appalling is the inescapable sense of *normalcy*, a feeling among both the Muslim Albanians and their Christian Serbian victims that a signal was given in 1999, and the violence is little more than the acting out of a story that already has been written. For example, a scene from 2001 – two years after the war ended:

Early in the morning, a bus full of Serbian school children from Kosovo Polje and surrounding villages was on the way to Gracanica for a school excursion. On the top of the hill, just outside the village of Ugljare, three anti-tank mines were placed, waiting for the bus to pass. By some miracle, the bus crossed the mine field unharmed, but the driver of the car following the bus did not escape. Two men were killed instantly when the mines exploded, a woman with two small children sitting on the back seat survived. The two bodies were brought to Kosovo Polje hospital by KFOR in three body bags. All the leads pointed to the, by then, already completely Albanian village of Dobrevo. Not one house was searched there. The Albanians from the village organised a celebration, driving through the town and waving flags. KFOR did nothing. I wonder if by that stage they realised just exactly what they were dealing with.

The cold detachment of KFOR (NATO’s “Kosovo Force”), the signal inadvertently or deliberately given to the KLA’s thugs, sets the stage for a silent, methodical program of elimination:

In the course of the cleansing of Kosovo Polje, it is interesting to note that KFOR actually mapped the progress of the cleansing; they produced maps showing each house in Kosovo Polje marking each with a colour denoting ethnicity. The first map for April 2000 shows very clearly that the majority of houses were inhabited by Serbs, with Albanians in the minority. Six months later by September 2000 the map showed a completely different pattern with Albanians in the majority. The map of 2003 shows the process was almost complete. By 2004, the mission was accomplished. The markers indicating where the Roma households were, have also vanished.

“Iseult Henry” is of course not the author’s real name, which in due course may be made public. But not now. *Hiding Genocide in Kosovo* is the witness of a Christian conscience to the ongoing genocide. It is also an indictment of her fellow internationals – Europeans and Americans – who see what has been happening in Kosovo, and have looked the other way or even abetted the cleansing.

More, the present book is a telescope into Europe’s possible future. While European and, even moreso, American policymakers delude themselves that they are buying the goodwill of the Islamic world by the sacrifice of a small Christian community in Kosovo, the perpetrators know this is yet another step in the imposition of Muslim power over the infidel, a way-station in the third invasion of Europe:

On my last visit to Vitina in October 2006 I was accompanied by an American photo-journalist. We visited the new mosque which is called the Medina mosque after the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia which is revered by Muslims. This is the first mosque ever built in Vitina town. We met with the Imam Akram Selimi who explained that he was the mullah of the mosque. He told us how he had studied Islam at the Azar University in Egypt for three years and was just newly returned to preach to his flock. His new flock he explained were very new as Vitina was a Serbian town up until 1999. He further explained that the Albanians had lived in the villages and only started coming into the town after June 1999. He even elaborated on this point by telling me that they had “taken the town from the Serbs.” He also pointed out that all women should be covered up as this is the will of Allah.

The reader of *Hiding Genocide in Kosovo* may be tempted to despair. That is not the intent of the book. For all the horrors of what has happened in Kosovo and is still happening, the final chapter has not yet been written. As of the date of this writing, the Serbian government still has not conceded

the loss of Kosovo, the Ahtisaari plan to hand governmental power to the KLA is stalled at the Security Council, and an ill-advised threat by the United States to force a unilateral recognition of Kosovo's detachment from Serbia has thrown Europe into consternation.

In short, the struggle continues. This is a struggle for the soul and future not just for Kosovo, not just for Serbia, but for all of Europe. More than a testimony, more than an indictment, *Hiding Genocide in Kosovo* is an entreaty to America and to Europe to look into the black abyss that stands before them and reconsider before taking that last, fatal step.

James George Jatras
Director, American Council for Kosovo
Washington, DC
July 2007

Introduction

Christians have abandoned God although God has never abandoned them. This holy place is an eternal testimony to the greatness of God. We internationals have a moral obligation towards this holy church in the midst of evil. Sufferings of Christians here is unbearable and unacceptable. We are committing here in Kosovo a crime against God and humanity.

A former NATO officer, 5/8/2006

The above entry was written in the visitor's book in the Patriarchate of Pec, a medieval Serbian monastery in the west of Kosovo on the 5 August 2006.

It succinctly states what in effect has been happening in Kosovo since NATO troops arrived there in June 1999. As an eye witness to the suffering, and the unbearable conditions meted out to the remaining communities in Kosovo, in particular the Serbs, I feel compelled to write an account of the events to which I have been a witness and which bears out what the former NATO officer wrote in the visitors' book in the Patriarchate.

Here is a true account of the genocide of the Serbs of Kosovo, the slow strangulation of their culture, their way of life, their means of livelihood and their ability to practice their religion. The writer does not feel restrained from telling what she knows by reasons of political correctness as so many others have been. James W. Gerard wrote in his Foreword to George Horton's "The Blight of Asia" an account of the extermination of the Christians of Smyrna by the Turks in 1922:

"That it should have been possible twenty centuries after the birth of Christ for a small and backward nation....to have committed such crimes against civilization and the progress of the world, is a matter which should cause all conscientious people to pause and think."

Gerard's comment about the Turkish genocide inflicted on the Armenians and other Christians in the 20th Century applies equally to the annihilation of the Serbs of Kosovo in the 21st century. Just as the last scene of the Turkish genocide directed at the Greek Christians took place in Smyrna within a few yards of the powerful Allied battle fleet, so the annihilation of the Serbs of Kosovo since 1999 has taken place under the eyes of the international community and on the UN's watch. The writer is a witness to the fact that not only did the authorities appointed by the international community turn a blind eye to the horrors and terror; in many cases they were guilty of collusion and in fact covered up what the ethnic cleansers were doing. The following stories will provide examples of their collusion and their inability to tell the truth about what was really happening in Kosovo. Not only are the various organizations charged with bringing peace and security to Kosovo guilty, so too are the various western media outlets which have consistently remained silent about the regime of terror prevailing in Kosovo since June 1999.

The Serbs were the main targets as they owned most of the land and commercial property in the province. In order to gain control of such, the internationals put in place mechanisms which successfully wrested away the legal title to most of the property of Kosovo. This entailed a variety of methods of which the Mafia would have been proud, for instance the spurious privatization process under the Kosovo Trust Agency, set up by the EU and the UN; the failed property dispute resolution mechanism under the Housing and Property Directorate and its successor the Kosovo Property Agency; the wholly inadequate performance of the police in protecting property; the establishment of a new and entirely inaccurate land registry/cadastral and the absolute failure of the local judicial system set up by UNMIK to support the rightful property owners if they were non-Albanian. .

The Enclaves of Kosovo:

The British historian Niall Ferguson wrote three years ago about, "an era of ...economic plunder and pillage in the world's forgotten regions, of economic stagnation and civilisation's retreat into fortified enclaves." *Newsweek*¹ commented that this scenario might be a little farfetched. However, as you will see from the following stories, it has already happened. Civilisation has retreated to the enclaves. The Serbs of Kosovo have ceased to exist as citizens of their own country and now inhabit enclaves, the new "reservations."

¹ 5 November 2006

These stories describe in detail the gradual, systematic and thorough cleansing of the territory of Kosovo through the slow asphyxiation of the remaining enclaves. It is a grim tale and I believe it is my duty as a European to tell it. These enclaves — remote, isolated, economically disadvantaged, cut off from most public services and utilities for large periods of time — are the last bastions of civilisation in Kosovo. If it can happen in Kosovo it can happen anywhere, where citizens of a country become unequal before the law, where they are restricted and have little or no freedom of movement. For today this is the plight of the Serbs of Kosovo, for tomorrow read your own backyard.

Every facet of the way of life of the Serbs of Kosovo is threatened by the new reality established since June 1999 under KFOR and the UN and therefore the very existence of the Serbs there is threatened. All kinds of persecution using all types of methods have been adopted. Throughout the territory of Kosovo, the Serbs have been persecuted, a persecution that is happening on their own territory; in their own country. They are denied basic human rights and are not equal to their Muslim counterparts under the law. Even though the Serbs were the main targets they were not the only ones. Consider the situation of the Croats who now number less than 500, or the Roma who have been banished to the edges of the Serb enclaves by persistent terrorization, or the Gorani, Slavic Muslims, who reside in the south west tip of Kosovo in the mountains and whose numbers dwindle every year.

These stories do not make for pleasant reading but they reveal the grim reality of what has happened to those deemed by the West to be on the wrong side of history. Furthermore, they are an indicator of a collapse of moral authority and its abdication to the dictates of power. They point to a very bleak future for us all, where the law no longer protects the innocent, where property belongs to those who want it rather than those who own it, where the institutions charged with upholding universal human rights are serial abusers of those rights and where a compliant and complacent media looks on approvingly.



I. The Diary of Miomir Savic

Miomir Savic was a young school teacher who lived in the village of Cernica in the municipality of Gnjilane in the east of Kosovo. Miromir was a gentle sort, a man of learning and like the other Serbian inhabitants of Cernica he suffered immense tragedy, pain and torment until his death in August 2003, when he was blown up outside a café in the village by UÇK extremists.

Miomir kept a diary and documented the days of terror inflicted on the villagers, the endless persecutions, the bombings, grenade attacks, drive by shootings, lootings and burnings as well as murder and kidnappings. This was all done for the sole purpose of making the Serbs leave the village. He documented the destruction of their property. He witnessed the first attack on the church of St Elijah on July 7, 1999 and he lived to witness the final destruction of the church on January 14, 2000, when it was mined and blown up. He did not live to tell you his tale but he will live on through the words of his diary and as a result the tragic events besetting the Serbs of Cernica will never be forgotten. All lives have a meaning and I feel honour bound to convey to you, the reader, the sad tragic events of his short life. (1968 - 2003)

What you are about to read is the story of Kosovo writ small.

Miromir Savic taught the Serbian children in Cernica until they were old enough to go to high school. As a well respected man in the community noted for his commitment to his vocation, education and learning, it is only natural that he decided to keep a diary of events as they unfolded in the village. The first entry is dated June 14 1999.

Albanians launched their first attack on Serbian houses in the village on June 14, 1999 shortly after the entry of NATO/KFOR troops to Kosovo. The attack was launched from the Smakic Mahala, an area of the village populated entirely by Albanians. The target was Serbian property and many Serbian houses were damaged with firearms. The attackers fired indiscriminately at

every Serbian house but luckily there were no casualties. KFOR did not intervene. This was just a taste of what was to follow for, according to the diary from June 14, until June 28, these low intensity attacks continued every day usually beginning at dusk. During daytime hours personal property such as cars or farm animals were stolen at gunpoint. Then on June 28, 1999, as the Serbs celebrated St Vitus' Day, the attacks intensified and a large number of Albanians armed with various types of guns attacked the Serbs. The shooting at the Serb houses lasted for three hours and damaged many. One elderly man, Zivko Savic died of a heart attack almost certainly induced by shock following the three hour assault. KFOR were conspicuous by their absence. It is not unreasonable to conclude at this point that the assailants felt emboldened by the lack of response from KFOR as from here on in the attacks became more sustained and deadly.

On July 2, 1999 Dobrivoj Kostic became the first of many Serbs from Cernica to be kidnapped. He was taken to the former Yugoslav Army Hall in Gnjilane town and was beaten with chains and interrogated before being released. He is one of the few that ever escaped the clutches of the UÇK. On July 7, 1999 the Albanians poured gasoline around the main entrance of St Elijah's Church and left rags soaked in petrol at the door. They then threw two hand grenades to try and set the petrol ablaze. Luckily this time only a small amount of damage was done to the exterior of the church. On July 8, 1999 the Albanians began a new tactic, firing tracer rounds from the forest near the village. These set off fires in several houses and barns. Much of the food stored for the animals was destroyed forcing many Serbs to sell their animals, as they had nothing to feed them with and attacks on people working in the fields had become more and more frequent. Drive-by gun attacks and shootings from long distance at farmers out in the fields continued throughout the rest of 1999. As a result the Serbian farmers could not go to their fields, could not sow or harvest their crops and could not feed their animals. Given their lack of freedom of movement, their only source of livelihood had effectively been extinguished.

As the days turned into weeks the attacks continued:

July 8: Serbian houses burnt. The barns of Zivojn Kostic and Zvonimir Jankovic were burnt. The house and barns of Uros Stojanovic were damaged.

July 10: One part of the house of Milanka Stojkovic was burnt down.

July 11: The remaining part of Milanka's house was burnt.

July 11: Shepherds including children bringing their livestock to pasture were attacked

July 12: Serbs were celebrating St. Peter's day. A group of Serbs were shot at in front of the store owned by Marko Petrovic. Drago Zivkovic from the nearby village of Partesh, Savo Petrovic and the owner's children were injured.

July 15: Serbian shepherds were again attacked tending to their animals.

July 17: A hand grenade was thrown at the house of Nebojsa Stojanovic.

July 18: KFOR searched the house belonging to Nebojsa Stojanovic that had been attacked the previous day and he was arrested and taken into custody by KFOR. He was detained for five days.

Miomir's diary notes that when a Serb house was attacked or damaged in an explosion, KFOR would come and search the damaged house. This had become an everyday routine.

"Instead of pursuing the terrorists who carried out attacks on the Serbs and their houses and property KFOR soldiers would search the Serbian houses that had been targeted and harass and imprison the Serbs." One US KFOR soldier told Miromir that "the Serbs throw grenades at themselves".

On July 20, two days after Nebojsa Stojanovic had been detained, his 55 year old father Bozidar who was an invalid was shot dead near his house. The victim was killed instantly by a shot in the head fired from very close range. KFOR has been unable or perhaps unwilling to identify let alone pursue the murderer who killed in broad daylight.

Attacks on houses continued. Meanwhile KFOR continuously detained Serbs from the village after searching their houses. One US KFOR officer admitted to one of the Serbs from the village that KFOR was following up on allegations by Albanians from the village against their Serbian neighbours.

On July 22, 1999, two hand grenades were thrown into the yard of Milorad Simic, one exploding and the other later being removed by KFOR. Soon after, KFOR raided the houses of two Serbs Svetislav and Milivoj Spasic. They damaged their properties and forced the family members, including five children ranging in age from three months to four years, to wait outside their house from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. while they were allegedly searching their houses for weapons. As the reader can imagine, the Serb inhabitants of Cernica, as is clear from Miomir's diary, felt that KFOR were not only turning a blind eye to the cleansing of the village but were colluding with the perpetrators by, on the one hand, blaming the victims and on the other failing to pursue the attackers and implementing the rule of law.

As July turned into August the attacks continued; gun attacks, bombs, theft, destruction of property. Still, KFOR only arrested Serbs and on occa-

sions even arrived at Serb houses to carry out raids accompanied by Albanians from the village. The sound of rocket propelled grenades smashing into Serb houses became a nightly chorus in the village of Cernica throughout the summer and early autumn of 1999.

On Sept 29, 1999 the home of Vladimir Savic, Miomir's father, was attacked and not for the first time. As Miomir, his wife and their two year old son were going to bed having just entered the bedroom a grenade was thrown at the window. It bounced back luckily and exploded outside. The attackers were seen running away and identified but as always KFOR took no action against them. Instead they saw fit to arrest Miomir and search several nearby Serbian houses.

On Nov 28 1999, the national day of Albania, the local ethnic Albanians celebrated by rampaging through the village in full view of KFOR troops stationed there. They drove repeatedly around the streets, flying the flag of Albania, stoning houses and threatening to kill all the Serbs of Cernica. Many houses and the gardens around them were damaged. As Miomir notes in his diary:

"The Serbs silently watched from their houses, scared for their lives."

KFOR's continuing lack of impartiality reached new heights (or should that be lows) on Nov 30, 1999, when having provided safe escort for two Serbian representatives from Cernica, Svetislav Spasic and Slobodan Todorovic, to a meeting in the village of Paralov, they then proceeded to search their houses in Cernica in their absence with sniffer dogs. They claimed to have acted on a report from an Albanian that both men had fought in the "war" and had weapons hidden in their houses. Nothing was found. These men were never members of the Serbian security forces and their houses had already been searched on numerous occasions usually after an attack.

The diary entry for December 3, 1999 reads thus:

"One of the most tragic events in Cernica took place on December 3.

A large quantity of plastic explosive was planted next to the houses of Slobodan Vasic and Dragan Petrovic, which were located at the border line between the Serbian part and the Albanian part of the village, known as Smekici. The explosive was detonated by a remote control at 18:00.

The blast completely destroyed both houses. At the moment of explosion, in addition to Slobodan Vasic, his wife Blagica, their eleven year old son Igor, the owner's nephew Goran Vasic, and neighbour Tihomir Trifunovic were in the house.

Blagica was killed in the explosion and she was buried at the village cemetery the following day. Other family members were severely injured. The eleven year old boy, Igor, was blocked under the wreckage for two hours. For more than half an hour KFOR prevented the neighbours who gathered at

the site to help the injured boy buried under the wreckage. It was only after he had started crying for help, that KFOR allowed them pull the boy out. The diary entry states that:

“The next door Albanian neighbour, Abdurahim Hasani had evacuated his family before the explosive was detonated. The terrorists used his property to plant the explosive.”

After this tragic event Slobodan Vasic fled the village with his children.

1999 ended in typical fashion. Miomir’s diary entry reads:

“At Albanian request KFOR cancelled curfew for New Year’s celebration. Albanians celebrated it by shooting at Serbian houses.

Despite numerous bullet holes on the houses, American soldiers insisted that the Albanians had been shooting to celebrate the New Year only.”

On January 14, 2000 after many previous attacks, the church of St Elijah was finally destroyed by a large bomb. The church stood 70 metres away from a building occupied by KFOR who apparently witnessed nothing.

Miomir’s entry for February 28, 2000 is revealing:

“Numerous attempts by the Serbs from Cernica to draw American soldiers’ attention to increased violence have been ignored. The Albanians have seen it as an encouragement and support to terrorist actions against the Serbs in Cernica.”

Likewise it is worth quoting the diary entry of March 24, 2000.

“Albanians celebrated the first anniversary of the bombing of Yugoslavia. They lit up fires on a dozen locations around the village.

“The most serious harassment of Serbs took place in Donja Mahala. The Albanians lit up a fire next to the Serbian houses and stoned the house of Srecko Savic (who was in his yard) and the house of Miodrag Spasic. US KFOR troops came only to prevent the fight between the Serbs and the Albanians, and not to protect the Serbs from harassment. Although the Albanians resisted and confronted KFOR, it was we who were searched and molested and not the Albanians. The Albanian interpreters who work for KFOR openly supported the terrorists. One of the interpreters even said: ‘Shoot and if necessary kill the Serbs for an independent Kosovo!’ KFOR neither searched nor arrested a single Albanian. All the Serbs however were lined up (as for an execution) and kept like that for two hours.”

Even when one of the perpetrators of the attacks was caught nothing was done. Miomir’s diary entry for April 4, 2000 provides an example.

“Three grenades were launched at the house of Dragisa Mitrovic. Two of them hit the barn and exploded, the third one did not explode. At the time of the attack, a group of Serbian children and teenagers played soccer by the barn and two of them Zivko Nisic and Dobrivoj Trifunovic were injured in

the explosion. The perpetrator was identified and arrested and the grenade launcher used for the attack was retrieved. After he had stated that his intention had not been to kill anyone and that he had only wanted to scare the Serbs off, the perpetrator was released from custody. He actively participated in the numerous attacks against the Serbs in the future. KFOR justified its decision to release him by the fact that he was a minor.”

Serbs took this as a clear message in support to the Albanian plan that the survivors have to be scared enough to leave the village for good.

“After this attack, the Serbs appealed to the international community to send its representatives to Cernica to witness the harassment and the terror that the Serbs have been exposed to.”

On April 13, 2000 the representatives of the Serbs met with the local US KFOR commander Colonel Schroeder. Miomir’s diary notes:

“Colonel Schroeder, using foul language, kept accusing the Serbs, throughout the meeting.”

On May 9, 2000, the diary notes that an Albanian threw a grenade into a Serb shop seriously injuring Srecko Savic and inflicting less serious injuries on several other Serbs. Witnesses to the attack positively identified the perpetrator as a senior officer in the Kosovo Protection Corps. No action was taken by KFOR or any other authority supposed to be in control of Kosovo.

May 28, 2000 saw one of the most heinous crimes committed in Cernica. An Albanian gunman opened fire with an automatic rifle at the shop of Zvonimir Jankovic. Four year old Milos Petrovic who had been playing in front of the shop was killed, as were two adults Tihomir Simijonovic and Vojin Vasic. Petko Jankovic and Zoran Stolic were wounded. Witnesses saw the gunman and identified him as Afrim Zeqiri an Albanian from Smakic Mahala. He was seen running back to his house only 200 metres away from the scene of the crime. Miomir’s diary succinctly states:

“US KFOR conducted a long and futile investigation on the crime. The international organizations and the judiciary are also familiar with the case.

The murderer is still at large.”

The reader may well wonder how a man can kill a four year old child and two adults and despite being positively identified by several witnesses remains free and unaccountable for his crimes.

Poignantly, Miomir’s diary entry for May 30 notes:

“There are fewer Serbs every day in this part of the village”

The entry for December 2, 2000 reads:

“The house of Verka Stajic was set on fire. This old lady is the last remaining Serb in this part of the village. The strategy of Albanians is clear. The Serbs must be forced to leave by using all means available. The most

vulnerable are those who live at the outskirts of the village or next to Albanian neighbourhoods.”

As usual December 31 was celebrated in the year of 2000 in the village of Cernica with an all-night orgy of gunfire directed at Serb houses. In the morning hundreds of bullet holes could be counted. KFOR did not intervene or investigate.

On April 28, 2001 KFOR arrived in the village in large numbers. They put a curfew on the village and searched both Serbian and Albanian houses. A memorial service for those killed on May 28 which had been planned for that day had to be cancelled.

The diary entry for August 5, 2001 concerns Miomir and his family directly. He writes in the third person which in some ways highlights the situation even more starkly than if he had written about himself in the first person. Miomir, as a school teacher and an erudite man, records the events in his diary even handedly. All victims are treated evenly, even when the victims are members of his own family. It is worth reading his account of that day:

“A hand grenade was thrown at the house of Vladimir Savic who was initially reported to have been killed at the spot.

The grenade exploded two metres from the main door and seriously wounded Vladimir and his wife Stanica. The KFOR personnel who promptly arrived at the crime scene, instead of giving first aid to the wounded, tried to arrest their son Miomir, who had been in the house with his wife and their two children at the time of the explosion.

Since the soldiers refused to help the wounded, their son carried them to his car and drove them without escort to the Greek military base in Bartes, where he was refused any help as well. Not knowing what to do, he proceeded to the American base Bondstil¹. After he had already arrived at the gate of the base Greek soldiers joined him.

The base personnel refused to admit civilians and insisted that it was a military hospital and that the victims should be taken to Pristina instead. However, given the difficult condition of the wounded, they admitted them to the hospital and after the three day medical treatment, transferred them to Kosovoska Mitrovica, initially to the South and then to North Mitrovica.

Both victims have been mutilated for life and are invalids today.

The perpetrator has never been found.”

On August 12, 2001 Miomir was one of a number of Serbs who were detained by KFOR while collecting beans in a field despite having been granted permission earlier in the day by US KFOR to go to the field. That

¹ US Base Bondsteel

day the village had been blocked off by KFOR and all movement forbidden ostensibly because of a grenade attack on a Serb. However, the ex-UÇK members who were now Kosovo Protection Corps personnel and/or village representatives in the Gnjilane municipal assembly were allowed to move freely. This is despite the fact that a machine gun had been found that day in the house of one of the Albanian representatives.

Miomir's diary continues with seemingly endless records of grenade attacks and shootings all conducted with impunity. His diary entry for September 14, 2001 notes:

"The sons of Feriz Memeti and Gahi Memeti have bragged publicly in the village that they are paid 200 German marks for each grenade they throw at Serbs."

The entries for 2002 are equally bleak. It amounts to a story of intimidation, humiliation, harassment, assault, grievous bodily harm and murder. With impunity! Miomir as the last school teacher of an ever diminishing Serbian community, obviously felt the need to record the details of what had really happened. His diary is an important record of the day to day extermination of his community regardless of age or gender. His last diary entry reads:

"Trajan Trifunovic born in 1963 the father of two children was murdered at the spot at the outskirts of the village known as 'Vidina'.

He was shot from close distance.

Two suspects with positive paraffin glove test proving that they had shot from firearms earlier that day were arrested. The murder weapon was also retrieved. The suspects are in custody. We expect that they will be released soon and ask ourselves: 'Who is next?'"

As this was the last entry in Miomir's diary one could ask: Did he have some presentiment of his own death? Of course all Serbs living in Cernica must have contemplated their own deaths and for that matter still do.

On August 31, 2003 Miomir Savic was sitting outside one of the few small Serbian cafes left in Cernica with some friends discussing plans for the start of the new school year the next day. Albanian terrorists threw a hand grenade at the café and ran off. The explosive device detonated, almost immediately seriously injuring Miomir. He was losing a lot of blood from his legs. People tried to assist but when US KFOR arrived they refused to let anyone touch him. He lay there for more than two hours bleeding to death. Albanian health professionals came from the emergency services in Gnjilane town, one surgeon and three nurses. They actually pleaded with KFOR to be allowed to assist Miomir.

However, they were refused. Miomir lay there outside the café bleeding to death and US KFOR did not help him and did not allow anyone else to assist him either. After two and a half hours and a half hours of lying there

with both legs severely injured a helicopter arrived to bring him for medical assistance to Camp Bondsteel but by that stage it was too late and he eventually died - in the midst of US KFOR soldiers. Soldiers who had watched him bleed to death for two and a half hours. Perhaps they were only following orders!

The two things that Miomir always pointed out in his diary were that the Albanians were attacking while US KFOR was targeting the victims, the Serbs. It is a terrible irony that what Miomir describes in his diary befell him too.

It is equally ironic that Marcie Reis, the head of the US Office in Pristina, at the time responded to the attack by saying:

“The meaningless killing of Miomir Savic on Sunday night is a tragedy that represents nothing less than an attack against all good and reasonable people in Kosovo.”

Dr. Milorad Todorovic who was a minister in the Kosovo government at the time wrote a letter to Minister of Health in Pristina complaining about the treatment meted out to Miomir in his final hours. He never received a reply.

People like Miomir were seen as the enemies of the new Kosovo, the threat to what has been created since June 1999. These are the types of people who must be driven out or exterminated, innocent, hard-working school teachers. Miomir Savic's voice speaks from the grave. Although he is gone, his diary will live on.

Other eye witness accounts should also be remembered. Serb villagers allege that in June 1999 UÇK members in uniform were transported to the outskirts of the village by US KFOR helicopters. The villagers saw the gunmen in camouflage uniforms complete with UÇK shoulder patches dismount from US KFOR helicopters near Trpeze village quite close to Cernica. After landing they launched an attack on the Serbs of Trpeze killing three and driving the rest out. Today no Serbs live in the village of Trpeze. This attack was just the beginning as Miomir's diary shows. There has been a relentless campaign of intimidation, harassment and assault by what the media describe as Albanian extremists. The President of Serbia Mr. Boris Tadic called on KFOR to protect the Serbs of Cernica as recently as February 2006¹ after yet another Serb house was destroyed by arson. Mr. Tadic noted that this was the 45th Serbian house to be destroyed in Cernica since June 1999. Since the middle of 2003, 12 Serbs from the village have been killed but no one has been charged with these killings or with the campaign of violence directed against Serbs in Cernica.

¹ VIP Daily News Report 07-02-2006

As recorded in Miromir Savic's diary the Serbian Orthodox church of St Elijah was blown up and destroyed on January 14, 2000, despite the fact that US KFOR troops were stationed less than one hundred metres away. It has since been rebuilt partly with the financial assistance of a Canadian charity and was up until 2005 guarded 24 hours a day seven days a week by US KFOR. St Elijah's church is comparatively new, having been built in 1933 but one document dating from the year 1512 refers to the village church of Cernica, testifying to the long history of Orthodox Christianity in the village.

One interesting point to note is that when I visited the village after the Kosovo-wide pogrom of March 2004, I went to the church and found that it was protected by US KFOR. There were three pleasant young soldiers from California and one from Florida. They seemed a little lost perched as they were on a hilltop beside a newly restored church that they had to defend. Three Californian surfers and a Miami beach veteran who really did not know where they were or for that matter why. From that vantage point a large new mosque dominated the horizon and they asked me and the people with me if we had built the mosque. I was a little surprised by the question and assured them that we had not and pointed out to them that it was likely enough that like all the new mosques in Kosovo the money almost certainly came from Saudi Arabia and other Wahhabi countries. They seemed a little perplexed with this news as if hearing of such a possibility for the first time.

Presently there are just over one hundred Serbs living in Cernica down from exactly 857 in June 1999. Of those who have fled about 200 are living in third countries while the rest are IDPs in Serbia or Montenegro. Approximately 3,000 Albanians now live in Cernica. Since I first began visiting the village the number of Serbs has diminished every year. Now, those that remain, live in about 40 households, all in the same street.

The attitude of those responsible for security is perhaps best summed up by the experience of one Serbian family whose house has been attacked several times since June 1999. I know this family personally and their story bears out the details of Miomir Savic's diary exactly. On one occasion grenades were thrown into the front yard of their house. Soon after US KFOR arrived and detained the two elderly occupants of the house that had been attacked. They were handcuffed while US soldiers searched the house. Nothing was found. Such behaviour calls into question the neutrality of some KFOR contingents charged with defending human rights in Kosovo. I visited this house several times over the years. The two elderly occupants were typical Serbs of rural Kosovo, hospitable, strongly attached to the land and their culture. They could understand why they were constantly under attack like all the Serbs in the village. The Albanians wanted to drive them out and

claim the village as their own. What they could not understand was why the international community did nothing to stop the attacks, why it was that they were handcuffed after their house was attacked. Their house has been attacked six times since 1999. No one has ever been arrested in connection with the attacks except of course for the two elderly residents themselves who were detained and even handcuffed while their house was searched for arms. On several occasions US KFOR marched them out of their house into their yard and tied them up in the early hours of the morning. Where is the justice in this? In early 2006 the wife of the household died of cancer, a complaint undoubtedly complicated by the stress of the previous five and a half years.

The community of Cernica is not only endangered, it has become virtually extinct. There is a constant campaign of harassment and intimidation which the security forces, US KFOR, UNMIK police and the Kosovo Police Service seem unwilling or unable to stop. Worse, no one in the international community seems prepared to speak openly about the day to day realities of being a non-Albanian in Kosovo.

Of course, the residents of Gnjilane municipality are well aware of the attacks, the intimidation, the harassment that has existed since the UN and KFOR took over. They were well aware before the aforementioned international "humanitarian interventionists" took over. In the early 1990s, a Yugoslav army Colonel (who wishes not to be named) an expert electrical engineer, visited the municipality to inspect the large electric components factory with a view to deciding if further investment in the factory by the Yugoslav government was worthwhile. Her recommendation at the time was that investment in the factory in the circumstances that prevailed in Gnjilane would be wasted money. She made her decision despite being offered the latest state of the art Sony television (then almost unobtainable in Yugoslavia) by one of the factory managers, an ethnic Albanian.

Incidentally, the team of experts who visited the factory in Gnjilane had lunch in a locked room surrounded by armed guards in case of attack by extremist Albanians.

There is much talk about standards and the future status of Kosovo. Given the experience of Cernica one can only conclude that the international community as a whole, and the US in particular, have decided to sacrifice the notion of human rights and democracy and to impose a solution to the Kosovo question. The term 'Realpolitik' in such circumstances is a euphemism for ethnic cleansing, a genocide ironically conducted in the name of "humanitarian intervention" and "to defend human rights".

The NATO forces fought and won their first war to the accompaniment of a chorus of praise from a willing and gullible western media. The Serbian community of Cernica would tell a very different story should anyone choose

to listen. Despite the fact that he is dead Miomir Savic's words still ring clear and provide a true testimony to the events in Cernica since June 1999.

Another case from Cernica is the tale of Milorad Simic. His house was in the centre of the village. It was a large house in a strategic location. It was attacked 27 times with 104 grenades. His house was searched by US KFOR 12 times. His is just one more example of the campaign of terror waged against the Serbs of Cernica and the inability or the unwillingness of US KFOR to intervene. Not only did they not intervene they blamed the victims and turned a blind eye to who the perpetrators were. Under such constant barrage of attacks Milorad Simic moved to the nearby village of Donje Budriga in the hope that things would improve. However, he is now in a hospital in the city of Nis in a very poor state of health. His experiences in Cernica destroyed his health both physically and mentally. No one has ever been arrested in connection with the attacks on Milorad Simic's house. The only thing that worked in Cernica in the end was the strategy employed by the Albanians, to get rid of the Serbs and all traces of them. They succeeded and have reached their objective. Someone now has Milorad's fine big house in the centre of the village, probably at this stage registered under a new name in the new cadastre. Nobody asks any questions! One sure thing is that they all love America and sure no wonder!

Lying at the entrance of the village is a recently constructed monument to commemorate the exploits of the UÇK. Similar monuments have been erected all over Kosovo and are in abundance in Metohija, the western part of the province, where most of the fighting between the UÇK and the Serbian security forces took place. These monuments have been built in areas and villages which the UÇK cleansed after the arrival of NATO forces in June 1999 and are testimony to the terror inflicted on innocent villagers. Many of these monuments are now fixtures in what prior to 1999 were mainly Serbian inhabited villages or mixed villages and are now the only historical markers and testimony to the UÇK version of history. What is interesting about the monument in Cernica is that it lists six names of UÇK members; what persons visiting the village are supposed to understand from that monument is that these 'heroes' died fighting for the UÇK in Cernica. However, no Albanians were ever killed in the village. None! There was little or no fighting in the east of Kosovo at all. Only two of those named on the monument were members of the UÇK and they were killed fighting elsewhere, not in Cernica. A longtime resident of the village informed me that the other four commemorated on the monument died in car crashes or of natural causes. This brings to mind what Canadian General Lewis Mackenzie stated in his book and I quote, "they played us like a Stradivarius."

II. The Story of Novo Brdo

On 21 June 2006 the Austrian diplomat Albert Rohan, Deputy Special Envoy to the UN Secretary General for negotiations on Kosovo, gave an interview to the Belgrade daily, *Politika*, entitled the 'History of Kosovo begins in 1991'. His attitude towards the history of Serbia, one of Europe's oldest kingdoms, is unfortunately not an isolated incident and is part of a broader, completely ungrounded concept, which various countries and organisations spin in order to sell to the international community (and innocent individuals like you and me sitting at home watching his ilk on television) a version of history which has been completely fabricated.

The story you are about to read will prove two things, firstly that Albert Rohan was being disingenuous with the truth, and secondly that history keeps repeating itself in the Balkans and in Serbia in particular.

The medieval Florentine poet, Dante Aligheri, in his most famous work, *The Divine Comedy*, condemns one Serbian king to hell for his interruption of the banking business of the city states of Venice and Florence by producing superior quality silver coinage. The year is 1282 A.D. and in his famous poem Dante, to please his patrons, places the Serbian King Milutin in Hell. In medieval Serbia, Novo Brdo was a famous mining area and the silver it produced was much prized as a currency as it contained a much higher grade than anything produced by either Venice or Florence. The embargo in 1282 imposed by some Italian city-states on silver coins from Serbia had much to do with the economic effect of higher quality silver being used as the standard currency unit, a practice which affected his patrons adversely, thereby spawning Dante's dislike. Dante's patrons were of course the Medici family, one of the main banking families of Florence who had serious concerns about controlling trade. This is perhaps the first recorded example of sanctions ever being imposed by one European country on another; that the European states of the late 20th century did the same thing in Serbia's case 700 years later is worthy of note.

The fact is that Novo Brdo, during the reign of King Milutin, had a population of over 40,000 people considerably more than contemporary London. It is a matter of historical record that the king brought in mining experts from as far away as Cornwall in England and the Dalmatian coast, to improve production methods. The king lived on a hilltop citadel constructed on the ruins of a Roman fort, and during his reign his endowments to the Serbian state and European civilisation produced more than 30 monasteries and churches, including UNESCO heritage sites Gracanica, Notre Dame de Levjaska in Prizren (whose frescoes were destroyed by Albanian extremists in March 2004) and the monastery of St Uros in Gornje Nerodimlje (blown up by Albanian extremists in 1999).

Novo Brdo was at the centre of the golden age of the medieval Serbian state but a darkness was about to fall; it fell to the armies of the Ottoman Turkish Empire in 1459, an event recorded in the famous "Memoirs of a Janissary" written by Konstantine Mihailovic of Ostrovica. He was a Serb taken into captivity as a child and forced to become one of the Ottoman Empire's elite military corps. Forced to convert to Islam and serve his new masters as a mercenary, he took part in the massacre of the inhabitants of Novo Brdo's citadel. Some time later he escaped to Hungary and nearing death wrote his famous account, outlined below, of life as a Janissary.

Mihailovic wrote that mining ceased at Novo Brdo soon after the fall of the Citadel. This was principally due to the manner of the fall. The Sultan ordered one gate to be opened for the surrendering population from which to emerge. As they did so, males and females were separated and 704 young women were taken away to be distributed among the attacking force consisting of mercenaries from various "nations" already conquered by the Turks. 320 young boys were taken to the "Grand Porte," the seat of the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople, for the Janissary Corps. The rest of the population was slaughtered.

The Ottomans developed an empire but as various historians have pointed out, they usually destroyed what they found, replacing it with a system based on allegiance to Islam, and a punitive tax system for non-Muslims. The Serbs were to become second class citizens in what had been their medieval state and as they remained Christian carried the main burden of paying taxes.

The incentives to convert to Islam were considerable but the failure of the Ottoman rule to develop socio-economic and educational systems required to run the administration of a widespread empire often led to converts running it for them. This was certainly effective but only as long as they could expand the territory from which they could claim tribute. Like all empires, it was not to last the test of time. This historical aside may seem somewhat out of place

to the reader but history has a tendency to repeat itself -- especially when it comes to the Balkans and the expropriation of property and land – and particularly in relation to Serbia.

It is worthy of note that 500 years later, in the 21st century other janisaries of another empire felt compelled to revisit death and destruction on the remaining Serbian and Roma inhabitants of Novo Brdo. That they survived for over 400 years under the Turks and still held on to their Christian faith and cultural traditions is testimony to their endurance. However, the Serbs of Novo Brdo were to be condemned to hell once again, but this time under the auspices of a UN protectorate and a NATO command. It is doubtful if they will survive the punitive measures and campaign of violence meted out to them over the past eight years.; in many ways they have to endure much harsher measures than that of their ancestors under the Ottoman Sultan. Under the Sultan, death came quickly; today they are living through a very slow death.

Today, Novo Brdo is the smallest municipality in Kosovo, and like some other municipalities in Kosovo, until relatively recently it had a Serb majority. After 1999 like in most other places in Kosovo, the demographics were forcibly changed, usually at the point of a gun.

The UN often points out that Novo Brdo is one of the safest areas of Kosovo for non-Albanians. It is worth considering what constitutes safe according to UN standards. Since 1999, 16 people have been killed or kidnapped and never found. The killings/disappearances began in June 1999 when the Serbian security forces had to withdraw under the terms of UN Resolution 1244. The KFOR contingent with responsibility for the area, US KFOR, did not arrive in Novo Brdo until August 1999. Meanwhile, this left the Serb and Roma inhabitants of the municipality at the mercy of the UÇK. These janisaries of a new empire very quickly took control of the area and thus began a reign of terror not seen since the invasion by the Turks in the 15th century. Once again, the Serbs were driven out, the most influential and strongest were slaughtered and once again their property was expropriated. 500 years later they were again to become second class citizens in what had been their state.

In June 1999 the UÇK, fresh from fighting against the Serbian security forces on the border with Albania, arrived back into Kosovo hot on the heels of NATO soldiers. As pointed out in other stories, there was little or no fighting in the east of Kosovo and Novo Brdo had no problems during the conflict. It was only after the arrival of NATO troops with the UÇK following soon after them that the attacks began in this part of Kosovo. When the UÇK entered Novo Brdo their first port of call was the barracks of the Trepca mine complex which housed vulnerable Serbian refugees from Croatia. A group

of local UÇK arrived and they shot and killed a man called Mila Vukas, a refugee from Croatia, and disposed of his body, which has never been found. In fear, the rest of the refugees fled the barracks and took refuge in the Serbian Orthodox church in the mainly Roma village of Bostane. From there they were taken by bus to Gracanica Monastery and eventually fled the province.

The UÇK followed up this attack with raids on the Serb villages scattered in and around Novo Brdo. In the village of Klokubar they killed a father and son from the same family, the Simic family. Their bodies were disposed of and have never been recovered. An Albanian father and son, the Bunjakus, (Agim and Bislim) were also killed, because they had friendly relations with their Serb neighbours before the war and their crime was to have worked in the police force before 1999. An old lady from Klokubar, Dragina Stankovic, was executed and her body was later found dumped in a well. A Serb farmer from Klobukar, Stanko Stojanovic, was beaten and hanged in front of his house, after having animal faeces stuffed into his mouth. Zivojin Peric, a man from Trnicevce village, was killed and his body was found dumped in a garbage container in Gnjilane. Sava Stojkovic of Labljane village was killed in an attack on the village, and out of panic and fear the villagers buried him in his lawn and not in the cemetery. Zivkon N. of Paralovo village was found hanged in front of his house. Aleksander Jovanovic was killed in Bostane village on June 21, 1999 while keeping guard near his house, and Blagonja Stankovic of Ljestar village was axed to death. Vojislav Timotijevic of Stara Kolonija was murdered while Zoran Andjelkovic of Nova Kolonija and Sasa Tasic of Boljevce village disappeared and their bodies have never been found.

In the village of Trnicevce the UÇK killed a teenage boy and dumped his body in a garbage container. Several villagers in the village of Labljane were killed and the Serb residents of Nova Kolonija were terrorised to the extent that they all fled. Their apartments were immediately distributed by the PDK (the political party established by Hashim Thaci, UÇK leader and very special friend of Madeline Albright,) to local loyal members of the UÇK.

In the village of Klokubar all the remaining Serbs, more than 300 residents, fled and their homes were destroyed, every single one. All of the Serbs living in Nova Kolonija fled in the midst of the terror campaign, while most Serbs living in the village of Stara Kolonija fled their homes in the face of the unremitting campaign of violence and intimidation, and most of the homes were destroyed there as well. A significant number of Serbs fled from other villages around Novo Brdo, fearing for their lives.

In 2001, two Serbs, a young man of 18 and his grandfather, were shot at in the village of Culkovce (the young man was wounded) during an attempted theft of cattle. Since 1999, cattle have been systematically stolen from all Serbian families in Novo Brdo as a means to apply pressure on these very poor, rural communities to leave Kosovo. The authorities have never solved one single case. Beatings and assaults on Serb residents have continued to take place to this day.

The result of this terror campaign carried out by the UÇK and directed against Serbs and Roma and those Albanians who had worked for the state prior to June 1999 and the arrival of the KFOR “peacekeepers” was that the pre-war populations of all ethnic groups fell drastically. In the case of the Serbian community the figure dropped from over 80% to under 50% with the majority of those remaining being elderly and sick people. More people leave with each passing day.

Today, Novo Brdo is “relatively calm,” meaning there are fewer violent attacks but of course there are fewer Serbs and Roma left to attack. There are no jobs and freedom of movement is still limited. On March 17 2004, the day of the pogrom against Serbs and other non-Albanians, the president of the Municipality, a Serb, had to flee his home when gunmen shot it up. He remains the only Kosovo municipal president to be an internally displaced person (IDP). On March 17, 2004 a police car driven by Serb policemen was shot at and an Albanian mob tried to burn down the municipal headquarters.

The name of the Municipality has been changed to “Artana” by the Albanian authorities, both at the local and central level, thereby erasing in one fell swoop centuries of Serbian history. Although not officially recognised by UNMIK, the name change appears on all official government correspondence and documents, phone bills, utility bills, tourist brochures, bus lines, maps, television news and programmes. Even representatives of the Kosovo Agency for the Protection of Cultural Monuments refer to the Municipality as “Artana” or the “former Novo Brdo”. In September 2006, unknown vandals entirely chipped off one of the stone crosses set in relief that has stood on one of the walls of the Fortress of Novo Brdo for centuries and partially damaged a second larger cross on another wall. Somehow there is an urgent need to erase everything that is Christian and Serbian.

It is questionable whether the remnants of the UÇK will ever become the Empire’s new elite military corps, although in today’s world anything is possible. However, one issue must be raised, and that is the question of whose interests were being served when the new masters of Kosovo arrived in June 1999? And why were the new mercenaries of the modern era allowed to cleanse municipality after municipality?

Who sanctioned this campaign of terror launched Kosovo-wide in the summer of 1999 and continued unrelentingly until the pogrom of 2004 when the international community told the Albanians enough was enough, and they were advised to change their tactics tactics?

The campaign of terror, which was carried out by the UÇK, was sustained and systematic, and was carried out with well planned precision. It was well organised both logistically and technically. This was not the work of some rag-bag bunch of paramilitaries but the results of well trained and well armed extremists who apparently had carte blanche to do as they saw fit.

UNMIK likes to present the international community with the notion that Novo Brdo is something of a model municipality and in one way they are right but not in the way that they mean. It is a model of the new Kosovo, a model of intolerance, injustice and ethnic cleansing; “might is right.”

On a final note, the suspected leader of the UÇK in Novo Brdo was detained by UNMIK/KFOR in March 2004, at the time of the Kosovo-wide violence directed at all non-Albanian communities. He was released without charge.

III. Julka

A Mother of Devet Jugovica

This story is about Julka, a woman and a mother from the village of Devet Jugovica, some 8 kilometres north of Pristina. Julka was every mother, she could have been your mother or my mother. When I met Julka she was old, in her seventies but beautiful and kind. She was also very sad, and the most striking memory I have of her is that she cried a lot; she cried for her son, she cried for her family whom she was unable to visit, she cried because she did not understand what was going on; she did not understand why her family was all scattered and she did not understand why she could not go to see them; she could not understand why it was unsafe to go to bed at night and she could not understand why it was unsafe to leave her house and go to visit her neighbours. She did not understand why her neighbours were all selling up and leaving the village and she did not understand why she could not farm her land. She also did not understand how other people, strangers, were occupying her land. She did not understand who all these new people were who moved into the village. She did not understand why the church bells did not ring anymore. She just did not understand any of it. These were times of almost unbearable suffering for Julka Radonjic.

I have many other memories of Julka. I remember she would sit on the edge of the bed where her son had been shot and she would weep. She would show me the blood on the floor which had dried into the carpet since the night in 2001 when he was shot. I remember waiting for her to come back from a nearby house after receiving a telephone call from her son and then for a few fleeting minutes she had a beautiful smile.

Her last years on this earth were truly awful; she was forced to live a life that no mother should ever have to endure and certainly no mother in Europe of the 21st century. I tried desperately to help her in her final days on

this earth and I made a promise the day I heard that she had died that one day I would tell her story.

Devet Jugovica is a typical, small Serbian-style village on the outskirts of Pristina. The houses are modest, with small gardens around a one storey house and arable land on the outskirts of the village to provide a supplement to one's income or even to form the basis of one's livelihood. In 1999 there were over 1200 Serbs in the village.

I first met Julka in the village. The first time I went to visit her she was not at home when I arrived. It was a Saturday morning and I had made an arrangement to go to visit her with the local UNMIK field officer, as I had heard that the village was in a very difficult situation and I wanted to see for myself. Julka was not at home but a neighbour agreed to go and find her. In a village like Devet Jugovica it is not hard to find someone, particularly a Serb as there are so few left. Some minutes later I was introduced to Julka. She was a small woman looking somewhat younger than her seven decades on this earth. In fact she informed us she was seventy eight years of age. She invited us into her home and we sat or stood around the main room in the house as the only furniture to be seen was a sofa turned into a bed, a small trestle table and one rickety old chair. She sat on the edge of the bed.

She apologised for being absent when we arrived but explained that she had been visiting her next door neighbours who owned a mobile phone to speak briefly to her son in the city of Kragujevac. She also apologised for not being able to offer us anything to eat or drink. Serbs are renowned for their hospitality when you visit them. She glanced almost wistfully at the empty rakija bottle sitting forlornly on the table when she told us she was sorry for not being able to provide us with a better welcome.

Julka started to tell us her story. It seemed she was anxious, even desperate, to let someone know about her situation. Up to now no one had shown any interest, at least no one from the "international community." Although I knew some of the details of her story from the local UNMIK staff I was still shocked by her narrative. She spoke in a quiet steady tone belying the tragic nature of the fate that had befallen her. She showed no anger or bitterness at this cruel fate that had become her lot. If anything she showed bewilderment at how things had come to this and perhaps an overwhelming sense of powerlessness.

Julka originally came from the village of Donje Ljupce near Podujevo a town some thirty kilometres north of Pristina. She moved to Devet Jugovica in 1970 when she got married to a man from the village. They had decided to move to Devet Jugovica to be amongst their own community because Julka's village Donje Ljupce had become almost entirely Albanian through a steady process of inward-migration of Albanians and outward-migration of Serbs. She still owns land near Donje Ljupce, arable land and some forestry.

One man whom she did not want to identify still came to her every so often to tell her about the condition of her land. She informed us that all the trees on her land had been chopped down illegally without her permission. She could not visit the village of her birth as it was too dangerous. Her son, Rados explained to me recently that all the Serb residents of the villages in the Podujevo area moved away in the early 1970s due to inward-migration of ethnic Albanians and constant harassment. For example when the numbers of Albanian residents began to rise there were incidents where Serb and Albanian teenagers would get into fights. The police, almost all of whom were Albanian, would detain the Serbs but let the Albanians go. The villages around Podujevo had been all Serbian until the late 1960s - early 1970s. They included Donje Ljupce, Jug Bogdan, Luzane, Belo Polje, Trnava and Batlava. When Rados went to elementary school in Luzane there were no Albanians in his school. By the time he left when he was 16 years old, there were hardly any Serbs left.

Julka told us that when she moved here to Devet Jugovica in 1970 there were 1200 Serbs in the village. Someone asked how many there were now. She thought for a moment and decided there were about 25. After consulting with her neighbour Ruzica, who had just arrived, Julka told us there were now 23 Serb households of which ten had just one family member left residing in the village. It was mainly just the old people who were left.

Julka started to tell us about events in the village since 1999. Ruzica occasionally butted in to supply particular details but Julka's quiet, resigned tone was starkly effective in presenting the facts. Albanians started to come into the area in 1999. Before that only one house had been sold to an Albanian man back in 1980 but he had never lived in it. He just came to visit it. But since 1999 there has been extreme pressure on the Serbs living in the village.

Some other Serbs from the village joined Julka. They described their environment as one of constant psychological pressure. Crops were continuously being destroyed. Livestock and tractors were being stolen. Every so often groups would go around shooting at houses. Some of their land was illegally occupied. There was a system of regular harassment in place backed up by the knowledge that 13 Serbs from the village had already been kidnapped.

In the "Second Assessment of the Situation of Ethnic Minorities in Kosovo (July -Aug 1999)" UNHCR/OSCE wrote that:

"The residents of these villages¹ had been warned to leave by the end of August 1999 by gangs of Albanians who claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a local Serb on 10/11 August 1999".

¹ The villages referred to in the report are Devet Jugovica, Donja Brnjica and Gornja Brnjica. This same report estimates that of the 1,000-1,500 residents of Devet Jugovica in 1999 some 70% were Serbs.

Julka's tale

What follows is an extraordinary tale of unremitting terror. None of us spoke to interrupt the interpreter's description of Julka's narrative except to clarify a particular detail. Even in translation the horror of her experience came through. We were all struck dumb. Even in Kosovo where such stories are all too tragically common-place Julka's story, related in a quiet, resigned fashion was shocking. The two Serbs with us checked with each other occasionally to make sure the translation was exactly what she said. It was not too difficult. She related a simple story of awful facts.

The destruction of crops, theft of livestock and continual harassment began in 1999 soon after the conflict was officially over and KFOR arrived. Some Serbs from the village left in the wake of the departure of the Serbian security forces, following the signing of UN Resolution 1244. Some people like Julka decided to stay, a decision tempered by the thought that there was nothing to go to elsewhere; her land, her life, her memories were all bound up with Kosovo. Why should she be forced to leave Kosovo? She was from here; she wanted to die here; her husband's grave was here marked by a gravestone with his picture on it, as is a common practice for Serbs. Julka had also engraved the headstone with her picture in the belief that when she died she would be buried along side her husband.

In the summer of 2000 Julka and a family friend from the village, Tomislav Markovic, were driving back from a visit to Serbia. They had just passed the checkpoint at Merdare when armed men stopped their car. They were near Livadice village on the road to Podujevo close to the former hotel "Besiana" which had then become a KFOR base. The four gunmen took them out of the car and Julka was ordered to "run back to Serbia" where she came from. Her travelling companion, Tomislav Markovic, was taken away at gunpoint in another car and was never seen alive again. As Tomislav was driven away in the opposite direction, Julka was bundled into the car she had been in with Tomislav which was then driven by one of the gunmen towards Pristina. However, a mobile KFOR patrol was on the road and the gunman stopped the car and threw Julka out. He then drove off. Julka started running in the direction of KFOR, screaming and waving her arms and the KFOR interpreter asked the patrol to stop to see what was wrong with the "grandmother". She was taken to the police station at Vranjevac near Pristina and then finally back to Devet Jugovica. No one has ever been arrested in connection with the abduction and murder of Tomislav Markovic.¹

¹ On 10 March 2007 in an interview with Rados, Julka's son, I learned that the body of Tomislav Markovic had been found and his remains were handed over to his family at Merdare in February 2007 for burial in Nis. Before Tomislav's disappearance his nephew Novica Markovic was kidnapped in Pristina and is still missing.

The second serious incident in which she was involved, not counting the numerous incidents of vandalism on her property, occurred in the early morning hours of 21 October, 2001. Julka was living in the house at the time with her son Rados and his wife Kosara. Rados worked for a radio station in Pristina. All the family members were in bed in their house in Devet Jugovica when they heard noises outside. The noises appeared to be coming from the shed where the little livestock they had left was tethered. Rados got up to look out the window and saw two shadowy figures. Rados hurriedly turned away from the window in an effort to press the "Alarm Button" which British KFOR had installed for him just a few months before. Rados was told by KFOR that alarm buttons were placed in houses that KFOR considered to be in strategic parts of the village and were linked directly to the KFOR base. KFOR obviously had their own intelligence sources and were probably only too aware of the intentions of the UÇK in the area.

Gunshots were fired, the glass in the window broke and Julka's son fell to the floor. He had been shot in the stomach but the bullet had travelled to his back and lodged in his spine.

Troops from Norwegian and British KFOR came soon after the shooting. An English soldier, Captain Eddie, arranged for Rados to be taken to the hospital in Gracanica but as they could not treat such serious injuries there, he was then sent to the Russian hospital in Kosovo Polje and later to the hospital in North Mitrovica. The hospital in Pristina does not cater to Serb patients. After some time, he was moved to Belgrade as North Mitrovica lacked the facilities to treat such a serious wound. Luckily, he was unconscious throughout this terrible ordeal. When he regained consciousness he discovered he was paralysed from the waist down and is confined to a wheelchair. He suffers great pain although it varies from day to day and especially with changes in the weather. The remarkable thing about Rados is that he is not bitter and whenever I visit him in Kragujevac his face lights up. But after some time with him, I glean the same image of sadness that I used to see on Julka's face before she died.

No one has ever been arrested in connection with the attempted murder of Julka's son. No one has ever followed up on his case. No one from officialdom ever assisted Julka after this terrible tragedy. Rados presently needs the official police report which was compiled in Vranjevac police station near Devet Jugovica on the night of the shooting in order to apply for a disability pension in Serbia. But Rados knows of no such mechanism to facilitate someone like him obtaining a copy of such a report. He has never been back to Devet Jugovica since that fateful night.

Julka was frightened to live in the house on her own after that attack on her son and so she went to live in her neighbours' house about one hundred

metres away, the household of Ilija and Ruzica Prica. Ruzica, who is standing nearby confirms this.

For eleven months she stayed with the Prica family, that is Ilija and Ruzica. Things did not get any better. Like all the Serb households in Devet Jugovica, Ilija and Ruzica suffered losses of livestock and constant harassment. They had cows and pigs and grew crops in the fields but now like others are afraid to go to the land that they own. They are even afraid to leave their house for any considerable period of time as they believe that it would be occupied in their absence. Ruzica is not even able to visit the village where she grew up, the village of Gornje Dobrovo, near Kosovo Polje. She tried to visit her parents' grave there recently through the kind assistance of an American UNMIK police officer but she could not even find a trace of the graveyard. The battle is not just with the living but also with the dead, they too must be wiped out.

After the attempted murder of Rados the remaining Serbs in the village took care of Julka as best they could.

After eleven months with the Prica family Julka moved back to her own house and another Serbian woman from the village agreed to stay there with her at night. The woman was Vera Drakolic who was born in the village in 1938. The reader might find this hard to take in but all these people who live in enclaves or in unprotected villages do not know once they go to bed at night whether they will ever wake up again.

A few months after Vera had moved into Julka's house, on 22 February 2003 just after midnight two armed men broke in. One immediately went into the little bedroom and turned on the light. The electricity supply was working that night. The intruder saw a figure wrapped up in blankets and opened fire, perhaps assuming it was Julka.

Vera Drakolic was shot in the leg. She was lucky to escape with her life. Julka who was sleeping on the sofa in the living room woke up and started screaming. The two gunmen ran out of the house. Vera was brought to the Simonida hospital in Gracanica and remained there until she recovered physically from her ordeal. She now lives in Belgrade. Although she still has a house in the village she is unwilling or unable to return, afraid that the gunmen might come again. Her son sold some of the land that they owned in Devet Jugovica to obtain enough money to survive in Belgrade. Vera has never returned to the village since the shooting.

Julka stayed on in the village because it was her home. She had no pension; no car; no telephone; in short she had no money. She received 40 Euro a month social welfare. The little land she owned she admitted she would sell to help her son if she could. The men who came to shoot her, she adds, she did not know. They were probably trying to frighten her, she thinks, to move

away. After that she was constantly afraid. She continued to live on in the house on her own for nearly a year. However, she could not go and see her son, she could not travel anywhere, because she had no money.

Whenever Julka spoke of her son, Rados, she cried. She declared through her tears that the only thing she wanted to do was to see her son one more time. In fact the last thing she said to me on the 3 March, 2005 was that she would like to go to Kragujevac to see her son. She finished by saying that if she could get to see her son one more time then “ if I die I would be satisfied”.

She informed me that she had not seen Rados for four years. and that this was her main wish. On the spur of the moment I told her I would bring her. I told her that I was travelling to Belgrade the following weekend and that I would come and collect her. I promised to drop her off in Kragujevac to visit Rados.

That weekend as arranged I picked Julka up in Devet Jugovica. When I arrived I could tell by her demeanour that she was very surprised that someone had kept a promise, especially someone from the West. Her neighbour Ruzica decided to come along as well at the last minute so there were four of us in the car. The weather was fine leaving the village and I estimated that it would take three or four hours to get to Kragujevac. However when we reached Kursumlija it began to snow and conditions deteriorated as we travelled further north. There was more snowfall which at times turned into a blizzard making the journey longer than usual. However, Julka seemed happy and even managed to drop off to sleep for a while. We reached Kragujevac after about six hours and dropped the two women off at an apartment block in the city. It was eight o'clock in the evening when we arrived, it was cold and still snowing.

I never saw Julka again, I went away on holidays and when I returned I was informed that she had died. Julka had suffered a stroke.

Julka's family could not afford to bring her body back to the village of Devet Jugovica to be buried with her husband. In addition the organisation involved in bringing her body back and the security concerns involved were too much for her family to consider so she was buried in a cemetery in Kragujevac. In the local cemetery in Devet Jugovica there is a headstone marking her grave and the grave of her husband. It bears a picture of both her husband and of Julka. Perhaps it is a fitting testament to the life of Julka Radonjic. Not even in death can she rest in peace in Kosovo.

If mankind is cruel at least God is kind. Julka received her last wish to see her son in Kragujevac one more time. Thinking back on it now I realise that my casual offer of kindness to give Julka a lift to see her son was part of a greater plan than I or anyone else there could foresee. God bless Julka

Radonjic. God be kind to her. When she was alive, an old and harmless widow living in a small farmhouse off the beaten track she could not have peace. I have to ask myself “Where was the humanitarian intervention” to protect Julka Radonjic and the other villagers of Devet Jugovica? Where were the reporters and the international aid agencies and the human rights groups? Where were the soldiers and the police?

Julka died amongst her own, her own family; her own people. She died in freedom although she had to go to Kragujevac to find it. She experienced one tiny bit of freedom before she died. A piece of freedom that was not afforded to her by the “freedom-loving nations of the West”.

What now for Devet Jugovica?

Now there are only 18 Serb households in Devet Jugovica. Ruzica and Ilija like all the remaining Serbs are desperate. All the surrounding villages are being asphyxiated, there are almost no Serbs left in these villages, there are almost no more Roma left in these villages. The few who remain in Devet Jugovica are old. They have no income apart from 40 Euro a month social welfare stipend. Ilija and Ruzica say that now they cannot go to Pristina or even to their fields. (Even in the past Ilija and Ruzica told us Serbian women rarely worked in the fields unescorted as they could be attacked. Back in the 1960s Ilija’s aunt was raped by Albanians while out working in the fields. In Ruzica’s village when she was growing up it was inhabited only by Serbs. Now only Albanians live there.)

Today in Devet Jugovica they have to be careful about being seen speaking to people from outside the village and especially “internationals”. On one occasion on a visit with Professor Wanda Schindley from Texas, in the summer of 2005 two Albanians told Wanda that she needed permission, their permission, to visit any Serbs in the village. The same two Albanians invited themselves into the house of Ilija and Ruzica and monitored everything we were discussing. I could not believe it but I was told to say nothing as telling them to leave would bring more misfortune on the village.

There is immense pressure on the few remaining families to sell their properties. Ilija was offered 10,000 Euro to sell his land. For 5 years the villagers have been afraid to work the land. Their son’s house in Devet Jugovica has already been destroyed once. They point out that this is no place for young Serbs. The few old Serbs left in a place like Devet Jugovica are not seen as a threat any more as they will die out. But that does not stop the harassment. There is no future for these people. Under this UN administration or the proposed new administration, dominated by former UÇK leaders, freedom is extinct.

IV. The Case of Bozidar Ristic

I first met with Emilija Corac in Belgrade on 7 March 2004. The reason I met with her was concerning the demolition of a house in JNA¹ Street, Pristina (now known as UÇK street) in early February 2004. My attention was first drawn to the demolition of this house as I had passed it by every day for a few years on my way to work and had always considered it to be a rather beautiful building and part of the rapidly disappearing heritage of the town of Pristina. One can only imagine my dismay on the morning of the 3 February, 2004 when I noticed that a group of men had descended on the house and were in the process of demolishing it, ironically while an UNMIK vehicle was parked right in front. Within a day of the house's destruction the site had become like most other illegal demolitions across the province, a car park.

When I met with Emilija she informed me that her parents, Bozidar and Leposava Ristic, were the rightful owners of the property at 68 JNA Street, Pristina, where they have lived from the beginning of their married life until just prior to the NATO bombing. (Bozidar's father Nicola Ristic had built the house in 1936). Bozidar and Leposava left their lovely home in March 1999, when the bombing started, as did most of the Serb inhabitants of JNA street.

Up until June 1999, the street was inhabited mostly by Serbian families. These included Miodrag Lazerevic who lived in number 66, the Simic family in number 64, Karakusevic family in numbers 70 and 72. On the other end of the street lived Professor Spasojevic, the Sindic family, the Miliidragovic family and one Gorani family at the far end. The opposite side of the street, where the Raiffessen bank now stands, was the home of Dr. Kozarac and the family owned the house up until 1999, when the old Vera Kozarac ended up selling it for 5,000 DM. Soon afterwards it was opened as the American Bank of Kosovo. Other neighbours included the Aritonovic fam-

¹ Yugoslav People's Army

ily and the Dancetovic family. What is interesting is that the street just to the right of Bozidar's house, Nusiceva Street, was also mainly inhabited by Serbian families and one of the first Albanian families to move into the area was the family of the poet, Flora Brovina, who moved there after the Second World War.

In June 1999 Bozidar's property was broken into and all of the contents were stolen. In July of the same year, the family of Enver Sadriu moved in and took up residence without the owner's permission and without any financial recompense to the displaced family living in difficult circumstances in Belgrade. On 30 January, 2004 the Sadriu family was expelled from the house by unknown individuals claiming that they had purchased the house.

Like all the other Serb residents who lived in the street, the Ristic family in exile was subjected to a constant barrage of calls and harassment demanding that they sell their property. Miodrag Lazarevic, who lived next door in number 66, JNA Street had already sold his house in 2001 to Burim Gashi, an Albanian from Podujevo, for 340,000 DM. Mr. Gashi regularly phoned Bozidar asking him if he too was ready to sell, describing himself as a "businessman." The Ristic family declined to sell emphasising that this house represented their lives, their good memories, even their trees and their flowers meant a lot to them and they hoped to be able to return to it one day.

The morning that the house was destroyed the Ristic family received a telephone call from Burim Gashi telling them that their house was being demolished and complaining and accusing them of selling to someone else.

The family was horrified. Emilija Corac, Bozidar's daughter sent a letter to UNMIK, on the 4 February 2004, specifically to the then Senior Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Harri Holkeri, the highest UN official in Kosovo, Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi and to Nexhat Daci, speaker of the Assembly in Kosovo. The letter asked them to exercise their power to:

"urgently avert the unprecedented violation of basic human rights.....", and Emilija pointed out that she would bring criminal charges against that person in a competent court"

On 20 February, 2004 Emilija received a response from the Housing and Property Directorate (HPD) acknowledging the letter she had sent to the SRSG. HPD pointed out that they were processing the claim but that it had no jurisdiction over illegally occupied properties nor over destroyed property and she was informed that this was a matter for competent police authorities to deal with. However as it was not possible for the family to travel freely to Pristina it was extremely difficult for the family to pursue this case with the police. Organising transport to Pristina is very problematic for Serbs

as they do not feel safe walking around, while driving in Kosovo with Belgrade number plates can also be very problematic.

Emilija, who is a former judge of the Pristina court system (she lost her job in the 1980s due to discriminatory practices against Serbs in the legal profession at that time) contacted a lawyer whom she had known from her previous work. His name was Bayram Tmava. He agreed to take the case and pursue the matter with the police but two days later he called Emilija again and he declined, stating that he had been threatened and could not continue. She also contacted another Pristina lawyer named Aqif Tuhina, who commented that he too was afraid to touch the case. On one occasion when Emilija was on the phone to the lawyer, Bayram Tmava, a man calling himself Ismet Zhdrella, bearing the same surname as the illegal buyer of this property, took the phone and told Emilija that:

‘The moment that you will get your property back is when you are going to be born again.’

How right he was.

From what the Ristic family was able to discover later, the course of events were as follows: the house was sold illegally to Burhan Zhdrella from Podujevo by a man called Dejan Aleksic who claimed to be representing the Ristic family. The authorisation for this deed was carried out in a court in Gnjilane on 3 December 2004 under the legal supervision of a lawyer called Idriz Bajrami. Bozidar’s signature and personal ID details all appeared on this document. This was a clear case of the falsification of documents. Previously the family had submitted a claim to HPD concerning the legal ownership of the property and they were informed that their claim was being processed (claim number DS 600371). When the documentation was submitted to HPD it included all of Bozidar’s personal details, including documents bearing his signature, which was later forged on the false documentation. The perpetrators of this insidious crime almost certainly gained access to the signature from the HPD files which suggests that there may have been people employed within HPD at the time colluding with criminals operating such scams which were widespread throughout the province.

I would like to point that Bozidar Ristic worked as a businessman throughout his life in Pristina and was very well known by both Serbs and Albanians; his daughter Emilija, as I stated earlier, had worked as a judge in the province and was therefore well known by people within the legal profession and in the judiciary. Therefore, one can reasonably assume that all these illegal transactions and deals were done by people who knew exactly who owned what and knew exactly with whom they were dealing.

Bozidar was lucky enough to know one of the few Serbian lawyers willing and able to take up the case in the Kosovo court system. He proved to the judge that the signature on the contract selling the house was a forgery and the court decided in Bozidar's favour. Then, believe it or not Burhan Zhdrella, who had demolished the house illegally, appealed against the decision and a second hearing was held. This too was decided in Bozidar's favour. This process took more than a year. About a month after this second court ruling a brother of Burhan Zhdrella phoned Bozidar and informed him that his younger brother who had "bought" the house the first time was young and did not do it properly. Now he wanted to buy the house again, this time "for real". He asked what price Bozidar would accept for the site. He told him to remember that he had already paid some money to someone called Dejan Aleksic who was not the legal owner of the house but who appears to have been the pawn in the transaction. The bargaining process over the price lasted for several days all conducted over the telephone. In the end one of the Zhdrella clan offered Bozidar € 350,000 for the site. This puts Pristina in the same league as Tokyo for real estate prices.

He stated that this was the best price that Bozidar would get. He pointed out that no one else in Pristina would match that price and if the court forced him to pay compensation for demolishing the house he would not pay it. Rather, he would start constructing a new house and he would make sure that the construction took "one hundred years". This was his method of negotiation.

Basically, it amounted to taking this offer or nothing. By this stage it was clear to Bozidar and the rest of his family that return to JNA street was not a viable option.

It was obvious from what had transpired that the UN and other international organisations had not been able to create a society that could guarantee even the basic rights of Serbs or any other non Albanians in Kosovo. Ironically despite the fact that the international intervention was supposedly to safeguard a multi ethnic Kosovo, the reality is that Kosovo was multiethnic up until June 1999 when the ethnic cleansing began.

Therefore, the financial offer made to Bozidar was the only realistic option open to him. The Zhdrella clan paid € 350,000 for a site measuring 352 square metres. This works out at about € 10,000 Euro per square metre, a price more realistic in downtown Paris or Manhattan rather than downtown Pristina. Incidentally, he paid in cash, in € 500 notes. He provided the money in bundles tied together with elastic bands. He handed over the money in Merdare on November 23, 2005 on the administrative boundary line between Kosovo and Serbia proper.

When he handed over the money he said that this money might bring some happiness but as a result he expected he would never see them again. Needless to say there was no mention of a receipt or any documentation connected with this transaction. Since then Bozidar and his family have had no contact with him. The writer asks the question: who in the real world can come up with € 350,000 in bundles of € 500 notes at relatively short notice. No one in the authorities in Kosovo seems to question these transactions or where the money comes from. This is just one of the many cases that have come to the attention of the writer. In this case remarkably the courts in Kosovo found for a Serb. The moral of the tale is; if the Albanians want your property then your choice is to move with or without compensation.

Amazingly, the week commencing April 8, 2007 after everything apparently had been settled HPD contacted Bozidar by phone in relation to his case. Bozidar was told that he should come to their office in Belgrade on April 30, 2007 for their decision on the property case. It would appear that the property dispute resolution system established by UNMIK is a little bit on the slow side.

The writer concludes from the evidence presented here and other cases she is familiar with that:

- Unauthorised persons who operate outside the legal system continue to conduct a form of “cleansing” of the towns, primarily, because they control people within the system whether through fear, extortion, bribery, etc and they operate with impunity.
- People whose properties have been taken illegally and destroyed like this have no recourse to any system that will represent them fairly and justly in Kosovo, and even if they are represented in court what choices do they have? Return and/or restitution of the property is certainly not an option.
- A climate of fear pervades all strata of society in Kosovo where to represent dispossessed people like this means that your very life can be in danger.
- “Non-Albanian communities” within the province have no rights to access their properties, they do not have the most basic of human rights – freedom. In the vast majority of cases the legal system there does not represent them.
- The displaced from Kosovo, those who were forced to flee in 1999 and since, (some 210,000 in Serbia and around 18,000 in Montenegro) are at an unfair disadvantage as their basic rights, freedom of movement, including entitlements to their properties are not protected by law.

- All properties taken in such a manner since 1999 should be rescinded as the actual owners did not have the freedom to defend their own rights (properties and assets) and were forced to sell under duress.

According to anecdotal evidence so far there are thousands of such cases throughout Kosovo.

History Repeats Itself: Bozidar's Previous Dispossession

One thing that is very interesting about Bozidar is that he remembers the events in Pristina during the Second World War particularly vividly. In the early days the occupying troops were Italian and things were not too bad. However after the Italian capitulation in 1943 German troops arrived and the situation quickly deteriorated. The Germans used the Albanians as mercenaries. First there was the Balli Kombetare, a quasi-paramilitary type outfit whose job was to keep any signs of resistance down usually through brutality, murder and intimidation. There was the Skenderbeg S.S. Division which was raised by the Germans to keep things under control in Kosovo. In June 1944 Bozidar, his future wife Leposava, his brother and his mother were rounded up by Albanians for questioning. They were taken to a makeshift camp in the Philosophy Faculty where the Albanians ran a detention camp for Serbs, Roma and Jews. At the time he was arrested there were between 70 and 100 Serbs in the camp. Most of them were in for political reasons, some being members of the resistance.

They were eventually hauled off by train to a German concentration camp near Vienna along with most of the Serbs in the camp and the last of Pristina's Jewish population. Bozidar thinks the name of the camp was something like Rodown K25, if he remembers correctly. He knows that his number was 556, his mother's 533 and his future wife's 534. In total they were in custody from June 1944 until May 1945 when the camp was liberated. They were relatively lucky he thinks as they were sent to a concentration camp and not a death camp, possibly because it was late in the war and maybe some of the Germans saw the writing on the wall. He was drafted into a labour gang which was forced to construct barracks for the German forces. They were treated better in the camp near Vienna than they were in Pristina where the Albanians regularly beat them up. Remarkably most of them survived and after their release they walked back to Pristina, a journey which took them some six months. While he was away Bozidar's house had been robbed and vandalised. However, he got it back in one piece.

After the war things were not easy under communism. Much property and land was confiscated by the communist government. Bozidar's father was a well known trader around Yugoslavia and most of his property was confiscated. Bozidar's wife Leposava also had a father involved in business. He did a lot of trade in wheat and other agricultural products. He had a large store right in the centre of Pristina. This too was taken away by the communists. The euphemism they used at the time was it was one of the properties to be "nationalised". They were never compensated for any of this.

All the top jobs in the local communist party were held by Albanians. For instance Bozidar had known Fadil Hoxha before the war and he went on to become the leader of the Communist Party in Kosovo. After 1962 almost no Serbs were employed in the government departments in Pristina. These jobs were quite openly only for Albanians. During the 1970s and 1980s things became even more difficult for Serbs and many left Kosovo including Bozidar's daughter Emilija and son Dusko. It was difficult for them to find jobs and even when they had one they faced open discrimination against them. All official documentation was in Albanian first and then Serbian. Increasingly Albanians began to come into Pristina. Before the Second World War they had mostly lived outside the city. When Bozidar was growing up it was mostly Serbs with some Turks and some Jews. Under communism it was difficult for Serbs to get permission to build on land. The area of Pristina now known as Dragodan up until the 1960s was mainly planted in vineyards. Bozidar's father and uncle owned vineyards there as did their next door neighbour. However, the communist authorities began to build housing in the area exclusively for Albanians from the late 1960s - early 1970s onwards. Often land was confiscated by the local authorities and then sold to Albanians. With the establishment of the state of Israel and continuing pressure from the communists on business classes in Pristina, what was left of the Jewish community departed in 1948.

The house that Bozidar lived in up until 1999 was built in 1936 by his father Nikola Ristic. It was a typical Serbian style dwelling, a small cottage finely finished and with a neat little garden around it. When they moved into the house there were, he remembers, only three Albanian households in the entire street. He recalls that the pressure really intensified after 1974 when Tito granted the province of Kosovo autonomous status. There was sustained pressure on Serbs to sell up and leave. People rang or called to Serb houses all the time trying to "persuade" them to sell up. Young Serbs were often harassed in the street either by gangs of Albanians or by Albanian policemen. Bozidar recalls that when he was growing up and even up until 1999 all the villages around Pristina were predominantly Serbian. Certainly if you consider those between Pristina and Mitrovica almost all the villages and most

of the agricultural land belonged to Serbs. There were some Muslims living in a few villages but very few Albanians. Since 1999 they are almost all populated exclusively by Albanians. Bozidar notes that the rapid demographic change was accompanied by an unprecedented spate of house building. Hundreds if not thousands of tall, multi-storey houses have sprung up along the roadside and even in the middle of fields. Sometimes only the shell is completed and the building stands as a marker to the change in ownership of the land. No one saw fit to ask where the money for this huge building spree came from.

Bozidar sees little or no hope for the Serbs of Kosovo as things stand now. The monasteries and old cultural monuments are Serbian but Bozidar thinks someone “out there” has already decided their fate.

V. The Croats of Letnica

The Croat community in Letnica is an endangered community; the village of Letnica is situated in the south east of Kosovo in the municipality of Vitina and is very near to the border with Macedonia. Croats have been living in Kosovo for 700 years, having come to the province during the time of King Milutin to work in the mines. Prior to 1999 the Croat community lived in many of the surrounding villages near Letnica; however like most other communities in Kosovo their lives and livelihoods were to change drastically after NATO troops assumed responsibility for security; the return of the UÇK back to the surrounding villages made the situation untenable and most Croats and Serbs in the area were forced to flee. Those who stayed have had to endure unbearable conditions. The following account is based on numerous discussions with members of the Croat community over a period of a few years and the report is based entirely on what was disclosed and reported to me during these discussions, and I have neither augmented nor elaborated on their account.

The first time I arrived in the village of Letnica was in 2004. I was introduced to Froka Djokic, the village representative who owns the restaurant “Dubrovnik;” his property is by any standard substantial and his house, which is situated in a strategic location in the village, straddles the stream which runs through the village. At the back of his house is his mill, his pride and joy. He showed me around the mill on several occasions, he showed me how the wheel turns by the force of the water running under the mill; he showed me his museum, housing all the ethnographic artefacts of the village which he has gathered down through the years: testimony to the centuries’ long tradition of Croats living in the region.

Froka Djokic is preserving the cultural heritage of the Croat community in Letnica. In his mill-house his old farming instruments and clothing typical of Croats under the Ottoman occupation are lined all along the walls. It is easy to see how this mill is his pride and joy. He has even made his own

handmade dynamo to supply electricity to the house. You can tell that he loves his mill; he outlines his future plans; one idea is to adapt the mill so that it will produce the electric supply for the whole village but he knows that under the present circumstances that this is unlikely.

Froka has an office at the side of his house and on the wall for all to see are all the medals he has received from the US army. He was awarded a certificate for attending a "Peace and Reconciliation" seminar, somewhat ironic when one considers the circumstances prevailing in the village.

During that first visit, as I sat in the Dubrovnik restaurant waiting for Froka to attend, I sat down at the main table in the room and Froka's son in law introduced himself to me. His name is Milorad Sotic and he is a Serb from the nearby town of Vitina. He told me he had a house in Vitina but that in 1999 he was expelled from his house and was forced to move to his father in law Froka's house in Letnica. His house was illegally occupied by an unknown Albanian until the Housing and Property Directorate (HPD) served a writ evicting the illegal occupier; however, not long afterwards his house was burnt to the ground.

Milorad is married to one of Froka's daughters and they have four children. He lived in Vitina and worked in the shoe factory near Letnica, which was a donation from the Croatian government back in the Yugoslavia days when each republic was encouraged to invest in Kosovo. Slovenia and Zagreb were their markets; they placed specific orders and finished off the leather shoes started in the factory. Roma, Serbs, Albanians, Croats all worked in the factory together, although it was mainly Croats. Production stopped before the wars in Slovenia and Croatia. Milorad used to help Froka in his restaurant "Dubrovnik," an annex to his main house, but due to the continual harassment and the exodus of Croats from the village the restaurant closed.

At one time Croats lived in all the surrounding villages but today very few remain. For instance, the nearby village of Stubla is now entirely populated by Albanian Catholics. Today there are about 10 Croats in the village of Shashencij. Vernico Kolo was a Croat village up until the 1990s but now only six Croats remain. Vernas village too now only has six Croats. In the village of Letnica only around 40 Croats remain. There were 900 Croat houses in this and the surrounding villages in the 1990s but now 99% of them are deserted and or occupied.

Harassment and Intimidation since 1999

According to Froka nearly every Croat house in the village of Letnica has suffered in some way since 1999. In general people are afraid to speak

out because of the levels of intimidation and their distrust in the local authorities established under UNMIK. A climate of fear prevails in Letnica just like all the other enclaves in Kosovo. It does not matter that they are Catholic Croats. Someone wants their land and their property and therefore they are legitimate targets. Some families in the village have suffered almost daily harassment and intimidation.

Terror

Albanians started their campaign of terror in Letnica and surrounding villages in June 1999. On 28 June 1999 a group of men came to restaurant "Dubrovnik." They were dressed in UÇK uniforms. They broke into the house after breaking all the windows. They attacked Froka, they beat him and accused him of having a son in law who is a Serb. The UÇK asked him to hand over his weapons for which he had a licence. They broke all the furniture and beat him up. Three beat him and two stood guard outside the door with guns, keeping an eye out for US KFOR which was nowhere to be seen at the time. Froka knew his attackers. He knew them by name.

During that attack the UÇK stole all his daughters' jewellery and a satellite dish. They tortured him to find out where his weapons were. They took all but one gun which somehow they missed. They tortured him putting a wire around his neck. They began to throttle him using their hands. Then they put a knife to his neck but he pleaded with them not to kill him this way. He begged that they shoot him like a man and not kill him with a knife like slaughtering an animal.

He spoke to them in Albanian. He knew who their families were. They were from the villages of Ljubishte, Mogila and one was from Stubla. I asked him if he could give me their names but he just looked at me and laughed in a funny kind of way saying that even if he did give me their names it would be of no use. He pointed out that knowing their names made no difference because these people changed their names on a regular basis. One day, it could be Enver, the next day it could be Afrim or Mohammed.

On Aug 17, 1999 others came. It was 6.30 a.m. They wore sunglasses to hide their appearance. Again they said they were looking for weapons and threatened to kill the whole family this time. Again they began to trash the place. They found the hunting rifle which the last group of UÇK had missed. US KFOR had given Froka five bullets for this rifle to defend himself and his family and they helped him to fix the telescopic sight. A man called Captain J. was a good man according to Froka. He was with the first contingent of US troops and knew that the Croats were under threat. US KFOR had settled

in the shoe factory four kilometres away but in the end they did not protect the villages or villagers.

Like Fr Mateo in the Croat village of Janjevo which is near Pristina, the priest in Letnica, Fr. Pesko Glasnovic, was a strong figure in the community and all the Croats in Letnica looked to him for guidance. He had been a priest for many years in the village and like all other religious figures he held the community together. The UÇK attacked and threatened Fr. Pesko on a number of occasions. They pointed a gun at him. They accused him of being friendly with Serbs and in particular with one Serb who was a dentist in the area. They accused him of the crime of allowing a Serb to visit his house. This dentist was later arrested accused of a crime he did not commit. The only evidence against him was an accusation based on the word of an Albanian. After several years in jail he was eventually released for lack of evidence. Fr. Pesko's sentence was banishment. He had to leave after being attacked and threatened at gunpoint. His strong presence in the community was seen as a threat to those trying to get rid of the Croats and usurp their property.

First Killing

The first to be killed in the area was a Croat man from the village of Shashevici; his name was Petar Tunic and he was 70 years old. A Catholic nun went with KFOR to look for him when he went missing. They found the corpse in the woods near his house. According to the nun every organ had been ripped out of his body and then he was shot. He had been with his horse and when the horse got back to the house it dropped dead. The nun went searching for Petar as Froka was afraid to go because not long before he was beaten up by the UÇK. The story that went round the village was that Petar Tunic had suffered a horrific death. He had been disembowelled. This event was enough to frighten most of the rest of the remaining Croats. Froka explained that the Croat community decided to leave after this killing believing that the Albanians did not want anybody who was not Albanian to stay. That one killing was seen as a warning and the continuing campaign of harassment has underlined the same message as far as the Croat community in the area is concerned. On 27 October 1999, two days before the "Day of the Dead" the Croatian government sent buses to rescue the remaining Croats and 400 left that day. More left later.

Most of the houses belonging to the 400 who left that day were later handed over to Albanians from Macedonia who were temporarily displaced by the war in Macedonia in 2001. This was presented by UNHCR as a humanitarian gesture. But, they are still there six years later although it is safe

for them to return to Macedonia. The Croats who left Letnica on October 27, 1999, have never had the chance to return and even if they wished to return they could not in the present circumstances given that their houses have been occupied by Albanians from Macedonia with the official approval of a UN organisation. According to Froka, one French representative of UNHCR asked him why could the Macedonian Albanians not keep the occupied Croat houses. In reply, Froka asked her that if they were occupying her house in France whether she would be happy to let them keep it. She did not reply. She did not seem to understand that the displaced Croats as the rightful owners of the properties should be allowed to return. This attitude by the international community towards the return of the displaced Serbs, Roma and Croats is not uncommon.

Court Case:

An Albanian man Haki Ahmeti from the village Komo Glava in Urosevac municipality bought a small piece of land from a Croat neighbour of Froka's who had decided to leave. The land was on the bank of the river which ran under Froka's house. Haki cut off part of the water to Froka's mill. Froka took Haki to court. In November 2003 when Haki got the summons to go to court he attacked Froka in the street near his home and rammed the summons into Froka's mouth. He called him vulgar names saying he would cut off his private parts. Froka reported the assault to the Kosovo Police Service who took statements and prepared a case for court. Two others from Letnica were witnesses. These were Marian Nikolic and Marko Kolic, who both told Froka that they were threatened by Haki to keep quiet. In court the judge said the case would be resolved if they shook hands and kept the peace in future. They did so but upon leaving the court only a few hundred metres from the court house Haki and his son attacked Froka and beat him up. Then and there, Froka decided to drop the case because of the threats. His friend Marko used to work in the mill but he is afraid to go there alone now. The Croat community is now afraid to report incidents and has no faith in the court system to defend their rights.

Haki Ahmeti wants Froka's house, mill and the land. If he had possession of these assets then he would control the water supply in the village as well as owning a very strategically placed property. The court case did not dampen Haki's enthusiasm for intimidating and harassing Froka and the other Croats. In fact he has stepped up his campaign, as now his son helps him to intimidate the Croats. Haki always tells Froka that it does not matter what the court says, "We will get the mill in the end."

Haki is now using the land that he bought from Froka's neighbour to re-direct the course of the river. Froka took a second court case against him, this time because he was affecting the water supply to the mill. Haki beat up Froka in the street outside the court and warned Froka that he was not to sell the property to anyone, not even other Albanians as he, Haki, is the only one with the right to it

Haki is using all of Froka's land and the land of the other Croats who have left; they asked Froka to look after their land for them while they were gone. The remaining Croats are afraid to work their land as Albanians both here and from across the border in Macedonia threaten them on a daily basis.

Froka consulted an attorney, an Albanian who promised to send a commission to investigate. But he has heard nothing since.

There is a primary school in Letnica and a secondary school in nearby Vrbovac. A Serb boy Milos used to go to the school in Letnica with Milorad's daughter but was beaten up by Macedonian Albanians on his way to school.

The village has lost hope. More than 100 reports of harassment have been lodged with the authorities but not one case has been resolved and the reports make the Albanians even more angry. Albanians come to see Milorad every day to see if he will sell his house in Vitina. The Albanians graze their cattle on Froka's land as if it is already theirs.

In March 2004 all the windows of the Croat houses were broken. This was at least the third time they had been smashed; however after the March 2004 violence UNMIK paid for the window repairs.

Froka prepared a report for President Mesic of Croatia and sent it on 13 April 2005. He wrote down everything that had happened and sent it to President Mesic and to many other leaders.

Froka thinks that the Albanians want to liquidate all Croats from here and they stay awake at night afraid to sleep. His daughter and grand daughter have been attacked and verbally insulted on numerous occasions.

The Catholic priest who replaced the Croat priest, Fr Gerge Crista, is an Albanian; he says Mass in Croatian every Sunday at 9 am but all other masses are in Albanian. The Albanian priest is seen by the Croats as unsympathetic; they say he gives no support to them. He never talks to them. After the earthquake some years ago, he visited all the Albanian villagers including the Muslims but none of the Croats. The Croats receive no support from him and he does not voice their needs.

No NGOs except the Serbian Red Cross assist this village; they bring stuff, food and non food items to Vrbovac and they share it out with the Croats in Letnica.

In 2005 in all the Croat villages there were 63 people left compared with 1999 when there were 570. In the early 1990s there were 6,000. All that remain are the old and sick. When returnees have visited Letnica they have been subjected to threats and intimidation.

The Macedonian Albanians have recently become increasingly belligerent, making insulting remarks to the Croat women in front of their men-folk in an apparent attempt to provoke some sort of incident. Certain women in the village have been threatened with rape. Froka, his Serbian son-in-law Milorad and the other Croat men express their shame that they cannot protect their female relatives and friends. Albanian Catholics do speak to the Croats in Letnica but Albanian Muslims, mainly from Macedonia never speak to the Croats except to swear at them and their women folk telling them they should not be here anymore.

Froka as spokesman for the Croat community in Letnica prioritises their needs as the repair of houses, food aid or some kind of income-generation assistance and the possibility of pensions. On many occasions when leaving, Froka breaks down in tears and asks me to let people know what is happening in his community, appealing for help from the international community to let people live in peace. His own wish is that he is not forced out, that he can die in his own village surrounded by his friends and family, in his own community and attended by his local priest as happens in normal places.

The Croats of South Kosovo recently celebrated the 700th anniversary of the Croatian community in the area. The first “Janjevci”, that is Croats of the area, came to the villages in this part of Kosovo at the invitation of the Serbian ruling family who wished to develop their mining interests. They built their homes in Janjevo and surrounding villages and built several churches including the Church of the Madonna of the Black Mountains in Letnica where Mother Teresa found her calling when on a pilgrimage there in 1928.

The first written mention of the Catholics in this area is by Pope Benedict XII in 1303, mentioning Janjevo as the centre of the Catholic parish of Sveti Nikola. I once asked Dom Matteo, the Catholic priest of Janjevo, if having just celebrated the Croatian Catholic community’s 700th anniversary would they last another 700 years. His reply was simple and stark. He said that he doubted if there would be any Christians in Kosovo in seven years time, never mind Croats. The reference of course is to the increasing efforts to Islamize Albanians, especially Albanian Catholics.

On subsequent visits to Letnica it became increasingly clear that the Croat community there is dwindling in numbers almost by the day. Most of those left are elderly. The campaign against them continues.

Latest attack

On November 9, 2006 Milorad was leaving the side door of the restaurant just in front of Froka when shots rang out. Milorad was wounded by shrapnel as the bullets disintegrated on striking the wall beside him. Froka was unhurt. Both men know this is just the latest attempt to force them out. US KFOR and representatives of the Kosovo Police Service, all Albanians, arrived soon after the shooting. They searched the area nearby and arrested the same man that had been intimidating Froka all these years. A rifle believed to have been used in the attack was recovered. The alleged assailant's son identified the rifle as the property of his father. Despite this, Froka is despondent. He has no faith in the justice system. He does not believe that his would-be murderer will stay in jail. As soon as he is released Froka believes the attacks will begin again and probably get worse. For now all they can do is wait and pray.

VI. “Wrong Judgement or the Bells that Won”

Urosevac municipality is named after the medieval Serbian King Uros. The main urban area in the municipality is Urosevac town, now renamed Ferizaj. There are about seven elderly Serbs left there now. Before June 1999 the town had up to 8,000 Serbs and 14,000 Roma (of whom around 10,000 would have described themselves as being Ashkalija, that is, people of Roma origin who generally speak Albanian and are Muslim). In addition there were a few Gorani, Turks and Croats. About 30,000 Albanians lived in the town and a further 5-6,000 Serbs lived in villages scattered around the municipality.

Urosevac town was noted for its small Serbian kafanas (cafes), boasting larger numbers of them than any other city in Kosovo and people would come from all around to enjoy a night out in one of the many kafanas. Before the bombing, there was little or no trouble in Urosevac municipality. The UÇK was not strong in the region and many Albanians in the villages were on good terms with their non Albanian neighbours. Indeed many of the Albanians of Urosevac were probably descendants of Serbs who had embraced Islam and eventually “Albanised”. The villages of Kamenoglava (Stonehead) and Jezerce were typical examples of this. It is interesting to note that Serbs in Urosevac often referred to Albanians in Urosevac as “relatives”.

The story of Urosevac will be told through the eyes of Petar who was born and who grew up in Urosevac town and who was an eyewitness to the horrifying events that beset the Serbian and Roma population after NATO forces arrived. Now in his thirties, he lives in displacement in North Mitrovica. He speaks English well, is a qualified medical doctor and presently works with a Christian charity organisation. Before that, he worked as an interpreter for KFOR and others. He remembers the NATO bombardment well and its aftermath in Urosevac town.

His household back in 1999 was only one of four Serb families living in a relatively new area of Urosevac. The rest of the houses in his area were

inhabited by Albanians. In the first few days of the bombing, which started on March 24th 1999, everyone was afraid initially and his Albanian neighbours were even afraid to come out of their homes and go shopping. The town had various police and military units in it at the time and they were probably fearful of the reception they might get if stopped in the street, Petar thinks, given that Serbia and Montenegro was being bombed by NATO at the time in Operation “Angel of Mercy” supposedly to protect the rights of ethnic Albanians. Petar went to the shops on their behalf buying 40 or 50 loaves of bread at a time for them. After a few days they started to venture out and go to the shops themselves when they realised that nothing would happen.

There were very few incidents at the time. A couple of Albanian-owned shops were burnt and some were robbed but the police rounded up those that were stealing. 35 people, mostly Serbs and some Roma, were arrested. One of the policemen who arrested them was an Albanian, an inspector in the Ministry of Interior police called Bajgora. He was killed by the UÇK immediately after they arrived in June 1999. Also killed were two prominent Albanian bakers who had kept working during the blitz from March to June 1999. Apparently the UÇK saw them as collaborators who not only had committed the crime of not leaving when the bombing began – to add to the picture of a humanitarian crisis – but they had continued to work feeding the townspeople of Urosevac. Interestingly, although about a third of the town’s Albanian population did flee the bombing, their numbers were more than made up by Albanians from the villages that, as elsewhere in Kosovo, tended to move to the local urban centres during the bombing.

However, as Petar states pointedly, the real war began when the bombing stopped and, under the terms of UN Resolution 1244, the Serbian state forces withdrew. Slobodan Milosevic appeared on television to tell the people that the international forces coming in were peacekeepers and Serbs were not to worry. The international force would consist of troops from many nations including Russia and not just NATO member states. No Serbs or Roma left. British KFOR arrived first sometime between 12-14 June. Then they moved on and were replaced by US KFOR soldiers about 15-16 June 1999. Before KFOR arrived many of the local Albanians told the non Albanians in Urosevac that the bombing was bad, that NATO was bad. They just wanted to be left alone and to have peace with their neighbours.

However, the first signs that something was wrong came on 13-14th June when television reports were aired describing killings and attacks on non Albanian communities elsewhere in Kosovo including Prizren. On the same day that US KFOR arrived, carloads of UÇK gunmen arrived. They were in military uniforms with the “UÇK” badge on their shoulders. They were Albanians but had very suntanned faces as if they had been out in the fields all

the time and wore long beards. They drove around the town and took over and occupied all the main buildings including the schools, the municipality building and all the hospitals. US KFOR did not intervene. The Serbian townspeople then heard that all Serb males were being kidnapped in the nearby village of Nerodimlje. Many of the Serbs from the villages had started to arrive in the town fleeing the killing and kidnapping in the villages. Houses on the outskirts of the town were attacked and burnt with the result that Serbs and other non Albanians began to seek shelter with friends and relatives nearer the centre. Several neighbouring families stayed with Petar. On the 16th June he spotted a US KFOR patrol outside his house and ran out to request help. He told them that the UÇK was burning their houses and that they were afraid but the soldier he spoke to just smiled and said nothing. They drove off.

US KFOR helicopters flew overhead literally fanning the flames in the houses that were burning. The villagers coming into Urosevac town said that US KFOR had told them that they could not guarantee the safety of the Serbs in the villages. These included Gornje (Upper) Nerodimlje, Donje (Lower) Nerodimlje, Stojkovic, Talinovac, Selo Varos, Staro Selo, Gatnjenje, Grebno, Sarajiste, Softovic, Sazlija, Prelez, Pozatiste, Tankosic, Biba and Grlica. In some cases the UÇK came in to their houses and said they had ten minutes to leave. A few old people decided to stay and were killed or disappeared. Petar and about 10,000 other non Albanians went to the city centre around the municipality building. A British KFOR general arrived and told them that they should stay, that if they left now they would never come back. As this discussion was being held women forced their way in and informed them all that 40 men had been grabbed by the UÇK in a nearby street and had been herded into a nearby factory. However, possibly with the intervention of the British general, they were released the same day. In the meantime it was getting dark.

The city looked like it was on fire. During the night of the 16 June, US and Greek KFOR came and said that they were arranging an escort to take the Serbs and Roma away. The remaining ten thousand or so were ringed off behind barbed wire "for their own protection" while they listened to the destruction of their city and the extermination of their friends who did not make it to KFOR's makeshift corral in the centre of the city, surrounded by barbed wire. They spent the night there. In the morning of the 17 June 1999 they were informed that only those with their own transport would be escorted from the city, Urosevac, a place that had been peaceful even under the NATO bombardment but was now hell on earth. It is an easy phrase to use especially for journalists. Except, remarkably there were no journalists to record this pogrom. There were only the killers, the prey and the UN mandated force

which prowled around the barbed wire perimeter, and if facts are to be considered, nowhere else.

The cleansing was remarkably efficient. Those who could drive, drove. Who knows how many piled into cars that day? For the rest of the doomed, buses were to be provided. That is what KFOR said. After the cars had left on the morning of the 17 June 1999, about 10,000 people did manage to leave maybe more, maybe less. No one was keeping score, certainly not US KFOR. The remainder, mostly old men and women, were secured behind barbed wire and left there in the centre of the town, exposed to the insults of the UÇK, to the insults of the civilians who had once been their neighbours and who had turned to be haters of old men and old women and to the indifference of US KFOR.

Some dates go down in military history. This should be one of them. All the heroes who fought for America, for American independence, for American values... all those heroes ... where were they that night? Where were they that night? Who slept soundly that night? The 1,000 or so old Serbs and Roma who were left, who endured that night, must have wondered what they had done? Or perhaps they wondered, having witnessed what the UÇK and their old neighbours had just perpetrated, perhaps some of them wondered is this the Second World War again? Is this the new order?

The survivors of that ordeal were left to endure being penned behind barbed wire in the open for more than a week with no sanitary facilities, no water and in the fierce heat of the Balkan summer before someone from UNMIK/KFOR chose to rescue them. "Operation Angel of Mercy" indeed. Perhaps the troops who were sent in to Urosevac had been badly briefed or badly trained but surely any young soldier understands that there is something wrong when they have the duty to "guard" one thousand Serb and Roma pensioners while the city around them is burned by their persecutors. It is important to obey orders if you are a soldier but not to the point where the order is immoral. Who ordered those young soldiers to stand by whilst the entire non Albanian community of Urosevac was cleansed? Slobodan Milosevic was gone. He can not be blamed for this. Who left 1,000 old and frightened pensioners behind barbed wire surrounded by KFOR soldiers for days and days in the open air before relief could be arranged? The soldiers who watched as the ethnic cleansing of Urosevac town unfolded before their eyes were complicit but their superiors are among those whom, in the words of Emile Zola, "I accuse."

"Heroes everyone."

"What did you do in the War Grandpa?"

Perhaps better not to mention the War.

The residents of Urosevac that were saved after more than a week of life under armed guard open to the gaze of the UÇK and their former neighbours who watched them continuously and who humiliated them continuously with impunity, yes they were saved. KFOR escorted their buses, finally. Most of them were eventually moved to safety in Bujanovac, a municipality in the south of Serbia.

And what of the non Albanians who did not make it to the wire?

Perhaps the story of Dobrinka Staletovic is worth remembering? She was old and thought no one would consider her a threat. She stayed. The UÇK arrived on the night of the 16 June and stripped her. They bound her with ropes and dragged her down to the nearby well and dropped her into it. Up and down she went. Something like the old British Royal Navy keelhauling. It was enough to torture but not enough to kill. Although of course, with an old woman and with the UÇK administering “justice” one doubts if there was any thought about whether she was left below the surface of the water for sufficient time to hurt but insufficient time to kill. With these events unfolding before their eyes the Albanian civilian population (that is, the non UÇK) took their opportunity to rob, loot and pillage the town. Was this revenge? In the very town where nothing had ever happened? Where the non Albanian population had been protected by the Serbs and other non Albanians?

What about Perka Mladenovic? She and her husband were beaten as they tried to flee their house. She was unable to go on and her husband placed her in a blanket in an attempt to drag her to safety. He ran the gauntlet but eventually soon tired. Two pensioners have difficulty escaping terror on their own. Nearly exhausted he decided he had to make for the centre of town and the barbed wire encampment established by KFOR. He might get the soldiers to come back with him and rescue them both. He made it to the barbed wire and more remarkably persuaded a US KFOR soldier to go back for Perka. In the few minutes it had taken to find help and return Perka and the blanket had disappeared. She has never been seen since.

What of the widow of the famous World War Two veteran, the Partisan who had fought the Nazis with great success in the mountains of southern Serbia? He died thirty years before his widow. She was more than 80 years old when the UÇK in uniforms broke into their house on the 16 June 1999. There were several old Serb women in the same house; her neighbours had taken shelter with her. “Wrong Decision.” The UÇK stripped them and raped them. They forced them to serve them coffee. How civilised. They were allowed to live being thrown out of their own homes, “never to return” as they were told. More than a hundred elderly Serbs who stayed in their homes, rather than going to the camp behind the barbed wire in the centre of town, suffered an ordeal of beating and torture for days. Some of them were killed,

some disappeared and the others fled, all in a dreadful physical and mental state. Since their ordeal many of them have died in their varied places of displacement.

Several examples will serve to illustrate the types of tactics employed by the UÇK or the mob that accompanied them on their orgy of death and destruction in Urosevac in June 1999. One old lady was beaten by a group of Albanian teenagers. As she lay on the ground, she was beaten and pumelled with stones. She was severely injured having one eye forced out of its socket by the impact of one rock at point blank range. She miraculously survived.

There was the case of Mr. Petrovic an elderly man who was tied to his own bed and whose house was then set alight. He burned to death. His burnt corpse was found lying on the bed where he had been bound.

There was one woman who survived by hiding in the little hut in her garden in which she normally kept chickens or even pigs. What must she have thought hiding for days in what basically amounted to a chicken coop as she listened to the destruction of the world she knew.

No commentary is necessary for the type of people who would inflict such unspeakable atrocities on harmless civilians most of whom were past retirement age and who had hoped to forget the atrocities of the Second World War.

Very few Serbs have ever returned to Urosevac town since the cleansing. On one occasion around September 1999, that is about three months after the pogrom, several senior Serbian school teachers accompanied by US KFOR returned to their school where it had been arranged that they could pick up the certificates of Serb pupils that had attended the school. The Albanian director welcomed them. After getting the required certificates one of the teachers expressed the desire to visit a nearby village, her birth place. KFOR agreed to accompany her there. Two of the Serbian teachers decided to stay in the school chatting to the Albanian director. The arrangement was that KFOR would collect them on the way back from the village. When the US KFOR troops came back not long afterwards, there was no sign of the two Serbian teachers. They had been kidnapped. The Albanian director refused to say anything.

Later the son of one of the kidnapped Serbian teachers happened to meet the Albanian director and, understandably angered by what had happened, threatened to kill him. The Albanian school principal replied simply that that was not so cruel. He knew that the Serb would only kill him. The UÇK would kill his whole family as well.

And what about the villages in Urosevac?

The terrors inflicted on the non Albanian communities were not confined just to the town of Urosevac. The villages as noted before were the first to suffer from attacks causing residents to flee to Urosevac town. It is worthwhile however to consider briefly what type of place the rural area of Urosevac is, to consider its historical and geographical richness which now has been swallowed up by a new dark age.

In the medieval Serbian state Urosevac played a significant role. It was home to the Serbian medieval kings. Tsar Uros was buried in the village of Nerodimlje. Tsar Dushan had a summer house, in fact a castle, built in the village as it was one of his favourite hunting areas. Dushan's castle in Nerodimlje, some remains of which can still be seen, was named "Petric".

Urosevac did not become a municipality until after the Second World War and the onset of the Communist government under Tito. Until then Nerodimlje was the centre of the municipality known as "Nerodimski Srez".

Nerodimlje village was renowned for several things apart from Dushan's Castle. It was the site of several ancient churches and monasteries dating from the time when the Serbian medieval state was at its height and after. It is the site of the first school in the Serbian language allowed by the Turkish administration in the year 1800. A famous pine tree, planted by Tsar Dushan himself, grew in the village. The tree had been a candidate for the UNESCO list of sites and objects of historical and cultural significance for some time. By the twentieth century the tree had spread so enormously that twenty four people joining hands could span its circumference. However, as a result the tree was a favourite target for invading forces.

A pine tree? Why would every occupying force try to remove the evidence of Dushan's pine tree? During the Ottoman occupation the Turks tried to cut it down. They gave up due to the enormous effort it would require. During the Second World War German occupation forces accompanied by loyal Albanians tried to cut and burn it down to the ground. Still it resisted. In July 1999 the UÇK using plastic explosives blew it up. That was that or so it seemed. However if you look at the remains today you will notice that the root of the pine is still extant and even looks like it is growing.

Nerodimlje was equally renowned for the geographical oddity of its bifurcating river, the Nerodimka. It divides in two near the village with one branch running to the Sitnica, then joining the Ibar, the Morava and finally into the Danube to empty into the Black Sea. The other branch runs via the Lepenac and the Vardar into the Aegean Sea.

But now back from the past which was often turbulent to the horrifying present era. The NATO bombing of Urosevac was spectacularly unsuccessful

if the casualties are anything to go by and if they were serious in their intention to intervene to prevent a humanitarian disaster. For instance NATO planes bombed "Fabrika Savnic" which produced iron pipes for the water supply. That raid killed 11 people of Roma ethnic origin and one Albanian. At one time the factory had been a big employer. Before the sanctions, and before Serbia became an international pariah, the very same factory had produced the water pipes for a major contract in Libya. Of course that was when Yugoslavia enjoyed international favour.

In June 1999 the non-Albanian population of Urosevac and especially in places like Nerodimlje had a serious choice to make. Following the NATO bombardment and faced with the on-going harassment and intimidation from the Albanians they had to choose to leave or die. Almost all left never to return. Eight Serbs, elderly people, chose not to leave Nerodimlje. All eight were killed.

The case of Andreja Sabic is typical. An eighty-two year old man and devout Christian, despite the years of Tito's totalitarian Communist regime, he chose not to leave. The UÇK killed him and placed his decapitated head on a stake in the centre of the village known as the Cesma or "Water Spring". The head stayed there for several weeks while Albanian villagers from the surrounding countryside came to spit on it. US KFOR patrols regularly patrolled the village in those days but apparently saw nothing wrong. This could perhaps be connected to the allegation from the former residents of Nerodimlje - that is the non-Albanians who were driven out - that US KFOR informed the Albanians and more specifically the UÇK, that they had 48 days to clear out the area but not to do it in daylight. Perhaps the allegation is unjust; perhaps the Albanians who boasted to the non-Albanian residents that the Americans had given them 48 days to get rid of them were joking. But that is exactly what the UÇK did.

The UÇK arrived in the village of Stari Kacanik a couple of days after KFOR had entered the province. Stari Kacanik is actually in the municipality of Kacanik but is situated very close to Urosevac. Six Serbs were murdered that day in some of the most horrifying circumstances. In one case a Serb managed to get two of his daughters out of the village putting them on the last bus out before more than 40 UÇK killers arrived. Another daughter and his wife had stayed with him. The UÇK burst into his house and tied him up. They raped his daughter and wife repeatedly and in what can only be described as an act of utter depravity, even by UÇK standards, the rapists ejaculated over the face of the man who had been forced to watch them rape his wife and daughter. Following this sordid performance, they gathered the seven Serbs they had caught and shot them repeatedly. Remarkably the man who had been forced to watch the rapists at work, was not killed. Nor did

they manage to kill his wife immediately. Perhaps the fact that they shot all seven together gave them this unexpected chance. When the killers had left he got to his feet and found that only his wife had also survived although they were both badly wounded. He succeeded in escaping carrying his bleeding wife through the forest for more than a kilometre before he realised that she had just died. He left her body there and went to seek help for his own wounds. Not long afterwards he was picked up by Macedonian police just over the border. They immediately brought him to hospital. His miraculous survival means there is testimony to the methods of the UÇK in Stari Kacanik that day. Today, he is in the camp for internally displaced persons in Leskovac in central Serbia. No one has ever been arrested for this crime or for any of the other inhuman acts carried out in those days of June 1999.

All the villages of Urosevac faced similar assaults. They were effectively cleansed within days of the “new peace” descending on Kosovo. Over 2,000 Serbian houses were burned down in Urosevac municipality. All the Serbian Orthodox churches were destroyed or damaged. All Serbian graveyards were destroyed in the municipality. The houses and apartments belonging to non Albanians that were not burnt down were without exception occupied illegally by Albanians. Pick any village at random and the experiences of the Serbs and other non Albanians in June 1999 will be, with a few minor variations, the same relentless, remorseless, faceless terrorism inflicted on the weak and the innocent. The Roma and the Gorani faced similar terrorism.

And Back to the Town

And what of Urosevac town itself? Today in 2007 there are seven or eight Serbs left, elderly people who are waiting to die and therefore to those who sought to exterminate the non Albanian population, they represent no threat (although that did not stop them in 1999). After the arrival of UNMIK and KFOR in June 1999 the attacks on Serbs, Roma and all non-Albanians in Urosevac became intolerable. Leaving for an uncertain future and with nothing to stay for or to wait for what was likely to be a swift demise was the choice. That was the choice because the non-Albanian population very quickly discovered that they were the “guilty” ones, they were the “problem; in fact they were the *unter-menschen*.

Petar has had several narrow shaves in his time but none closer than the time he chose to return to Urosevac some years after fleeing the town. I first met Petar in Pec Patriarchate during Orthodox Easter in 2001. I had the opportunity to meet him again and he agreed to come back to Urosevac to show

me some of what he had described to me before. His story is typical of the ethnic cleansing conducted by the ethnic Albanian Muslim UÇK throughout Kosovo, a cleansing which was at the very least condoned by KFOR.

He described to me the time he had come back before, after the 1999 pogrom. He was working for an international NGO in 2002 and he and his Norwegian friend Rune (a former KFOR photo-journalist) and several other Serbs decided to have a drink after work one night. After a few drinks with Rune, they decided to have a drive through Urosevac again just to see it. After all, for the Serbs in the car it would be their first opportunity in 3 years to see their place of birth. They drove there arriving shortly after midnight and drove around some of their old streets. Their trip was rudely interrupted. They were excited and were pointing at various buildings that they knew well from their youth.

Abruptly, a KPS car stopped them. They were asked to show identification. All went well until the Serbs showed their UNMIK IDs with Serbian names. Despite the fact that an "international" was with them they were all hauled out of the vehicle and subjected to an interrogation in the street. Whilst their friend from Norway looked on, the KPS took great delight in tormenting the Serbs who were foolish enough to come back for a look at Urosevac. Meanwhile a hostile crowd was gathering and all the Serbs could hear was the call going out "Serbs in town." They were lined up against a wall at gunpoint while reinforcements were called for and soon there were 10 or more Albanian KPS beating them up. They were beaten with batons as they stood against the wall, being falsely accused of killing someone. Then they were forced to lie on the ground while the KPS continued to interrogate them, kicking them while they were on the ground, as is usual practice with bullies who accused them of killing someone in the town before June 1999, that is, before the UÇK, or the KPS or UNMIK took over. Whichever!

Eventually at a stage when the Norwegian was convinced they were all going to be killed, and many threats to do such a thing were made, an international policeman turned up. Well, that is to say a member of the UNMIK international police from the USA. He asked the Serbs what they were doing in Ferizaj at that time of night or for that matter why they were there at all. The Serbs answered they had not seen their homes for three years and were curious to see the place they had grown up in. His answer was sombre, if true. He put it simply: "Wrong Judgment."

The policeman's name was Francis. When Petar found this out, he said to him with a name like that you must be Catholic and pointed out that they were also Christians and he pleaded with him to save them. After some more questions they were allowed to continue on their way. Petar is very well aware

that if the UNMIK police officer was not there that night, things might have been very different.

Apart from Petar, none of the others have ever returned to Urosevac after that night in 2002. Petar did return with me and other “internationals” including an armed UNMIK policeman- incidentally from the USA - and, accompanied by his uncle Nenad, he showed us Nerodimlje and other places in Urosevac. When I visited the village with Petar and his uncle in the summer of 2006, we were made to feel uncomfortable and after some time a crowd began to gather. The UNMIK police officer became worried and advised us all to get out of there quickly. It is an unwelcoming place.

No one has ever been brought to justice for the murders in Nerodimlje. No one has ever been brought to justice for the other murders in Urosevac or for the campaign of terror, intimidation and harassment that has driven almost all non-Albanians out of the municipality. According to UNMIK there are no ethnic problems in Urosevac.

For any Serb who is originally from Urosevac, to return there is a “Wrong Judgment.”

Perhaps some things are greater than guns and bombs and propaganda.

At night time strange lights appear near the monastery of Saint Uros which was blown up several times by the UÇK: the strange lights deter the Albanian intruders. More remarkably the bells of the church are to be heard ringing at night and at certain times of the year. This makes the local Albanian population uneasy. Not even the high grade plastic explosive of the UÇK can stop them ringing. In the meantime the pine tree grows.¹

¹ When I was typing this story into my laptop computer based on my handwritten notes, I as usual chose to save it to make sure it wouldn't disappear into hyperspace. Of course as usual, I had given it too long a name. But what the computer did is interesting to me at least. Instead of saving it as “The Bells that won't stop ringing” the computer saved it as “The Bells that Won”.



VII. The Cleansing of Kosovo Polje

The terror began in Kosovo Polje in the summer of 1999. At first there were small incidents - low level harassment, intimidation; threats, especially regarding property. Beatings were a daily occurrence as were attacks on houses; in the beginning, these incidents nearly always took place at night. One source informed me that every single elderly Serb was beaten at least once in Kosovo Polje.

Then as the summer of 1999 wore on the scale of terror intensified and there began a spate of kidnappings, arson attacks, murders and bomb attacks.

At the express wish of the various sources that have contributed to this story, I have omitted names, as sources have expressed fear for their lives and the lives of their families. Understandably so, knowing what happens to people in Kosovo who decide to speak up freely. Numerous Albanian witnesses in cases against the UÇK have been killed or kidnapped.

In the course of the cleansing of Kosovo Polje, it is interesting to note that KFOR actually mapped the progress of the cleansing; they produced maps showing each house in Kosovo Polje marking each with a colour denoting ethnicity. The first map for April 2000 shows very clearly that the majority of houses were inhabited by Serbs, with Albanians in the minority. Six months later by September 2000 the map showed a completely different pattern with Albanians in the majority. The map of 2003 shows the process was almost complete. By 2004, the mission was accomplished. The markers indicating where the Roma households were, have also vanished. These maps were given to me by a priest who was forced to flee his church and house in Kosovo Polje and he in turn received the maps from a Norwegian KFOR soldier.

The first KFOR contingents to arrive in Kosovo Polje were British; the MILAN platoon of the Irish Guards and a contingent of the Green Howards Regiment. The latter were led by Major Simon who was to become notorious

among Serbs for his blatant antipathy towards the Serbian population. Later Norwegian KFOR took up position in Kosovo Polje. KFOR employed several interpreters, both Albanian and Serbian, and some of the Serbian interpreters shared their experiences with me.

One Serbian interpreter recalls that he often accompanied the British soldiers on their patrols. He noticed that the British soldiers swallowed everything they were told by Albanians, especially in the beginning. Right away he began to notice a pattern. He realised at an early stage in that summer of 1999, all the Albanian interpreters suddenly appeared with mobile phones, a rare site in those days. None of the Serbian interpreters had such luxuries. The strategy was simple: a British KFOR unit would leave their base planning a routine patrol or in response to news of an incident and then one of the Albanian interpreters would phone and tip off the perpetrators. Other tactics employed by the Albanians were equally simple but effective.

An Albanian who wished to take possession of some Serb house would start by provoking the Serb owner. This harassment could last a few days or even weeks but it would culminate in British KFOR arriving at the scene just in time to arrest the Serb who may or may not have had a gun in his possession trying to defend his property. Another tactic was to falsely accuse a Serb of stealing some household item. In due course, British KFOR would search the Serb's house until the owner could provide some documentary evidence that he or she had purchased the item in question. Who at the point of a gun can find a receipt even if they kept it in the first place? This apparently did not seem out of place to KFOR.

The above type of provocation ended in many Serbs just packing up and leaving. It was obvious to Serbs by then that the Albanians wanted their property. However, there was one young British army lieutenant who tried to address the issue in particular by creating a mechanism by which the rightful owners could return to their property. He drew up a plan to create a list of who the rightful owner of each property was and allow the return of only the people from the list. But he was not supported by his superiors. In actual fact he was transferred to another location and his plan was never implemented.

The Irish Guards were seen by the Serbs as more neutral than the Green Howards. For instance, on one occasion they stopped a car coming from Pec which was occupied by two men in UÇK uniform, although officially by then the UÇK was supposed to have been disbanded. The British found a rocket propelled grenade launcher with several rockets under one of the seats of the car and confiscated them. They even forced them to remove their uniforms and sent them back to Pec driving away in their underwear. Incidents like these inevitably meant that the Irish Guards unit was withdrawn from Kosovo Polje soon after. One source explains there were some good officers and

soldiers in the Green Howards unit, trying to act objectively, as did the Irish Guards. However, some were totally partial and pro-Albanian and regarded the Serbs as their enemy from the very beginning. In general, Norwegian KFOR were seen as more impartial or at least less anti-Serb than their British counterparts.

One source began working with KFOR in June, 1999. His job as an interpreter meant he went home twice during the first month and a half to his house in the town and during that time he experienced many incidents. He remembers that one of the Albanian interpreters working with the British was particularly vociferous in her propaganda campaign against the Serbs. She really tried to poison the minds of the KFOR soldiers against all Serbs. She was having an affair with one of the senior Green Howards officers and was obviously in a position to influence procedures. Ironically, this interpreter was a member of the family that had opened the Albanian separatist café in the 1990s where the owner had actually worked for the Serbian secret police. As is often the case, the children of people like this have to prove themselves and show they are more extreme than anyone else.

KFOR H.Q. seemed to be unaware of what was really going on in Kosovo Polje. Major General Dannett on 18 June, 1999 told international journalists at a briefing:

“Further out beyond Pristina itself, out in the Kosovo Polje area, the Green Howards Company is doing good work amongst the Serb civilians in that area to try and reassure them.”

This does not tally with what actually happening on the ground. For instance, one of the houses that the British army commandeered as a barracks belonged to a Serb living just off the main street that runs through Kosovo Polje. It was later used by Norwegian KFOR. At least the Norwegians paid him rent money. The British contingents, regardless of how long they occupied the house, paid no rent; and to add insult to injury left without paying a telephone bill of more than 6,000 Deutschmarks (€ 3,000). Ironically, one of the British soldiers, then Sergeant Major Steve Bennet, placed a picture in the regiment’s newsletter posted on the web which showed members of the platoon proudly posing outside the house, above a caption which stated that:

“We have just liberated this house”.

The fact that this family had lived for generations in this area seemed, in the excitement of the moment, to have escaped the minds of the liberators. It begs the question: who were British KFOR liberating the house from? Because since June 1999, this family has been subjected to the most horrible

existence at the hands of the UÇK; they have spent the last years watching their neighbours disappear one by one; they have seen their Health Centre burnt to the ground, they have seen their church destroyed; they have very limited freedom of movement and they are trying desperately to hold on to their property and dignity until the end. Like myself the reader might well wonder whom Sergeant Major Steve Bennet was liberating the house from and for whom?

Another incident in September 1999 brings into stark focus the reality of the situation in Kosovo Polje. This attack was the most serious up to then and “persuaded” many Serbs to leave. Albanians lobbed several grenades from a window overlooking the main “green market,” a small enclosed square where traders met every week. The roads around the market were by then already occupied by Albanians; most Serbs living in those streets had already sold their houses and the approaches to the market were even by that time considered dangerous. However, no one was prepared for the savage assault launched that sunny September day on innocent market goers. Incredibly, the evening before the attack a phone call warning of an attack on the market was made to a local humanitarian organisation’s offices. This was the “Centre for Peace and Tolerance” established in Kosovo Polje by a Serb woman called Nena Lukacevic. Staff at the centre immediately telephoned the UNMIK Police station and the British KFOR base to warn them. An Albanian answered the telephone and promised to inform KFOR of the warning. Somehow, nothing was done. Maybe the message was passed on and maybe it was not. The reality is no warning was given to the shoppers who attended the market the next day. No KFOR security was present even though they had been warned.

That morning as the market was crowded with shoppers the attackers lobbed at least two grenades into the middle of the market. Three Serbs died instantly. One more died two months later and many more were injured. Most of them were elderly men, women and small children. The market was only 500 metres away from the nearest British KFOR base. The two attackers, both in their late teens, were seen running away from the house in which they had hidden to launch their attack. Although they were identified by several eye witnesses, they were never accused of this attack. Later, one of those identified as being involved in the green market attack was detained by Norwegian KFOR who came across him accosting a five year old Serbian girl in the street. He was holding her by the arm and burning her with a cigarette. Norwegian KFOR soldiers infuriated by this sight took the suspect, stripped him and tied him to a fence and proceeded to beat him. Soon afterwards, apparently alerted by a member of the public members of the British military police unit arrived and took the suspect away but our source does not know

what happened to him afterwards. One thing for certain he was never charged with anything.

In 2001, on the dirt road between the nearby Serb villages of Ugljare and Preoce, another terrible incident occurred. If it happened anywhere else in the world, it would have been categorised as blatant terrorism.

Early in the morning, a bus full of Serbian school children from Kosovo Polje and surrounding villages was on the way to Gracanica for a school excursion. On the top of the hill, just outside the village of Ugljare, three anti-tank mines were placed, waiting for the bus to pass. By some miracle, the bus crossed the mine field unharmed, but the driver of the car following the bus did not escape. Two men were killed instantly when the mines exploded, a woman with two small children sitting on the back seat survived. The two bodies were brought to Kosovo Polje hospital by KFOR in three body bags. All the leads pointed to the, by then already completely Albanian village of Dobrevo. Not one house was searched there. The Albanians from the village organised a celebration, driving through the town and waving flags. KFOR did nothing. I wonder if by that stage they realised just exactly what they were dealing with.

On one rare occasion the interpreter witnessed the arrest of an Albanian man armed with an AK-47 and two Molotov cocktails while walking through the town of Kosovo Polje, in the vicinity of a Roma house that just happened to have been set on fire half an hour earlier. He was released shortly after his arrest due to lack of evidence.

As one source explains, the Serbs had very few guns to defend themselves with and those they had were kept in the house or some place nearby where they could be obtained quickly. At this stage Serb households expected an attack at any time. Thus, British KFOR searching houses for guns usually found them inside a Serb house. They almost never found them in Albanian houses because, not expecting to be attacked themselves, and usually being informed beforehand of searches by the Albanian interpreters, they could afford the luxury of hiding them more securely such as burying them in the garden. In just one case, that our source is aware of, following the report of shots fired, two rifles and some grenades were found in the gravel pit outside an Albanian house.

The cosy relationship between most of the British KFOR contingent in Kosovo Polje and their Albanian interpreters meant that whether they were aware of it or not, British KFOR were being used by the Albanians to help them ethnically cleanse the town and its surrounding villages. On numerous occasions, an “anonymous” Albanian would report that there were weapons in a specific Serbian house. Very soon afterwards, British KFOR would search that house and remove any offensive items, but later that night the Albanians

would know the house was now “clean”, and the house could be torched, usually the same night. In such circumstances most Serbs decided to leave.

Every Serb detained by KFOR in those days would end up in jail, often with no charges. A Serb man, who tried to defend his home against three armed Albanians, shot one of the attackers and was himself wounded on his doorstep. All four were put in custody, the Albanians being released the next day. The house was burned the same evening and the unlucky owner spent the next several years in Mitrovica prison without a court trial. In 2005 he was released without charges and left Kosovo. His house is now illegally occupied by the same Albanians who attacked him.

A Serb, once a city bus driver, well known and respected by all, was shot dead when he went to visit his house, by a former colleague from work. Even though there were witnesses and KFOR had a description and details of the murderer, he was never arrested. The murderer still lives in Kosovo Polje and is well known to my sources.

Following these incidents, accompanied with many other similar cases, arson, bomb attacks, beatings and intimidation, the remaining Serbs organised a peaceful protest blocking the road from Pristina to Pec in order to attract the attention of the international community to their problems. For the Serbs of Kosovo Polje this was nothing new. They often had similar protests in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s complaining about the very same issues. In this case the international community, namely British KFOR, dispersed the crowd with force. No media recorded this event.

During a protest on the other side of the village a man returning from work was killed in a drive-by shooting. Even though there was heavy KFOR presence in the area because of the protests, armed Albanians entered the village with a vehicle, shot the man and left unhindered.

Kosovo Polje also witnessed another Albanian tactic to take over areas in towns. They would buy a house at either end of a street that they wanted to take over. The price could be astronomical. Soon after the owners of the houses between the two that had been sold would be bombarded with offers to sell up, usually at prices far below what they were worth. Those that did not take the offer were usually encouraged to sell through intimidation, harassment and midnight firebomb or grenade attacks. It was an effective way to clear the town of Serbs and anyone else who did not fit in. Today in 2007 the same pattern of cleansing is being played out and is very visible in the village of Novo Nasilije in Lipljan municipality. Novo Nasilije is a Serbian village; however the first large house at the entrance of the village is sporting a large Albanian flag which means that it has been sold. The pattern is that another similar type of house will be sold to Albanians at the other end of the street and then all the houses in between will end up selling for a much re-

duced sum. So are we to anticipate that the village of Novo Nasilije will go the same way as Kosovo Polje?

The agricultural land on both sides of the town of Kosovo Polje which was owned by Serbs was all sold between 1999 and 2007. In the face of the terrorist campaign against them they had no protection and were left with no choice but to leave under extreme pressure. This land has now been turned into an industrial zone with warehouses and workshops. After eight years, this once fertile agricultural land is unrecognisable, having been transformed into a major industrial complex. One UN source informed me that the majority of the properties were bought by Albanians from Bujanovac, Medvedja and Presevo, which is ironically classed as one of the poorest areas in south Serbia. No one ever asks where the money comes from. This area of south Serbia which is populated mainly by Albanians is renowned as the narcotics centre in the Balkans.

The house of another Serb in Kosovo Polje was just off the main street. It was an imposing structure and quite large for the area. Although attacked on numerous occasions the owner stubbornly refused to sell. In the March 2004 pogrom, the same day that the owner took refuge in the Health Centre, his house was badly damaged. After that attack, he was one of the Serbs who had his house restored at the expense of UNMIK and the local authorities although it was not restored to its original condition. He continued to receive many offers to sell, all much lower than the real value of the property. Finally, a new tactic was used. The only access to the house, a small path possibly about 75 metres long was built over which meant that his house is now completely blocked off and he has no proper access to the road. Beside him a huge apartment building has been constructed, further stifling his house. He has been surrounded on all sides and is now left with no choice but to sell to the lowest bidder. It is a form of social asphyxiation.

Now almost eight years after the terror began most of the housing and the land has been sold to Albanians. The Serbs were left with no choice but to sell. They lived a life of sheer hell. They were not protected by anybody. They were forced to sell under extreme pressure. Albanians from Drenica and Bujanovac have moved in and have gradually taken over the whole of the Kosovo Polje urban area and are now extending out towards outlying villages which still, for now anyway, have some Serbs left in them. But the future is more and more bleak.

In an area like Bresje on the edge of Kosovo Polje which until 1999 was virtually all Serbian, now there are very few Serbs. They do not feel safe and the young have left, only the elderly remain on the off chance that things might improve and they may be able to hold onto their property. They receive no protection. They only have a few shops where they can go to. They no longer have access to their green market. The Serbian population has been eradicated from Kosovo Polje. The

few remaining Serbs lack most of all freedom of movement, economic opportunity, access to public services such as health or education; they even lack cultural freedom. What kind of peace is it that means you cannot feel safe to speak your own language in the street outside your own front door; that you cannot practice your own religion because the church is surrounded by barbed wire or burned down? What choice have you but to leave when you cannot bring your children to school? What freedom have you when all traces of your culture has been wiped out in the space of a few years and you are told that you are the guilty?

In Kosovo Polje not one murder has been solved. Incidents are still happening although of course, there are not so many Serbs or Roma to get rid off. KFOR is also gone or at least they are not as visible. The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) is now in charge but they are not trusted and in many cases it is clear to the victims that things happen with the assistance of some of the KPS. Between June 1999 and April 2004 seventeen Serbs were murdered in Kosovo Polje. A witness of the 17 March program in 2004 saw with his own eyes a KPS policeman taking part in the arson. One Slovenian policeman is still supposed to be investigating the events of the 17 March 2004 but no one has heard anything. The above mentioned witness was attacked that day by a mob but managed to escape to the Health Centre like others. His house was burned down the same day. There was a five thousand-strong mob which came to Kosovo Polje but no one from the “authorities” saw it.

On the other hand, in Lipljan town two Albanians from Kosovo Polje were killed by KFOR after a day long orgy of violence. This is another typical UÇK tactic. They export the attackers to other places so locals will not know who they are. On that day every single house in Kosovo Polje still owned by the Serbs was burned or destroyed, not to mention the only Serbian school still operating, the hospital – the only health institution available to Serbs – a post office and a church were all destroyed. Since that day, many previous citizens of Kosovo Polje live in nearby Ugljare village, in containers donated by the Russian government as Internally Displaced Persons, just several hundred meters away from their own homes. However, they do not feel safe moving back into their houses. The same is true of the Serbs in the nearby town of Obilic. Their houses are nearby but they cannot sleep there at night, it is not safe. The remaining Serbs of Obilic live in containers and are protected by the Slovak army.

Transformation in Kosovo Polje

How did Kosovo Polje (translated literally from Serbian meaning the Field of Blackbirds) go from being an area populated almost exclusively by

Serbs and Roma to an area exclusively populated by Albanians? This happened in a very short period of time, just a few years. If it could happen in this part of Europe here could it happen where you live?

It is important to note that Kosovo Polje is very important not just in Serbian history but in European history. In Paris, in 1389 the bells of Notre Dame Cathedral rang out in thanksgiving and celebration of the Serbian victory on the “Field of Blackbirds” over the Ottoman invaders intent on spreading their empire and their Muslim religion.

Kosovo Polje is a crossroads both geographically and figuratively-speaking and has always occupied a strategically important position. It was here on Vidovdan, June 26 in the year of 1389 that the armies, assembled under the Serbian leader Prince Lazar, took on the invading Ottoman forces under Sultan Murad. Both leaders were to die in the battle and the planned Ottoman invasion of Europe was halted as a result for nearly another hundred years. It was not until the 1450s that the last Serbian outposts of resistance were overcome by successive waves of Ottoman forces. Certainly the Ottoman army under Murad was halted but at a huge cost to the defenders. The vast bulk of the Serbian aristocracy and its manhood died that day in June 1389.

Today Kosovo Polje remains just as strategically important, located on the main road from Pristina to the airport. This time the last Serbian outposts were overcome with the help of contingents from practically every single European army. Their property was usurped and all their churches were destroyed. Even the Ottoman Turks did not inflict such mortal wounds on such an old European civilisation.

Today a new reality reigns – the church bells have fallen silent, the church of St. Nikola is all but invisible dwarfed by all the new buildings. A new mosque calls the faithful to prayer and all Orthodox Christians both Serbs and Roma have been cleansed and forced to flee at the point of a gun.



VIII. The Death of Vitina

The last remaining Serbs living in Vitina do not believe in the future, they only believe in the present. They do not like speaking to the myriad of strangers and representatives of international organisations who come and ask them how they feel. They find it very hard to speak about what happened, it is too painful. They are the last remaining members of their community; they know they are becoming extinct. How can they be enthusiastic when people ask them the same questions every time they come but never do anything to help.

My last visit to the town of Vitina was in October 2006. I went to visit the last remnants of the Serbian community who live huddled around the Church of St. Petka. They are part of the remaining 100 or so Serbs left in the town. They rarely travel more than 200 metres away from the area around the church on foot as to do so could risk serious attack. Up to June 1999, Vitina town had up to 4,000 Serbs living there. As a local priest informed me, Albanians only started moving into the municipality after 1970 and even by 1999 there were only a few Albanian families in the town.

I met Pedja in a restaurant in Belgrade recently. He is 27 years old, dressed in a smart suit and from his outward appearance you would think that nothing was amiss. He informed me that he was now trying to build a new life for himself away from the horrors of Vitina. He has started a new job and is trying to forget what happened to him, his family and his community after the arrival of NATO troops in June 1999.

On the rare occasions when he returns to Vitina he describes the feeling as very strange, not one of nostalgia, but one very difficult to put into words. But it is a bad feeling, so bad that he cannot stay longer than a day.

Pedja used to live in the centre of the town of Vitina. He lived with his family up until 2000 when his father died from cancer. He was only 50 years old and died very soon after being diagnosed. Pedja is convinced that the stress of the NATO bombardment was a significant factor in his father's ill-

ness, not to mention the possibility of contamination from whatever toxic materials NATO was 'raining' down. The vast majority of targets were civilian and Pedja informed me that some 50-100 Serbs died of cancer after 1999. Most of them were quite young, mainly happening to people in the age bracket of 40-50 years.

After his father died Pedja lived with his grandmother, she had taken care of him since he was small as his mother died when he was very young.

Vitina 1999

As the story is told to me, the UÇK first started attacking civilians in June 1999 when they arrived back from the western part of the province after fighting against the Serbian security forces. At the start of the campaign to cleanse them, a Serb was killed every week; after a while it became a Serb being killed every second week. Pedja pointed out that before the bombing Vitina was peaceful, there were a few Albanian families and they had good relations with the Serb majority. He pointed out that they even sheltered together during the NATO bombing in the bomb shelters, in cellars under people's houses.

After the Serbian police and army left in June 1999, NATO troops arrived in the province; from then on unbelievable things began to happen. He pointed out that Albanians came from nowhere, he did not recognise any of them; some of them looked very wild, had very tanned faces and wore beards. After their arrival in the town, the local Albanian population from the town and the surrounding villages began to act differently, calling them names and calling them on the phone and telling them to leave Vitina.

The kidnapping of Serb residents became an everyday occurrence. Some were taken to the nearby village of Vrban where they were kept in a cellar. The local Serbs called it the UÇK Concentration Camp of Vrban. Several people who were held captive in it managed to escape, thus its use as a concentration camp is widely known.

When US KFOR established itself in Vitina in June 1999, they only assisted the Albanians, they gave them food and clothing and completely ignored the Serbs. The Albanians were jubilant and were on the streets every day making lots of noise and giving flowers and presents to the US army. They were waving at them and even kissing them. The Serbs watching this thought it was pure theatre. From this point on Albanians became very rude and aggressive when they saw Serbs.

The first few months after KFOR's arrival the Serbs were running out of food. Pedja lost 17 kilos over that period. The Serbs were saved from

starvation by food sent by the Greek Church, a token of solidarity with their fellow Christians. The UÇK did not allow the Serbs to leave their houses. This siege lasted for three months. Those that did venture out usually never made it back. Pedja's grandmother used to venture out sometimes, mostly at night, feeling it was safer for a woman to, scavenge for food in the abandoned Serbian gardens, mostly for tomatoes and peppers. Much later after the Serbs had been saved from starvation by the Greeks some food assistance came from USAID to the Serbs. However it was usually distributed by Albanian staff who had a pleasant game of throwing the food into the crowd gathered outside the church as if it was feeding time at the zoo. Pedja never went to take the food as it was he thought a deliberate attempt to demean them and strip them of their human dignity. He felt it was like throwing meat at dogs.

During this very difficult period, one Albanian shopkeeper who had a shop near Pedja's house refused to sell him any food. He was surviving on pasta given to him by the Greeks. One day he went to the shop to buy ketchup. He knew it was dangerous as people were being shot every day in front of his house in Tsara Dusana Street (now renamed Adem Jasheri Street) but he went nonetheless.

The shopkeeper told him; "Go away, we do not sell food to Serbs, you are dogs"

A year ago when Pedja returned to the town for a visit he happened to meet the same shopkeeper and asked him why he would not sell him any food back then. His response was that he could not sell food to Serbs because the UÇK were outside his front door in civilian clothes watching him and he was told that if he sold food to Serbs, they, the UÇK, would punish him. Pedja does not believe that the shopkeeper is a bad person, their grandfathers and fathers had been friends. He believes that he was intimidated and acted out of fear.

Days of Terror

One day, soon after KFOR arrived, Pedja realized things were never going to be the same again, that there was to be no normality for Serbs. He and some friends were sitting on a bridge near his house when an UÇK member in black uniform came over to them and asked what they were doing there in a very vulgar and threatening way. He told them "In fifteen minutes, when I return I do not want to see you mother-f-ers here." Needless to say he and his friends left the bridge immediately.

The killing started about that time. They killed every day everywhere. Serbs were so scared that many of them left and fled to Serbia and more than

half of the town was emptied of its Serbian population in the space of two months. Their houses were looted, plundered and eventually burnt. The UÇK had a special focus on killing young people. Pedja's grandmother did not want to leave as she did not want to die as a refugee. Pedja spent his time in the house afraid to venture out. There was no electricity and the UÇK had disconnected the phone and the water supply. Therefore no one could call KFOR or the police if anything happened. Bombs were thrown into his garden on a regular basis. His house was stoned and also broken into. This was the lot of every Serbian household in Vitina. An example of the type of terror tactics imposed on the Serbs to get rid of them and to acquire their property is the case of Sinisa Dinkic. His shop is diagonally across from the church of St. Petka near the bridge. It was attacked at least 15 times with rocket propelled grenades, rifle grenades and bombs. He was wounded on a number of occasions but miraculously survived. Eventually he could go on no longer especially as there was no end in sight to the attacks and there was no protection forthcoming from any police or military authority. His shop is now occupied by an Albanian who makes his living in the premises of a man who now is no longer allowed to make a living in his own property. In the new Kosovo, property does not belong to the person who owns it, it belongs to the person who wants it.

The fact is that the Serbs owned all the property in Vitina in 1999. However to control a town you must own the means of production, the assets of the town. Therefore the UÇK for economic reasons wanted to clear Serbs and others from their property in order to establish businesses particularly profitable and illegal ones. Prostitution became big business in Vitina after the UÇK cleared the town. One big brothel was opened in front of the church. Pedja said that there were no brothels there before the NATO bombing.

Some of the terrorists were well known to the Serbs and came from the nearby villages of Binac and Kabash. Others as mentioned before were strangers and had never been seen before in the town.

One month after Pedja's father died, his uncle Slobodan Jovanovic was murdered. On 2 November, 1999 he had ventured out knowing that he was taking a risk but had decided to go as they needed food so he went to the green market to buy vegetables. He was returning home with two bags of food when someone came up to him and shot him in the back. The man who killed him was called Sadik. UNMIK/KFOR in this case actually caught him some time later. Apparently, an Albanian friend of Slobodan's had actually gone to the police to report him. Pedja told me that this Sadik was kept in custody for some months and even though he, Sadik, admitted the killing he was released because according to the judge there was not enough evidence. At that point Pedja says he lost hope. Many times after that he would stand

in front of his house waiting for the Albanians to throw a bomb at him as it would put him out of his misery. He could not end his own life as he is a practising Christian.

Although there was the constant threat, although the circumstances were horrific he became used to it, almost numb to it. Perhaps people can become used to anything. Perhaps Pedja thought that the worst was over. On 27 April, 2001 Pedja celebrated his birthday and some of his friends came to his house and they had a few beers. A few days later his friend Sasha Dodic who was only 17 years old came to see him to celebrate his birthday. On his way to Pedja's house he was killed by the UÇK. They also tried to kill Sasha's sister Tijana and his other friend Vladan but they managed to escape. This broke Pedja completely, he felt he was going crazy. His father's death was very difficult to take but then to see his uncle and his friend killed within a few months of each other was hard to take in. His grandmother worried about how all this tragedy was affecting him, being so young. His friend Sasha was buried in Ruma in Vojvodina as his family did not want him to be buried in Vitina especially as they wanted to be able to visit his grave.

Pedja points out that Kosovo is not a place where normal human beings can live. He says that Serbs are a spiritual people. They have a strong tradition of visiting the graves of their dead ones. Pedja buried his grandmother in Belgrade when she died two years later. Both his father and his uncle are also buried in Belgrade as he knew it would be impossible to visit their graves in Vitina. Moreover, many Serbian Orthodox graveyards have been vandalised all across Kosovo and in some they have been completely demolished. This is in addition to the more than 150 monasteries and churches destroyed by the UÇK since 1999. In the Vitina area churches were destroyed in the villages of Bozovik, Grmovo and Binac.

Pedja feels no animosity towards the ordinary US KFOR soldiers in whose area of responsibility Vitina lies. He understands that many of the rank and file are often poorly educated, and from poor backgrounds. He thinks that they are often good guys but very naïve. One of them told Pedja that they were told that they had come to Kosovo to fight the Serbs. Pedja makes the point that US KFOR was strictly correct in their behaviour in the sense that they did nothing wrong. It is just Pedja adds, that they did nothing to help.

Since the arrival of NATO troops in 1999, 51 Serbs have been killed in Vitina and the surrounding villages; 56 Serbs have been wounded; 97 apartments have been illegally occupied; 73 Serbian houses have been occupied illegally and 50 other houses have been mined, burnt and or semi destroyed. 19 Roma houses have been occupied illegally. The rest have sold up and left.

On my last visit to Vitina in October 2006 I was accompanied by an American photo-journalist. We visited the new mosque which is called the Medina mosque after the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia which is revered by Muslims. This is the first mosque ever built in Vitina town. We met with the Imam Akram Selimi who explained that he was the mullah of the mosque. He told us how he had studied Islam at the Azar University in Egypt for three years and was just newly returned to preach to his flock. His new flock he explained were very new as Vitina was a Serbian town up until 1999. He further explained that the Albanians had lived in the villages and only started coming into the town after June 1999. He even elaborated on this point by telling me that they had “taken the town from the Serbs.” He also pointed out that all women should be covered up as this is the will of Allah.

As I left my meeting with Pedja he said in a resigned tone that all Serbs will leave Kosovo. Today there is no Vitina. It has been Albanised to ‘Viti’.

IX. The Plum Trees of Banjska

Banjska is a small village only a few kilometres from the town of Mitrovica. It is a picturesque village built along the sides of several gently sloping hills. You can see the land is productive or at least would be if things were normal, but like everywhere in Kosovo things are not normal. I met the representative of the Serbian community in Banjska, Predrag, now in his eighties, on 23 July, 2003. Things were not easy then in the village. As elsewhere it was not safe for Serbs to work their land and they owned a considerable amount of good land around the village.

Banjska, as its name suggests, is the site of several natural water springs or wells which ensure the productivity of the land. But Serbs only feel safe working the small plots around their houses. In the fields their crops have been destroyed or stolen. Their animals have disappeared even when kept in sheds near the houses. Hay stored in barns to feed the animals over the winter has been destroyed by arson. These are common occurrences. In 2003 when I first met the villagers they told me that on several occasions Albanians had set fire to hay and other crops stored in barns in broad daylight as Greek KFOR looked on. They did not or could not intervene. At that time Greek KFOR maintained a 24 hour armed checkpoint at the entrance to the village and had a look-out post on one of the hills overlooking the village.

The number of incidents continued to increase from June 1999 onwards with small crops like potatoes being stolen from the gardens around the houses virtually every night. On the 15 June 2003, a cow belonging to Ljubisa Krsmanovic was stolen despite having a 14mm steel chain around its neck. The thieves simply cut through the chain. The cow was given to Mr. Krsmanovic by the Coordination Centre for Kosovo to help him feed his five young children, ranging in age from three years of age to thirteen.

The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) manned almost entirely by Albanians just drives around the village. Despite the numerous complaints made to them and the international UNMIK police, "nobody does anything". They told

Predrag and the Serbs of Banjska they were surprised as they thought “things were getting better and not worse.”

International aid agencies have donated cows to villagers to replace the ones that were stolen but these too are stolen. The only way you can keep anything is to keep it near your house and even then it is likely to be stolen during the night. Predrag explains that the people come up with an idea to improve life in the village but then something happens, an incident, an attack, more theft or intimidation and the people “turn in on themselves”. I know what he means. I have seen it elsewhere in Kosovo. People lose morale. They become passive, helpless, drifting; unable to help themselves let alone anyone else. It is a form of psychosis brought on by stress and a feeling of helplessness.

Predrag told me at that meeting in July 2003 that he had had a meeting with the representative of the Albanians in the village and that they had reached an agreement to share the water from the largest well in the village, which incidentally was situated on Predrag’s land. That meeting was on a Friday night. The next day, Saturday, another Serb house was burned to the ground. The Albanian representative had told Predrag he had expected something to happen because he, the Albanian, was seen by some in his community as “co-operating with the Serbs”. The Albanian went on to say that he did not expect to remain as village representative for long. In that, he was correct. Some weeks after their meeting about the water, he was replaced by a more elderly, less “co-operative” representative.

Most people did not want to leave the village. Although many Serbs had left, when we met in 2003, there were still 20 Serb households left in the village; however there were still dozens of Serb-owned houses. Most had gone to nearby Mitrovica but would come back if it was safe to do so. Before when most people had a job they used their farms as a hobby. But they could still produce a good living for themselves and their families if they were given a chance. However arson continued on a regular basis. Predrag pointed out that there were simply not enough Serbs left to maintain a constant vigil to guard against attack especially on an empty house and especially at night.

In July 2003 the village leader explained to me one of the reasons why he felt it was important that if at all possible they, the Serbs, should stay in Banjska. He explained that the village was the closest one of several villages near Mitrovica. If the last Serbs of Banjska left then almost certainly the more outlying ones would follow, places like Gojbulja, Miroce and Slatina.

In harvest time 2002, Pedrag was walking on his land away from his house when an Albanian, one of his neighbours, asked what he was doing

walking on the land. The Albanian told him that he should go indoors and stay in his house.

In September 2003, there were eight children attending school in Banjska with two just starting. The school was built in 1989 with donations from two towns in Vojvodina. Originally the Serbs had offered to share it with Albanian children but the Albanians had refused. Recently a fence was erected around the school building and the Serb villagers offered their services but the French organisation carrying out the work said they would not be paid for any work they did on the school fence. As a result they brought in their own workers, all Albanians.

There is no employment for Serbs from the village. One man from the village is living in Mitrovica where he is working washing dishes for KFOR. With crops being stolen and hay burnt, the food situation is not good. They hope and pray that the situation will get better. Apart from the serious unemployment/lack of income the most serious problem remains access to medical treatment. If someone is taken ill during the night there is nothing one can do until morning. Patients must travel by convoy to Mitrovica for medical attention. Doctors used to come from Mitrovica every Friday to carry out general checks such as one's blood pressure and providing prescriptions. The villagers must travel to Mitrovica to buy the medicine if they can afford it. The most common medical complaints in Banjska are heart problems and diabetes which are directly affected by and induced by stress.

Predag shook his head at the end of that meeting in July 2003 in an expression of wonder, bemusement, disbelief. He could not understand what had happened or why no one could stop the slow, cruel, asphyxiation of his community which had never harmed anyone. Ironically during the NATO aerial bombardment from March to June 1999, when the Albanians in the village were afraid, it was the Serbs of Banjska who reassured them they were not going to be harmed. Not one Albanian from the village was killed. Not one Albanian left the village during the bombardment. After the signing of UN Resolution 1244 which ushered in the UNMIK administration and KFOR responsibility for security, things changed. And attitudes began to change.

A few days after the official withdrawal of Serbian security personnel from Kosovo, strangers began appearing in Banjska. They were Albanian but none of the Serbs knew them. The first Serb from the village to be killed was shot dead about a week after the signing of UN Resolution 1244. Since that killing the pressure has been relentless; not usually a killing, more a relentless torture, turning the screw on the thumbs of the defenceless. All the tractors belonging to Serbs were stolen. Then all their animals were stolen. Eventually the 20 Serb households left in Banjska had one horse to plough the little bit of land that they felt was relatively safe to farm. It died, probably as a

result of the strain of doing all the work and the irregular supply of food, as irregular for the animals as for the Serbs in Banjska.

In early 2004 Greek KFOR withdrew the 24 hour watch on Banjska. Within days the Serbian Orthodox church was seriously damaged in a bomb attack carried out in the early morning.

On 17 March 2004 there began a Kosovo-wide pogrom against virtually all non-Albanian communities in Kosovo. Banjska suffered like all the rest. Predrag's house like all the Serbian households was not spared. After being severely beaten he was ejected head first from the first floor window of his house by the Albanian mob that burst through the doors in the early afternoon. No "security forces" were present. All the other Serbs, mainly elderly were treated the same way, badly beaten and threatened. They were all lucky to escape with their lives.

I went to visit Predrag in June 2004; he was by then displaced in Mitrovica and he was thankful that he was alive. His head was still bandaged from the attacks and his left eye was permanently damaged. Predrag and his wife now live in North Mitrovica. And like all his neighbours from Banjska he has decided that life is impossible in the village where no one is prepared to uphold law and order, where the international community decided things were getting better and not worse despite all the evidence to the contrary. The Serbs hear the mantra from UNMIK telling them that these are only perceived threats.

Like all rural Serbs Predrag planted fruit trees. Once harvested they make home made fruit brandy called slivovica. In 1999, Predrag had six plum trees in his garden. By 2003 they were just getting ready to produce fruit for the first time. One night in late summer 2003 they were stolen. Not chopped down and destroyed but dug up and stolen. It is ironic. There is an old Serbian folktale about plum trees saying that near the end of the world there will only be enough Serbs left to shelter under the shade of a plum tree.

Now in Kosovo and certainly in Banjska, there are not only no Serbs left to find shelter under a plum tree but there are not even any plum trees left.

X. The People of the Mountains

The Gorani are a unique community in South West Kosovo. The Gorani or Goranci literally means ‘people of the mountains’ and the region they inhabit is called Gora. They are Muslims, what are sometimes referred to as Slav Muslims, whose traditions and lifestyle is specific to them. They have their own traditional costumes. Although they are Muslims, they still celebrate Slavias (Feast Days normally associated with the Serbian Orthodox Church). The big feast day in Gora is St George’s Day when Gorani from all over return to Gora, if they can, to celebrate.

In all my travels round Kosovo I have never seen such a beautiful place. This is unspoiled nature. The scenery in the Metohija region near Pec for instance may be more awe-inspiring but Gora is remote, mysterious, pristine. There are still wolves and bears living high up on the slopes which venture lower down in hard winters in search of food. The Gorani go to the mountain sides and collect the medicinal herbs that grow wild all around.

The roads winding around the mountain sides are one reason why Gora is still remote. Even if they were well-maintained they would make for dangerous driving. But now after years of neglect they can be negotiated only with the greatest care. As you drive from Dragash town, the main urban centre in the district, you leave behind you the modern world and enter a different place. The women still wear traditional costume dating from the days of the Ottoman Empire and a phenomenon of social mimicry. The villages cling precariously to the sides of the hills and you hope and pray fervently that your four wheel drive system will stay the course. You find small signs that the “outside” has been here since only relatively recently. Occasionally, you see a satellite television dish. In one village in the main square you can see a U.S. Chrysler Dodge Special Forces jeep that made it here in 1945 and never got anywhere else. It is the central monument in the village where people meet and children play, serving the same purpose that a fountain or a statue might elsewhere.

However, not even here can you escape the fundamental changes that have engulfed Kosovo since the West's humanitarian intervention in 1999. There is no escaping that. Gora came in for some very heavy bombing during the NATO campaign including the use of depleted uranium munitions despite the fact that there were no significant Serbian military forces in the area. It is not the type of territory in which to use heavy armour. In one raid NATO bombed the largest grain store in the area for no apparent reason.

Back in the days of communism Gora was recognised as a distinct region and had its own administration. With the arrival of UNMIK in June 1999 the administrative district was redrawn to produce the municipality of Dragash (named after the largest town in Gora). This new municipality lumped together the 18 Gorani villages with 19 nearby Albanian villages in the Opulje area, producing a municipality with an Albanian majority. By this action alone the death knell was sounded for their community as for the first time they became a minority in their own "region". Then there began a campaign of terror which has continued to this day.

Like the majority of the Albanians, the Gorani are Muslim but this has not saved them from harassment, intimidation and outright attack. The Gorani speak Serbian and in general give their allegiance to Belgrade. They see themselves as citizens of the country of Serbia and this has marked them out for attack. They, like all the other communities, could not be left alone. They too had to be destroyed.

Almost as soon as the Serbian security forces withdrew in June 1999 and KFOR arrived, Gorani people faced assaults. People were beaten up in the streets or even in their own houses. Bombs were planted in houses and shops. The Gorani have a tradition of keeping small pastry shops specialising in baked delicacies famous all over the former Yugoslavia. Many shops in Dragash town were expropriated by Albanians, mostly newcomers that the Gorani did not know. The latter complain that after the Albanians returned – many fled during the NATO bombardment – more came back than actually went. In the case of Gora many of these Albanians allegedly came from the country Albania over the mountains. The Gorani like others allege that during that period, 1999-2001, UNMIK was handing out UNMIK I.D. cards willy-nilly. Apparently, all one had to do was say your papers were destroyed in the war, have two witnesses swear that you are who you say you are and you live in such and such a street, and it was that easy. Of course this calls into question the whole registration practices of UNMIK when they arrived in Kosovo.

In 1999, the UÇK killed seven Gorani.

These were:

1/ Skenderi Dzumret from Vraniste village killed in Prizren

- 2/ Beljulji Zulfikar from Orcusa village killed in Lipljan
- 3/ Safeti Vajdin from Mlike village kidnapped and killed in Suva Reka
- 4/ Safeti Abiba from Mlike village kidnapped and killed in Suva Reka
- 5/ Sadula Faradin from Ljuboviste kidnapped in Decani
- 6/ Vehabi Rahim from Zlipotok killed in Mitovica
- 7/ Duljderen Maksut from Brod village killed in Pristina

In the year 2000 Mendo Aslani from Vraniste was killed in Dragash. Also killed that year was Rasiti Kadir from Radesa who was killed in Mitrovica. In 2001 Rahte Irfan was killed in Dragash his home town. In 2002 Mustafa Saladin was killed in his home village of Krstac. Since then another six Gorani have been murdered. The methods vary but they are always carried out with total disregard to the rule of law or the possibility of ever being caught.

One Gorani was killed by a bomb planted at night while he slept in his house, only five metres away from the police station in Dragash town. Another was gunned down in front of his wife and family in his own living room. One was shot dead in the office of his place of work. Many more have been wounded in bombings, shootings, knife attacks and beatings.

The Gorani are a close knit community. Virtually everyone knows everyone. The impact of killings and assaults is magnified because in most cases you know the victim. As Gorani fled their houses and shops especially in Dragash town, freedom of movement became even more restricted. This is a remote area anyway, often cut off for months at a time during the snowy winter months but with attacks on drivers in private cars and on public buses, things went from bad to worse. As recently as late 2005 and early 2006 two buses going from Dragash town to Belgrade were attacked with rifle grenades. Luckily on both occasions they failed to detonate although German KFOR who defused the grenades told Gorani representatives that the explosives were real. This was not just an attempt to frighten people. The recklessness of these attacks is underlined when you consider that on the first of these occasions there were 14 Gorani passengers, seven Albanians and one Serb. Collateral damage presumably would be the attitude of the Albanian terrorists who fired the grenades. Like all the other places where non Albanians live, such attacks deter freedom of movement.

From a population of around 27,000 in the 1990s the Gorani community now numbers about 7,000. Like the Serbs, Roma and Croats they did not suit the new Kosovo and like the other communities they were not protected. In actual fact UNMIK did a grave injustice to this community by making the municipality a majority Albanian one. They just have to get rid of anyone that is not like them.

Another problem for this beleaguered community is that for many years the Gorani have travelled to Western Europe to ply their traditional trades of pastry and sweet making, particularly in Germany and Austria. However, these people have an immense attachment to their home place, Gora, and worked in Western Europe with the intention of earning good money and then retiring in some comfort to Gora. Now, the houses of most of these people have been illegally occupied by Albanians. The Gorani “retirees” like the Croats of Letnica have nowhere to retire to now. Court cases launched against illegal occupants have had little success. Even in cases where they do win a judgement demanding the restoration of the property to the rightful owner, the house is usually torched soon after the illegal occupant vacates it.

Dragash town used to boast of an excellent health centre where more than 40 Gorani people worked, many of them medical specialists, surgeons, doctors, nurses all skilled in particular disciplines. An Albanian mob attacked the health centre in broad daylight and beat up the staff inside. 21 of them fled, too afraid to stay in Dragash. These are now mostly working in different hospitals around Serbia. The others were considering going but Gorani representatives pleaded with them not to go. So far they are still there but for how long? Now, the manager of the health centre is an Albanian. Mission accomplished.

Apart from security, the Gorani list illegally occupied property as their second biggest problem. This applies not just to Gora for the Gorani owned many small businesses throughout Kosovo, for instance in Urosevac town which was famous for its small shops and Kafanas (small cafes). Gorani representatives have a list of more than 200 businesses that have been taken from them by force.

Various methods are used to intimidate or harass the Gorani. For example in December 2005 a truck carrying food and other humanitarian assistance from the Serbian Red Cross arrived in the centre of Dragash town. Three Albanians approached and demanded to photograph anyone who went near the truck. One of them then claimed to be an official from the municipality who had to carry out a “sanitary inspection” of the truck. He looked at the tinned food, etc., and told the Gorani representative that all seemed to be in order ‘for the time being’. The Gorani naturally asked him what he meant by ‘for the time being’. He just smiled and got out of the truck. Then three men came and said that they were going to confiscate the truck. Luckily, a German KFOR patrol arrived at that moment and for once, thankfully, intervened ordering them to go away. The Gorani found out later that the three men then went to the local police station (Kosovo Police Service) and demanded that the truck be impounded. The commander of the station, incidentally a Gorani himself, explained that it was an official Red Cross truck. It had crossed

the administrative boundary line from Serbia proper into Kosovo and its papers were in order. Therefore, he had no grounds to 'expropriate' it. They went away finally but this was not the end of the story. A few days later the Albanian-language newspaper, *Koha Ditore*, which is published in Pristina carried a story alleging that the Serbs were sending poisoned food to the Gorani in Dragash. Albanians have used this type of propaganda in the past with similar stories circulating about the Serbs trying to poison Albanian school children. This type of propaganda has incredibly been believed and even propagated by the western media.

Gorani people who were employed in the public utility services or in business companies were almost invariably kicked out of their jobs in 1999 when UNMIK and KFOR took over the running of the province. In one large textile company 'Drateks' more than 500 Gorani lost their jobs. In the forestry service 15, in the agricultural enterprise 'Sarproizvodi' 37 Gorani lost their jobs, in the post office seven, in the Municipal Court 10 people including four judges, in the Communal Services Enterprise 21 were forced out, in the Commercial enterprise 'Kritnik' 28 lost employment, etc, etc. The list goes on.

Another tactic to dispossess and ultimately drive out the Gorani is to build illegally on land belonging to Gorani people. There is never any compensation. Gorani people have no faith in the new court system or in the UNMIK procedures. Nothing ever seems to get done. Another problem they face is the enforced "privatisation" of socially-owned enterprises where the former workers had a share in the business. These the Gorani believe are asset-stripping tactics or else ways to buy other people's property at rock-bottom prices. One large factory was sold by the Kosovo Trust Agency (EU/UNMIK agency to privatise enterprises in Kosovo) to an Albanian for €312,000. But, as the Gorani point out, the machinery alone in the factory was worth that.

One more method of undermining the Gorani's morale is the supply of electricity. Of course since 1999 the electricity supply throughout Kosovo has been erratic at the best of times despite a huge amount of investment in the power plant near Obilic. (The EU alone has put in nearly €1 billion of EU taxpayers money to the power plants). The electricity bill that arrives every month includes a three and a half Euro charge for the provision of the Kosovo T.V. service 'RTK'. However, no one in the Gora region gets a T.V. signal so the charge is meaningless. The only way to see television is to purchase an expensive satellite dish. In one particular case that I am acquainted with, one Gorani man who - right beside his house - has a stable equipped with electric light, receives not only two electricity bills but two T.V. bills as well. Presumably, RTK thinks his cows watch television. There is no access to internet and no local Serbian language newspaper so the Gorani feel even more isolated.

A relatively new tactic the Albanians are using against the Gorani is to interfere with their access to education. The Gorani are traditionally fond of educating their children and many go on to third level education. They wish to have their children educated in their own language so that for those who do go on to higher secondary and tertiary education, they can do so in Serbia. The local authorities are demanding that the young Gorani children attend local schools which are now dominated by Albanians. The Gorani representatives see this as a clear attempt to “Albanise” them. They fear for the future and for the forced assimilation tactics which have also been used with the Bosniak communities in the Zupa valley where I have also witnessed the forced assimilation of non Albanians. For instance in the village of Drajcici the Serbian speaking Bosniak children have to go to the Albanian school in the village. Before 1999 the school was Serbian-Bosniak as there were no Albanians in it.

Albanise or else! And this is all done under the watchful eye of the UN, EU, OSCE, etc.

Some 20,000 Gorani have fled since 1999, mostly to Serbia proper or in a few cases to the West. They do not know if they can survive as a community. If they do go, a unique place, a unique culture will be irretrievably lost. The Gorani think that the only possibility they have of survival in these circumstances is to have their own municipality in Gora which can link up with Serbian areas for trade, etc. They see no future for themselves as part of an Albanian-dominated Kosovo.

My Gorani friends are at pains to ask not be identified in any official reports. They fear they will be targeted by the Albanians if they are seen to be complaining about the new reality in Kosovo. However they know they are always targets anyway.

One night around 11p.m. in January 2007 one of my friends from a small village not far from Dragash town was retiring to bed with his wife when he heard his daughter calling from downstairs. She had been with friends in the square near the mosque where the young people usually meet to chat. He opened the window to see his daughter shouting that there was a black box on the doorstep and a funny smell, something like acid. He told her to run back to the square immediately. She needed no further warning. Just as he turned away from the window, the device in the box detonated throwing him across the room. It virtually demolished the house collapsing the main gable wall. He and his family were lucky. His daughter got back to the square just as the bomb went off. No one was seriously injured although my friend is now partially deaf in one ear.

No one has been apprehended for this attack or for any other serious crime in Gora.

Now every year on 16 June, the Albanians celebrate the “Liberation of Dragash”.

XI. “Gotovo Gotovo – It is All Over”

Radmila Savic is the last Serb living in Peyton Place in central Pristina. Up until 1999 it was a predominantly Serbian suburb of the city. She is a 90 year old woman who is trying to live out her last years in peace on this earth with the hope that she can be buried with her husband in the Orthodox Christian cemetery graveyard in the city. She is sure of neither.

One day last year when I dropped in to visit her I discovered her in an anxious state. Albanian children were outside throwing stones at the house and shouting in at her. She locked her gate and her door but the shouting of the young children continued, “Gotovo Gotovo - It is all over”.

Radmila has had no problem with her old Albanian neighbours and never had. However the children throwing the stones are the children of newcomers to the locality and they constantly hurl insults if not stones at the house as well as spraying the wall with graffiti from time to time.

I first met Radmila in the village of Velika Hoca in Orahovec municipality in the year 2003 at the Serbian harvest festival. She was travelling with a KFOR escort and that first time she asked me for help as she wished to be buried with her husband Mladen Savic, who died in 1995. Her normal sounding request was not so normal at all given the circumstances in Pristina. She wished to be buried alongside her late husband in the Orthodox Christian graveyard, which has been the target of persistent attacks and vandalism since June 1999. Apparently, she was confused by the responses she received from UNMIK expecting to be refused permission to be buried there. Apparently to be buried there is seen as a provocation to ethnic Albanians, but it seems that no one sees the continual vandalism of Christian graves or churches by Albanians as provocation. Incidentally, the old Jewish graveyard adjacent to the Orthodox graveyard has also been vandalised. Those attacks are simply part of the unexplained and uninvestigated happenings in Kosovo since June 1999.

Radmila was born in 1917 and has lived in Peyton Place throughout her married life. She points out that this area of Pristina was predominantly Serbian until 1999. All of her Serb neighbours were forced to flee and later forced to sell their property to Albanians between 1999 and 2002. The houses in the streets nearby and those to her back which were all owned by Serbs now boast some of the newest hotels in Pristina. Most were forced to flee at the point of a gun and many were killed.

Peyton Place - or to be specific No. 1 Partizanska Street - was also the location of the detention centre established by the UÇK for Serbs, Roma and others kidnapped for torture and ultimate execution when the UÇK arrived back to Pristina in June 1999. It was established like other torture centres around Kosovo in the basement of an innocent looking building and it is widely believed that it was one of the main detention centres or concentration camps in Pristina for the many of the Serbs and Roma who disappeared, especially in the summer of 1999.

I have asked her many times to leave as it is not safe but she points out that she is old and frail and they know she will die soon and therefore she is not a threat. I pointed out the Albanian children do not seem to think so. When I ask her now if she is afraid she points out that she was here when the worst things were happening. People were chased from their apartments, others fled in fear, some were killed or kidnapped never to return, and in the space of a few brief months all the property began to change hands. This is not surprising given that Peyton Place is prime real estate in a very central location near the centre of Pristina. The Albanians, or more specifically the UÇK, wanted it and in Kosovo it is irrelevant who owns property. What is relevant is who wants it and who is willing to kill for it. She does not know who the newcomers to her street are. All she knows is that they have come from villages around Kosovo and she has been told that some are from Albania. She stresses again that she cannot complain about her old Albanian neighbours but the new ones are the ones she fears.

The day that they were throwing stones and shouting "Gotovo, gotovo - It is all over" I reported the incident to members of the international UNMIK police, both of whom were Americans and who have since kept an eye on her. They warned the stone-throwing children that they would be watching them.

Another time in January 2006 when I visited Radmila and I was so shocked to find her huddled under blankets on a sofa staring at the ice forming on the wall and windows. She was nearly frozen to death. It was around this time that I sought help from UNMIK police regarding her situation. Two US police officers have helped her ever since. They arranged for her boiler

to be fixed as it was broken and between us we bought her a stove and tried to bring some comfort into her life.

She continues to receive bills for the utilities some of which may be correct but some of which are clearly unreal. Her name has even been changed; it has been Albanised from Savic to Saviq. Her street name has been changed too. At times her electricity bill has been for hundreds of Euros which she is clearly incapable of paying and which she most certainly has not run up, not with a few electric light bulbs and a small heater. Not long ago with the help of the same two US police officers Radmila obtained a television set. She was delighted. Even with the television set on she could not run up a bill equivalent to the one the Kosovo Electricity Service (KEK) is demanding. This is of course the same KEK which numbers among its thousands of employees not one Serb. That was taken care of in the summer of 1999 when British KFOR went to the power plants and told all the experienced workers there (including Serbs, Albanians, Roma and Bosniaks) that they all had to leave their work stations at the plant and would be rehired in a few weeks. Hot on the heels of British KFOR came the UÇK, who became the new power plant workers. Although untrained and with no expertise or experience in the management and running of thermal power plants they took over the place and, well, the rest is history. Let me put it this way, there has never been a full day electricity supply in Kosovo ever since although the European taxpayer has forked out nearly one billion Euros so far on this endeavour.

Radmila's house is in a prime location and she has been asked many times to sell it. Some people from the Turkish office in Pristina even asked her if she was willing to sell it to them. Although she has never actually sold her house it has been sold from underneath her feet on not one but two separate occasions. She owns the house and has the papers indicating that she is the lawful owner. However, when she went to the cadastral office established by UNMIK she discovered like so many others that her name had been illegally erased. She is now in the process of trying to normalise her legal affairs.

Twice, forgery and fraud have been used to try and steal her house from her. This, one must point out, suggests a very inefficient and indeed corrupt legal system/judiciary where property belongs to those who want it and not to those who own it or have the proper legal entitlements. As has been pointed out by numerous international watchdogs the judiciary in Kosovo is prejudiced and is afraid to bring a judgement against a fellow Albanian. This is perhaps understandable given the very real threat posed by the UÇK, but the international community does nothing to prevent intimidation or attacks on potential witnesses and therefore the law belongs to those "on the right side of history" according to the Western powers that supported the UÇK.

In one of the cases where Radmila's house was sold the property document sealing the sale, was signed by one Radmila Savic/nee Pavlovic born 1977, quite clearly not the real 90-year-old owner and occupant of the house in Peyton Place.

Radmila's case is hardly unique and it begs the question what was it all for?

Did NATO go to war for the very first time so that conmen and charlatans could steal the house of a 90-year-old woman out from under her nose, not once but twice?

Did NATO also go to war to ensure that people like Radmila could not be buried in a Christian graveyard alongside her husband?

Did NATO also go to war to ensure that people like Radmila could not sleep peacefully and safely at night?

Did NATO also go to war to ensure that property belongs to those who want it and not to those who own it or have the proper legal entitlements to it?

It begs the question -- what was it all for?

XII. Old Habits Die Hard

The Story of Zupa Valley

Zupa valley is situated in a picturesque mountainous region in the south of Kosovo. It runs from the town of Prizren down towards the border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is a place with many small villages dotted around the hillsides as the Zupa river winds through the countryside. The communities living there are mixed, with Albanians, Bosniaks (Serbian-speaking Muslims not to be confused with the Gorani who come from one specific region of Kosovo, Gora) and Serbs. There are some Roma scattered among the various Serbian communities still existing in Zupa. The Serbs that remain in the villages of Zupa are, without exception, elderly people, mostly elderly females. This like other places around Kosovo is no place for the young.

I first visited the area in November 2000. I had arranged to go there with Fr Petar, a Serbian Orthodox monk from the Patriarchate of Pec. Fr Petar was travelling to the Zupa area, some sixty kilometers away to visit the villagers and to serve liturgy in the medieval church in the village of Drajcici. We departed from the Patriarchate of Pec escorted by Italian KFOR in two armed personnel carriers (APCs). Fr Petar travelled in the first APC and myself and his Serbian interpreter, Milica, travelled in the second one. We travelled under tight security and reached Prizren in late afternoon. There we stopped at the Bishop's residence which was later destroyed in the March 2004 riots. At the residence we were changed over to German KFOR. I remember one of the KFOR soldiers (I do not remember whether he was German or Italian) pushing Fr Petar and when I saw this I told him that this was not the way we in the west treated members of the clergy. He looked at me somewhat puzzled.

After Italian KFOR departed we were transferred into German KFOR jeeps and driven to the monastery of Holy Archangels. The whole region of the south west of Kosovo fell under the German area of responsibility and there were certainly plenty of German soldiers around as we pulled up outside the monastery. We stayed overnight in Archangels monastery, which was later burnt to the ground, during the 2004 March riots. The monks there were very hospitable and Fr Herman, the abbot, welcomed us warmly. I remember we spent some of the late evening walking around the beautiful grounds of the monastery nearby the river. The one thing I remember distinctly about that first visit to Archangels was that the monastery had no running water. In order to wash ourselves or flush the toilets we had to carry in buckets of water from an outside pump. The water was cut off in June 1999 and here I was 17 months later visiting the monastery to find that the monks had lived there all that time there with no running water. The monks did not complain. However, later that evening when a UNHCR representative from Prizren visited the monastery I mentioned to him that it was terrible that certain individuals could cut off the water supply to the monastery and get away with it. I remember him saying in a strong American accent that I should not be taking sides. I looked at him in disbelief and pointed out that in any normal place when people vandalised other people's access to public utilities they were usually brought before a court and sentenced. But of course this was Kosovo under a UN Protectorate, and might was right.

Early next morning we went in German KFOR jeeps to visit the nearby village of Mushnikovo, Fr Petar went to visit some of the Serbian families and I stayed outside near the KFOR jeep. I noticed that the doors of the surrounding houses had yellow markers on them. On some houses it looked like an X, on others it looked like a cross. I asked the German soldiers what these yellow crosses were doing on these doors. I received an answer I could scarcely believe. The young soldier, whom I later photographed, informed me that these were used to denote that Serbs lived in these houses. He said that people had to know which houses were inhabited by Serbs. I wondered why? So I then said to him. "You mean that you are highlighting the fact the Serbs are living in these houses by putting yellow crosses on their doors". He nodded. I could hardly believe what I was hearing. The previous night the church and the house across from the church had been attacked by rocket propelled grenades and here was German KFOR marking out the houses which were later attacked by extremists. This seemed incomprehensible to me. I pointed out that they were denoting the religious affiliation of these people and outlining the fact that these were Christians in a predominantly Muslim village. I pointed out to the soldier that this was not the first time in their history that the German army had put markers on the doors of people perceived as unter-

menschen. I immediately got my camera and took some photos. I asked to see their commanding officer. The German soldiers got very angry so I decided to make a quick exit. I ran into the church yard and went into the church. My heart was beating so fast I thought I would die. I gave my camera to an innocent bystander and hoped for the best. Thankfully, I was able to retrieve it later.

Shortly afterwards, a German army officer came and asked me what my problem was. I pointed out that I was not the one with the problem. He explained that the reason that the yellow crosses were on the doors of the houses were that these houses had been searched for weapons and unexploded ordinance and were deemed “free” of weapons. It was then that I really began to wonder if these people in charge really knew what they were doing. The Muslims, both Slavs and Albanians in the village had no such markers on their houses. They had complete freedom to travel wherever they liked throughout Kosovo and harass and intimidate innocent members of other communities. The Serbs in the village had no such freedom of movement. I was aware that the Serbs and Roma and others were being cleared out of their villages and towns all around Kosovo and I wondered what information the KFOR soldiers on the ground were receiving from the NATO high command. Were they still being fed the propaganda that the few remaining elderly Christian Serbs were the enemy or were the threat?

After we left Mushnikovo we then went to the village of Drajcici where Fr Petar served the Liturgy. It was attended by a few elderly Serbs from the village. I remember standing for nearly two hours throughout the service. My back was killing me but I did not complain as I watched the elderly Serbs stand throughout the whole service with not one word of complaint. These people were farming people whose families had lived for many generations in this mountainous village. You could tell that they were people who had suffered – as an outside observer you could see that their faces were sad. They were poor, their shoes were old but they had made an effort for the occasion that was in it. As I watched them praying the Liturgy that cold November morning I realised many things. I realised that they were old and that their children had fled the village after many attacks and provocations. They the elders in the family were trying to hold on until things might improve. They were receiving little assistance from the outside world. They were afraid for their future and did not feel safe. They were happy that the monks had come to pray with them, in their old church. They probably knew this would be the last time. After all their houses had yellow crosses on them. They were marked with the seal.

The rest of the Slavs in the village had embraced Islam a century before and were Muslims. The writing was on the wall for the Serbs. The future

was not for them. As we left the village we met with some Albanian children. They were attending the school which was now flying the flag of Albania. Before 1999 all classes were in Serbian as all the children were either Serbian or Bosniak. Now the village was under the Albanians, the Serbs were pushed out and the Albanians occupied their houses and hoisted their flags. The remaining Bosniak children were forced to have their schooling in Albanian. Forced assimilation. And nobody seemed to be bothered.

As we left the village I again noticed the small yellow crosses made of some kind of resistant cardboard or duct tape which had been pinned on the doors of some of the houses. I visited the village a few times since and remarkably you can still see the remnants of the yellow crosses on the doors although of course most of the Serb houses are uninhabited or illegally occupied. Nowadays only a handful of elderly Serbs remain in these villages and when they die no one will be around to explain to curious visitors why some of the doors are marked with fading yellow crosses.

As myself and Fr Petar travelled down the side of the mountain in the back of a German KFOR jeep, the soldier sitting in front of me was in radio contact with the base at Archangels monastery. He kept referring to the base as Big Brother. I just looked at Fr Petar and said nothing.

A Final Thought

The stories I have recounted in this book are all true, appalling though it is to contemplate; in certain cases the names have been changed to protect the sources. However, everything recounted is based on the experiences of the individuals and of my own experience. What I have written was done in great haste to counteract the lies and in an attempt to bring the truth out about what has been happening in Kosovo since NATO troops entered the province with the UÇK hot on their heels in June 1999. The stories I have written are twelve stories of particular individuals or of persons in particular villages; there are thousands of such stories and hundreds of thousands since the genocide of the Serbian people began.

My intention has been to convey some sense of the impact that the events in Kosovo had on the individuals and on the society and on the Serbs, Roma Croats and Gorani who were deemed to be less equal, the children of a lesser God.

It was not just the killings, kidnappings, destruction of churches, monasteries, whole villages and communities and the systematic injustices inflicted upon those who were deemed less equal, it was not just the glib manner of the various representatives of the various international organisations who lied through their teeth to deny the obvious truth. One only has to look at the itinerary planned out by Mr. Ruecker, the incumbent SRSG of the UN to understand what is happening. The UN observation team representatives were brought to villages where return has been successful (if you would like to call the village of Brestovik near Pec a successful return, where Serbs do not even have freedom of movement), but not to villages where it has failed like Srpski Babush, Zhitinje and Leshtar.

It was not just the smoke screen laid down by UNMIK, NATO, the EU, OSCE to cover up what was really happening. It was not just my outrage at seeing everything turned on its head, where all the laws, conventions, standards and norms that the so-called developed, civilised countries proclaimed fall to ashes and empty words. But it was not just that.

What you will have gleaned from these stories, which only portray the tip of the iceberg, is that what has gone on in Kosovo since June 1999 when NATO and UÇK arrived in the province is tantamount to genocide.

What unfolded was not the work of a handful of random UÇK terrorists shooting up their local district. It was a campaign that was systematic, organised, well thought out and well supported logistically. The campaign targeted every ethnic group including Albanians who did not approve of the new reality. The campaign targeted every town, village and rural settlement in every municipality. It was all about wiping out whole communities, whole ethnic groups.

The UN Convention on Genocide Article 2 defines it as:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Genocide?

In 1999 despite the much higher birth rate of Albanians there were towns that were still predominantly Serbian even if the villages in the municipality were predominantly Albanian. These include Kosovo Polje, Klina, Obilic, Vitina, Lilpljan, Istok and Kosovska Kamenica. In addition five municipalities were predominantly Serbian; Novo Brdo, Zubin Potok, Leposavic, Zvecan and Strpce.

Other towns had substantial number of Serbs even though they were a minority. For example Pristina had 40,000 Serbs, Pec had 16,000, Prizren had 10,000 and Gnjilane had 11,000. With substantial populations like this it was strategically important for the Albanians to clear the towns. Even if they controlled surrounding villages they could not exert complete control if there was a large urban centre full of Serbs in their midst. Therefore they had to take the towns and in the process they deliberately inflicted on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (in Kosovo not in part but in whole); they caused and are still causing serious bodily and mental harm to members of the group; killing members of the group and finally imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

Destroying beauty

The beauty and the scenery of places in the province of Kosovo is striking. How long that beauty will last is anyone's guess with all the trees being cut down, all the fields covered with concrete or absurdly tall buildings, all the rubbish being dumped in the parks? The beauty of the remaining monasteries despite the ravages of occupation and repeated attack in ages past? One thing is striking, and that is the beauty of the people who still have not learned to hate despite everything.

I wrote this book to tell the truth. I wrote this book to do justice to the communities in Kosovo that I have come to know and respect. I promised myself I would not let them be forgotten even if they are no more. And unfortunately for many of the communities they are no more and face extinction.

The people of the villages in Kosovo will forever be with me. No matter where I am I will never leave it for it is in my heart.

I make no apology for trying to defend the Serbs, Roma, Croats or the Gorani of Kosovo. They are the victims. There are many stories that could not be included in this small volume. They will see the light of day although I fear the communities that the stories describe and the individuals that make up those communities will not. A darkness has descended upon Kosovo that stifles attempts to see the truth, let alone tell it.

Some ordinary Albanians in Kosovo have been useful sources of information in verifying details in the stories, although understandably no names are mentioned. They too fear for the present and their future. The main thing I object to is the hateful ideology and the methods of the UÇK who have now become the real power in Kosovo, notwithstanding what UNMIK and KFOR prattle on about.

In 1917 U.S. Senator Hiram A. Johnson declared that:

“In war, truth is the first victim.”

Today's Kosovo would need a slightly revised version:

“In a UN-sponsored peace, truth is the first victim.”

On the White House lawn on the 7 May 2007 while welcoming the British Queen Elizabeth, George W. Bush stated that both their countries were “defending liberty against terror... while resisting those who murder the innocent to advance a hateful ideology.” I wonder if they know that their troops have not been defending liberty in Kosovo but allowing a reign of terror and facilitating the advancement of a hateful ideology.

Is it possible in this information age of high technology, where the media daily bombards us with news and information that these two leaders do not know what has really taken place in Kosovo?. Can it be possible that they do not know that their troops were aiding and abetting terrorists in Kosovo and stood by as whole communities were wiped out?