

NATO forces complicit in ethnic cleansing of Serbs

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Even as NATO military officials and politicians, visiting Kosovo on Wednesday, pointed to evidence of Albanian graves as vindication of the NATO war, a reign of terror against the Serbian population in the province was escalating.

NATO Supreme Commander General Wesley Clark and General Secretary Javier Solana held a press conference only a short time after the bodies of three Serbs were found at Pristina's university. They had been stabbed and tortured to death. Many more reports are emerging of rapes, kidnappings, murders, and the burning and looting of Serb homes.

Robin Lustig in Kosovo for the BBC commented, "People are still being killed, mainly Serbs this time, and there are many who still fear for the future... Kosovo is now more divided than ever. Both communities have felt fear, everyone feels they are victims."

Portrayed throughout the war as freedom fighters interested only in defending the Albanian population from Serb aggression, events have shown the KLA to be a nationalist movement dominated by anti-Serb chauvinism, whose methods are in no essentials different from those of extreme Serb paramilitaries. Having stepped into the power vacuum created by Serbia's withdrawal, the KLA has spearheaded the assault on Serb civilians.

Indicative of the scale of attacks on the Serbs, sections of the generally pro-war media have begun to speak of a "reign of terror." The *Daily Telegraph* noted that "NATO and the United Nations traded blame yesterday as Albanian rebels continued a campaign of terror aimed at ousting Serbs from their homes in western Kosovo."

The *Telegraph* described how KLA guerrillas encircled the 14th century Serbian Orthodox patriarchy

in Pec, where several hundred Serb refugees have taken refuge. "One KLA official, calling himself a military policeman, threatened to shoot our driver after we offered a ride to an aging Serb woman wishing to visit her son. Fresh graves and burning houses lined the roads leading into Pec, a city already devastated by Serbian police and paramilitary units who had wantonly destroyed Albanian homes and offices." KLA guerrillas had killed 12 Serbs in the Pec area, according to witnesses.

A week ago German troops raided a former Serb police headquarters that had been taken over by the KLA. They found 15 prisoners, including a deceased elderly man, handcuffed to a chair and badly beaten. The prisoners included Serbs, Albanians and Gypsies. One had welts across his back from being lashed; an old man had a bandage on his head and cuts on his face; while another had been stabbed in the leg.

It is impossible to deny that what is now unfolding in Kosovo is essentially of the same character as the crimes carried out by Serb forces and paramilitaries. The scale of the present atrocities may be smaller, in part because of the size of the Serb population, but this time the ethnic cleansing is taking place under the auspices of NATO.

Nobody familiar with events in Yugoslavia over the past decade can claim surprise over this turn of events. Every nationalist movement and government that has emerged from the breakup of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including NATO allies Croatia and Bosnia, has employed such methods. The US, Britain and the other major powers were well aware of the nature of the KLA, although their war propaganda concealed this information from the public. The NATO governments are politically responsible for the KLA's actions, and, more generally, for the worsening spiral of communal

warfare unleashed by their war.

There have been many examples of K-FOR compliance with ethnic cleansing against the Serbs, despite its claims to impartiality. On June 20, for example, Albanians looted and burned the homes of fleeing Serbs in the village of Grace, 10 miles north of Pristina. Questions from reporters as to why British and French troops did nothing to intervene were dismissed with claims that nothing could be done.

NATO has moreover reneged on its pledge to disarm the KLA. It has given the guerrillas three months to demobilise, despite their assaults on political opponents and Serb civilians. The KLA's "undertaking of demilitarisation and transformation" included a suggestion that it transform itself into "an army in Kosovo on the lines of the US National Guard." This prompted *Times* columnist Simon Jenkins to remark, "That should enable it to complete the next round of this Balkan horror, burning Serb villages, evicting Gypsies, smashing churches and settling lethal scores."

NATO's pretense of even-handedness and statements such as that by British Foreign Minister Robin Cook—"We want to see a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Kosovo"—assume there is no limit to the gullibility of the public. The Serbs, of course, have no doubt what life will be like in Kosovo under a KLA police, which is why they are fleeing.

The reprisals against Serbs are being carried out not only by the KLA, but also by sections of the Albanian population. (This has not prompted NATO officials or media commentators to make the kind of racist accusations of "collective guilt" against the Albanians that they so readily leveled against the Serbs).

These tragic and terrible events confirm that the crisis which existed in Kosovo prior to the NATO bombing did not accord with the simplistic and self-serving explanations offered by Clinton, Blair and company. Their demonisation of the Serbs was part of a calculated campaign of propaganda to manipulate the public and justify a policy of war.



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