

NATO "peace" sets stage for expulsion of Kosovan Serbs

Julie Hyland, Barry Grey

9 June 1999

Now that the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo seems near, it is being widely acknowledged in the Western press, and even by government and NATO officials, that the NATO-imposed "peace" will mean a new mass exodus of refugees fleeing for their lives—this time, Serbs and other minorities fleeing Kosovo.

The London *Telegraph* stated in its front-page leader Tuesday that "200,000 [Serbs] are now expected to be driven from Kosovo". The BBC website commented that "many of Kosovo's nearly 200,000-strong Serbian community may flee as Serbian forces pull out of the province".

Interviewed in the *Observer* on June 6, Britain's Foreign Secretary Robin Cook spoke of the danger of Kosovar Albanians extracting "bloody revenge on the Serb minority inside Kosovo". According to the *Observer*, Cook accepted there would be "pressure on the 175,000 Serbs previously resident in Kosovo to form their own enclave or quit Kosovo altogether."

The United Nations Under Secretary General for humanitarian affairs, Sergio Vieira De Mello, joined in warning that "the danger of revenge" created "the likelihood ... of further displacement". He noted there are already half a million Serb refugees displaced from Bosnia and Croatia currently living in Belgrade. He described their conditions as "squalid" and "subhuman".

They have now been joined by 11,500 refugees from Kosovo, mainly Gypsies and Serbs who fled NATO's bombing, who are living in disused army barracks and camps, without citizenship, passports or voting rights. Most are unemployed and are able to feed their families only by eking out an existence in the underground economy and through government food parcels.

One can be certain that the impending flight of

Kosovan Serbs will not be attributed to "ethnic cleansing" on the part of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Rather, their plight, to the extent it is even noted, will likely be deemed the unavoidable and unintended consequence of a "humanitarian" war, or blamed on Yugoslav President Milosevic.

But for NATO to pretend it bears no responsibility for the coming Serb exodus from Kosovo is as hypocritical as it is absurd. The next wave of "ethnic cleansing" in the territory that a decade ago constituted Yugoslavia—like all of the previous ones, including that of the Albanian Kosovars—is ultimately the product of US and European support for the dismemberment of the country. This policy has entailed direct support for chauvinist and communalist politicians and organizations in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and the fanning of ethnic and communal animosities.

Nowhere is this more clearly the case than in Kosovo. There the West—led by the US—adopted the KLA, a ragtag organization funded by drug money, tied to mafia elements and imbued with anti-Serb chauvinism, and used it as a military and political weapon against Serbia. Now American and NATO officials, asked how they intend to demilitarize the KLA as required by the agreement endorsed last week by Belgrade, either evade the issue entirely or talk of turning KLA guerrillas into the basic cadre of a new Kosovo police force.

No single measure, it is self-evident, could be more certain to spark panic among Kosovan Serbs and inspire their flight than handing over the policing of the province to Albanians who have made the killing of Serbs their life's work.

The refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia—teeming with people uprooted by the Serb military and NATO bombs, grieving over dead or

missing loved ones, herded together under horrendous conditions, politically and psychologically disoriented and confused, angry, desperate and frustrated—have become incubators of communal hatred and a thirst for revenge. Far from countering such emotions, NATO, assisted by the UN and various “human rights” and refugee organizations, has encouraged them.

They have given the KLA the run of the camps, where it promotes its politics and enlists new recruits. The British magazine *Economist* recently reported that the KLA “has become entrenched in some of the camps where some 100,000 displaced Kosovars are eking out an existence, and not just in border areas ... any visitor to the Mullet camp south of Tirana comes across dozens of uniformed fighters.”

The resulting political climate was revealed in a horrific attack last weekend by thousands of Albanian Kosovars on a Gypsy family in a camp in Stenkovec, Macedonia. It is worth quoting at some length the *New York Times* (June 7) account of the incident:

“For a moment, it seemed as if the mob of Albanian refugees would literally tear the 7-year-old Gypsy boy apart, limb from limb, said three aid workers who saw the attack on Saturday night. Minutes earlier, 15 to 20 enraged Kosovo Albanian refugees had beaten the boy's older brother and father, whom they accused of collaborating with the Serbs and killing Albanians inside Kosovo last month....

“The attack was part of a chaotic and terrifying four-hour siege here as a mob of several thousand Kosovo Albanian refugees tried to seize and beat the Gypsy family.

“The attack illustrated the chaos NATO forces could face in Kosovo when hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees return home to the shattered province....

“While most Serbs, and Gypsies who have allied themselves with the Serbs, are expected to flee the province before any Kosovo Albanians return, some elderly people could remain....

“In the attack, the refugees, chanting and screaming for blood, tore down the fence surrounding the Catholic Relief Service's main office here, kicked in the front door, tore bars from its windows and used a metal gutter as a battering ram.

“The violence was only defused after hundreds of Macedonian riot police officers arrived, and

Christopher R. Hill, the United States Ambassador to Macedonia, addressed the mob at midnight and promised that justice would be done in the case.”

The article makes a telling admission:

“In one sense, the refugee camps here are sweltering caldrons of hate, where increasingly frustrated Kosovo Albanians can commiserate about their mutual victimization at the hands of the Serbs. As might be expected, peer pressure is exerted in the camps to hate Serbs.

“In the Cegrane camp here, which holds 40,000 refugees, children recited poems to a crowd of refugees last Thursday that glorified the Kosovo Albanian rebel soldiers and listed massacre after massacre believed to have been committed by Serbs as their Albanian teachers looked on approvingly.”

NATO's war on Serbia has created the conditions for the next wave of communal violence and forced emigration, and new grievances and crimes that will fuel future communal wars. This is perhaps the most devastating refutation of its claims to be bombing Yugoslavia in order to halt “ethnic cleansing.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact