

Reverse ethnic cleansing: a post-war visit to Serbia and Kosovo

This is the latest report by the British Helsinki Human Rights Group on the impact of the Kosovo crisis on human rights and politics in former Yugoslavia. A month after the NATO-led war against Yugoslavia ended 4 members of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group visited Serbia, the Sandzak and Kosovo to assess the political and humanitarian situation there. BHHRG representatives were in Belgrade during NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia in mid-May 1999 and the Group's report **NATO targets Yugoslavia** appeared on its website soon afterwards. The Group has also had monitors in Macedonia and Albania.

The war's abrupt end came amid rumours that the NATO alliance was planning a ground invasion in the late summer. In Belgrade reports circulated that NATO intended to carpet-bomb the city and other urban areas in Serbia if Yugoslavia did not accept its terms. It is assumed that the prospect at least of a ground invasion caused the Milosevic regime to seek a way out of the conflict and accept the proposals put forward by the Ahtisaari-Chernomyrdin peace mission.

Both sides claimed victory in the war. But, despite failing to inflict serious losses on the Federal Yugoslav Army (JNA) and without the fulfilment of all the demands contained in the Rambouillet Agreement, NATO looked very much like the winner. The fact that NATO was able to secure terms under which its armies entered Kosovo and effectively occupied the province (albeit under a UN mandate) which was a serious blow to its prospects of remaining part of the Yugoslav Federation. Nevertheless, Belgrade could claim that having stood up to the most powerful military machine in history for two-and-a-half months it had obliged NATO to modify its original demands and to accept the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, without even a repetition of US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright's verbal assurance to the Albanian delegation at Rambouillet of a referendum on the province's future status after three years.

The Serbian Political Scene Today

Outside observers often confuse their dislike of elected officials in Yugoslavia and their policies with lack of democracy there. In fact since the disputed local elections of November, 1996, which sparked the three months of street protests led by the *Zajedno* coalition and eventually resulted in the Serbian Parliament endorsing opposition victories in key cities including, Belgrade, no participants have challenged the results of elections _ though many observers thought that the radical nationalist Vojislav Seselj may well have been cheated out of a close victory in the Serbian Presidential elections in December, 1997.

Both parliamentary and presidential elections were last held in Serbia in 1997. Federal Yugoslav elections took place in 1996. Although NATO and members of the Serbian opposition are demanding new elections immediately the government spokesman, Goran Matic, has indicated that they will not be held until next year.

The main issue in Serbian politics is whether or not the Milosevic regime can be removed from power, and if so by what means. Milosevic has survived many attempts to bring this about and some people think he will continue to survive. While Western politicians constantly urge the Serbian public to remove him, without fresh Federal elections there is no constitutional route to achieve this since Milosevic as president of the Yugoslav Federation holds a post to which he is elected by members of the Federal parliament not the people of Serbia and Montenegro. The Socialist Party itself would have to be soundly defeated in such elections before that could happen.

With fresh elections problematic, not least because no-one could predict with confidence that any fall in Socialist support might not benefit the radical anti-Western Serbian Radical Party led by Vojislav Seselj rather than pro-Western politicians, it may well be that Western leaders

would prefer an extra-constitutional route to removing their bogeyman from power in Belgrade.

Money will be a key issue in post-war Serbian politics. Financing the reconstruction of civilian economic entities, like power stations and infrastructure destroyed by NATO's airstrikes is a central problem for Serbia lacks the hard currency to buy replacement technology, etc. In the political sphere opposition politicians are well aware that money will play a key role in the political struggle. Bribery as well as political advertising etc. will play a big role in Serbia's developing power struggle.

Oppositionists lack significant domestic sources of cash to finance local politics _ though their control of several major municipalities means that they are not entirely without local means. They have long looked abroad to Western governments and philanthropists like George Soros to underwrite their cause. NATO states are encouraging the Serbian opposition to unite its disparate elements and position itself for a change of regime. US Balkan representative, Robert Gelbard, recently met the main players in the Montenegrin resort of Herceg Novi; rumours abounded of the amount of money and support that would be available to bring about Milosevic's downfall. The leader of the Serbian Democratic Party (DS), Zoran Djindjic spearheads the opposition forces – for the moment, that is.

The strategy seems to be to provoke unrest in opposition strongholds as well as in areas where (presumably disgruntled) army reservists are stationed. While Belgrade itself is the ultimate prize – it was the capital that saw the biggest demonstrations in 1991 and the winter of 1996/7 - protests are more likely to evolve there gradually. Parallel to the strategy of targeting likely venues for unrest support is being given to independent television stations and trade union movements. Independent unions were instrumental in bringing down the Zhan Videnov government in Bulgaria in 1997. Western governments indirectly encouraged and some even sponsored organisations and individuals involved in the violent upheaval in Albania in 1997 which resulted in rigged elections at the end of June, 1997, confirming the fall of President Sali Berisha and his Democratic Party there.

While the main transmitters for Serbian TV were bombed local TV and radio stations were relatively unaffected and new ones are opening. An example is Radio Pancevo. Vuk Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Movement still controls Belgrade's main television station, Studio B a factor, no doubt, taken into account by those who have been trying to engage him more actively in opposition protests.

Protests: In the past fortnight protest meetings have been held in several Serbian towns, especially in the south-west of the country. The opposition Alliance for Change grouped around Djindjic's Democratic Party has addressed meetings calling for the downfall of the Milosevic regime. Several thousand people regularly attend these occasions according to onlookers although it is difficult to assess the accuracy of the figures given. CNN has reported [16th July] that attendance has been falling rather than rising and that the popular mood is complex: disillusionment with Milosevic as much for losing Kosovo as for fighting at all is combined very often with cynicism about the personalities competing to supplant him.

Some of these protests have started to become violent. In Valjevo the offices of the local Socialist mayor were attacked by demonstrators. The reasons for this new development which was absent in 1996/97 (when the worst opposition violence was the throwing of rotten eggs at the RTS headquarters in Belgrade since bombed by NATO). It is possible that the violence is caused by provocateurs both from those trying to discredit the demonstrators by stirring up images of incipient civil war or by others wanting to provoke a police crackdown thereby proving the illegitimacy of the government and gaining the sympathy of the West for those suffering a new Tiananmen Square-style repression. Such a crackdown might provide the cue for further NATO intervention.

Violence at protests: Opposition activists have been particularly encouraged by what they say was a spontaneous protest in the town of Leskovac on 5th July. During transmission of a baseball match an employee, Ivan Novkovic, with the local TV station interrupted the commentary and called for the overthrow of Milosevic. Over 20,000 people allegedly took to

the streets in protest. Whether this outpouring of feeling was as completely spontaneous has been questioned – some say DS activists were behind the protest. It is also possible that people were driven to protest because TV transmission of their basketball game had been rudely brought to an end. Novkovic himself was imprisoned for 30 days. Afterwards, protestors tore up railings outside the home of the mayor of Leskovac, Zivojin Stafanovic (Socialist Party) and used them to damage his car and other property on 7th July.

On 8th July, shots were fired disturbing a demonstration in Prokuplje led by Zoran Djindjic, though the rally continued.

Street protests are now being accompanied by a petition signing campaign – to get rid of Milosevic. Police have intervened in some places to prevent opposition activists collecting signatures however no violence has been reported.

While it is always possible that meetings and petition signing will galvanize people in sufficient numbers to demand change and bring down the government there are unresolved problems with the Serbian opposition parties with which the West is prepared to deal. For, despite the repeated allegations by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair that Serbia is a totalitarian state it is, in fact, a democracy, albeit an imperfect one. People in Serbian elections have a choice and they have not yet given enough votes to the parties favoured by the West for them to come to power unaided.

The Democratic Party (DS) : Even at the height of its popularity the Democratic Party led by Zoran Djindjic never enjoyed majority support even among opposition voters. In 1996 it formed the *Zajedno* coalition allying the Civic Party of Vesna Pesic and the Serbian Renewal Party (SOP) of Vuk Draskovic to fight the November local elections. Afterwards, Draskovic claimed that out of the 900,000 votes gained by the coalition in those elections all but 100,000 went to his party (based on his support in the presidential election in September, 1997). The fact that the DP has mayors in several large towns like Nis is due to an agreed carve-up whereby the SOP gave mayoral mandates to the DP in return for Draskovic becoming the main opposition candidate in the forthcoming 1997 presidential election. The *Zajedno* coalition fell apart before then as Djindjic and Draskovic accused each other of reneging on the deal and Draskovic stood for the Serbian presidency while the other parties in the opposition coalition boycotted the 1997 polls. Djindjic himself was voted out of office as Mayor of Belgrade and replaced by the SOP's Milan Bozic, who was elected with Socialist Party votes as well as his own party's.

Boycotting elections is a two-edged sword. While it may preserve the boycotters' bona fides (at least in the eyes of Western politicians who have on several occasions encouraged election boycotts in former Communist countries) it tends to remove the politicians concerned from the public eye. In the case of the Serbian Democratic Party this remoteness from the public has been compounded by the fact that the party's leader, Zoran Djindjic, left the country during the NATO bombardment and is widely regarded as a traitor. It is very difficult to imagine him attracting majority support in (fairly conducted) elections however disillusioned people in Serbia may be with the current government. At several of his rallies since returning to Serbia, Djindjic has been booed and harassed by critics even if his supporters have given him a warm welcome. Several Serbian observers think that the presence of political leaders like Djindjic or Draskovic who both have a reputation for changing their views radically and falling out with allies to the discredit of the opposition has a limiting effect on protests *all* politicians in Serbia.

Vuk Draskovic and the Serbian Renewal Party: BHHRG members met Draskovic in May 1999 soon after he had been dismissed from his post as deputy prime minister during the war. Despite his stated opposition to the Milosevic regime and reputation as a political maverick it is hard to see him cooperating with Djindjic again. Draskovic is vain and enjoys the limelight. He is a colourful figure who can, with justification, present himself as a patriotic Serb who stayed in Belgrade during the bombing. The SOP has much more of a popular

following than the DS so he probably feels he can go it alone – the mayor of Belgrade Milan Bozic is from the SOP and the party owns a TV station in Belgrade, Studio B.

For all these reasons the West knows it cannot completely sideline Draskovic and, conversely, the SPO does not want to be isolated from the West. A party spokesman told the BHHRG that the US State Department was in daily contact urging them to play their part especially by encouraging the SPO to pursue closer contacts with the Montenegrin government and support President Djukanovic's party in its attempt to gain equal representation on federal bodies. Although Western governments do not support Montenegrin independence the small republic might choose to secede from the Yugoslav federation if all other attempts to unseat Milosevic fail.

On 17th July Draskovic addressed a rally of his supporters in Kragujevac and called for an end to the Milosevic regime. Despite this, he does not support handing Milosevic and other war criminals over to the Hague Tribunal – he feels that something on the lines of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be a more appropriate way of changing Serb society. But it is unlikely that NATO will accept this.

The Serbian Radical Party: Belgrade politicians are convinced that Vojislav Seselj and the Serbian Radicals are a spent force. Their private opinion polls tell them so. However, it would be folly to write the party off just because Serbian liberals and their Western allies could easily be indulging in wishful thinking. Many people resent Milosevic for *finishing* the war the way he did rather than starting it in the first place. Seselj's uncompromising nationalism and contempt for the West could make him more not less popular if elections were to be held now.

The Army: The relative weakness of the Serbian opposition parties – at least those palatable to the West – suggests that change may have to be affected by the army and security services. It is, no doubt, hoped that disaffected high-ranking members of the military, including those dismissed by Milosevic during the past year, could spearhead mass revolts in the army. Towards the end of the bombing campaign army reservists began to desert and demonstrations were held in the south of Serbia. In the first week of July reservists protesting over unpaid wages gathered in and around Kraljevo and Novi Pazar blocking bridges over the River Ibar.

The authorities are nervous about these protests as witnessed by BHHRG as they travelled through south-west Serbia towards Kosovo. In the small town of Raska the Group filmed two soldiers with whom they had fallen into conversation near the local bus station where its observers were already interviewing a group of Gypsy refugees from Kosovo. The short encounter was reported to the local police and the Group's cameras were confiscated. The security police in Novi Pazar were clearly concerned that Westerners might have discussed sensitive issues like the relations between Serbia and Montenegro as well as the situation in the Sandzak region with its large Muslim population. The potential for explosive meddling is obvious.

The officer in charge of the 'case' (no charges were brought) was deeply angry and resentful towards the West. This may not have been unconnected with the number of local MUP officers killed in Kosovo – black-edged notices pinned on the police station door recorded their deaths including at the hands of the KLA before the beginning of NATO bombing. The whole area had been badly bombed by NATO. Many bridges and fuel depots are destroyed and in the town of Novi Pazar BHHRG saw a prime example of a NATO 'mistake': a block of flats in a residential district which had sustained a direct hit killing 11 people including a two-year-old boy. The MUP building itself is a 6 storey tower set in its own grounds in the town centre and was undamaged. If anti-government protests in Serbia continue people like this officer could lead a backlash. In fact, Draskovic himself has warned of the possibility of civil war breaking out between supporters of the apparat and the opposition.

The Secret Police

A Romanian-style solution would require co-operation between the Army and Secret Police to mount a coup under the cover of popular protests, or at least of reports of such demonstrations

During the war, leading NATO-figures like British Defence Secretary, George Robertson, publicly spoke with approval of long-term security chief, Jovica Stanisic, who was removed in October, 1998, for opposing Belgrade's defiance of NATO demands. General Momcilo Perisic, ousted chief of the Yugoslav general staff, was also endorsed as reform-minded by the allies. Both Stanisic and Perisic were once denounced by the CIA as the string-pullers behind the Srebrenica massacre in 1995 but the transcripts of their telephone orders have now been forgotten as yesterday's ethnic cleansers have become potential allies against the West's enemy-in-chief, Slobodan Milosevic.

Conclusion:

The impact of three months of one-sided war against the most powerful military alliance in history has compounded the last ten years of economic mismanagement and international sanctions to push Serbia into a desperate position. Political upheaval may well follow. But even with assistance from NATO states, the overthrow of the present Yugoslav/Serbian government cannot be guaranteed. Certainly it would be naïve to expect its fall to be either bloodless or necessarily the prelude to a Western-style democracy. Even if the opposition were able to unite, it is more likely that a coup rather than a "people power" revolution would ensue _ if only under the cover of demonstrations to distract Western media attention and to legitimise the outcome. Since such a coup would be led by men and institutions actively involved in ethnic cleansing since 1991 whether it should be welcomed by democrats and human rights activists is more than open to doubt.

REFUGEES from KOSOVO: Kraljevo

Already during the NATO bombing, there was an influx of refugees (technically "internally displaced people") into Serbia and Montenegro from Kosovo as well as a retreat into the countryside from big towns by many thousands of city dwellers. Since the signing of the military-technical agreement and the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army and Serbian police in mid-June as many as 140,000 but at least 75,000 people have fled from Kosovo (even if several hundred thousands have returned to it from Albania and Macedonia) adding to the scores of thousands who had already fled the province under NATO bombardment after March.

BHHRG visited refugees from Kosovo in Kraljevo in the south of Serbia and Liposovac in the north of Kosovo. Figures given by Miroslava Tenjovic, Secretary of the local Red Cross in Kraljevo estimate that, by week ending 9th July 1999, c.71,000 people had left Kosovo. This includes Serbs but also large numbers of gypsies and Slav Muslims from Kosovo including those from the specific Gorani minority.

In Kraljevo itself about 11,000 refugees were dispersed in families in the town while 2000 were in collective centres. The town has a population of 60,000 and the borough 120,000. It had long been used to receiving Serb and gypsy refugees from Kosovo and one quarter of the town was known as "little Albania".

Ms. Tenjovic said refugees were arriving at approximately 500 per day. Of them, between 30 and 40 had visible injuries. She said that no help was forthcoming from the government which was reluctant to admit the existence of the refugees.

The Vuk Karadic school is used as a distribution centre for basic supplies to refugees. BHHRG spoke to some of them who described how they had been despoiled of their homes

and goods by armed men from the KLA. Kfor troops made no attempt, according to them, to intervene. Some attribute their betrayal by Albanian neighbours to their desire to appear patriotic and loyal to the KLA and in one case it was alleged that an elderly couple had been murdered because they were too old to move. It was also alleged that Italian soldiers had actually assisted in the removal of Serb residents from Kosovo. The reason given for this behaviour by the refugees was that the Italians felt it better if there were no Serbs to protect as it was too difficult for them to do so. One witness described how British soldiers had watched as Serbs were stoned by Albanians and when an officer was asked why he was doing nothing to protect the Serbs he replied that he had "no mandate" to arrest offenders. The use of technical vocabulary like the word "mandate" in the testimony of the refugees has a ring of authenticity.

In the Dobradovic Beranovac school we talked to the mayor of Klina and several refugees from that town. 360 people were housed in the school in very overcrowded conditions. The Serbs there had departed en masse taking 4 days to reach Kraljevo. They had fled for their lives and reported much the same experiences as the other refugees described already.

The stories told by these refugees were strikingly similar to those related by Albanian refugees to BHHRG in camps in Macedonia in May. They differed in one respect however. Many of the Serbian refugees claimed to have tried to defend their Albanian neighbours during the war. When asked from whom and from what, they said paramilitary bands – both Serb and Albanian (of the KLA). Albanian refugees in Macedonia always claimed to have fled exclusively from Serb paramilitaries. Many of these refugees felt abandoned by the Serbian government and several expressed a desire neither to return to Kosovo nor to remain in Serbia, but to emigrate.

However, they were not afraid to talk (and complain) and no impediment was put in the way of our observers during the visit. This contrasts sharply with the experiences of an American journalist writing in *USA Today* who described scenes in Kraljevo refugee centres in lurid terms: people locked up and prevented from meeting foreign reporters. No such things were seen during the day's visit (filmed by the BHHRG). Many such articles making exaggerated claims about the Serb authorities appear in the Western press.

As members of the Group drove south to Kosovo they passed cars loaded with possessions leaving the province. At dusk in the bus station in the small town of Raska there were groups of Serbs huddled around their luggage. But there were many more gypsies – around 50 – who had been expelled that day among them a girl whose eye was a running sore the result, she claimed, of having been beaten by Albanians.

The Gypsies : Of all the tragedies that have befallen the people of Kosovo during this war the fate of the gypsies is perhaps the most dramatic. There were officially only 43,000 Gypsies in the province at the last census in 1991 but experts suggest that this figure seriously undercounted the real number since many Gypsies preferred to classify themselves as Albanians or Serbs, or under another designation less likely to be viewed derogatorily by others in the local population. [See Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London, 1998), 209.]. In terms of ethnic cleansing the Gypsies of Kosovo have suffered most but very little noise has been made by international NGOs usually so vociferous in their support for Roma rights.

The reason given for their harsh treatment by returning Albanians and the KLA is that they were perceived to be collaborators during the war doing the Serbs' dirty work by, for example, helping to bury people murdered by the Serbs. It is true that Gypsies told the Group that they considered themselves to be loyal Yugoslavs but whether or not all (including women and children) should take the blame for the perceived wrongdoing of the few is, to put it mildly, debatable.

In any case, as noted above, other non-Albanian minorities seem equally fearful and at risk. The Group's rapporteurs met Turks and Egyptians from Kosovo who had fled into Serbia as well as Slav Muslims, Gypsies and Serbs. Whatever crimes may have been committed before the handover of Kosovo to UN/Kfor (in effect in most of the province is under KLA control) it is

clear that it is not only Serbs who are victimised as a result. In fact, Gypsies seem to be taking the brunt of violence.

When the Group's rapporteurs visited the Stenkovac refugee camp in Macedonia during the conflict they did not find any refugees among the tens of thousands who had visible signs of beating (including facial injuries).

Gypsies comprise the largest group in the Leposavic camp a few miles from the Kosovo/Serbia 'border'. The camp was established hastily on 18th June and comprises three large hangers that were once a food storage depot for the JNA. At the time of our visit (7th July) it contained 400 people. One hanger has been made habitable and was filled with gypsies, mainly women and children. We saw people there with injuries including a young girl with a bruised and swollen face and an elderly lady whose feet had been badly burned. They all claimed these injuries had been inflicted by Albanian neighbours. Some of the men had tried to return to their homes to retrieve their possessions but had been chased away again. Marko Pujic a Red Cross worker at the camp says that the numbers arriving vary each day. Sometimes it can be 5 – 10 sometimes as many as 200 – they usually arrive on the evening train from nearby Kosovoska Mitrovica.

The camp is only intended for transit purposes and Mr. Pujic says many people who come through, Serbs in particular hope to return one day. But gypsies show no sign of wanting to go back to Kosovo saying that they want to emigrate from Yugoslavia altogether.

A consignment of aid from the UNHCR arrived during our visit and another, from Medecins sans Frontiers, with baby food was scheduled for later in the day. Many humanitarian agencies have visited them, including independent groups from Greece and France but they had received little more than promises. Mr. Pujic also said that fuel was running out and there was only a day or so's supply – enough for Red Cross vehicles and the ambulance from the local hospital. Help from the Serbian government as such seems to be non-existent - the Yugoslav and Serbian Red Cross have to bear the burden of finding the money and the aid requirements. However, it is noticeable how little is being done for these people compared with the largesse distributed by the international community and its humanitarian agencies to Kosovo Albanian refugees in Macedonia during the war – including imported drinking water.

Kosovska Mitrovica:

The first large town after leaving Serbia is Kosovska Mitrovica which has a large mining-related industry. There has been a lot of trouble here between Serbs and Albanians since the end of the war and something like a stand-off now prevails with Albanians living on the south side of the River Ibar and Serbs on the north. A connecting bridge is guarded by French Kfor troops who patrol the whole town.

Although a report in the Financial Times, 20th July 1999 ["Yugoslav Twilight" by Mark Heinrich] claims that the Serb part of the town is "untouched", the whole town seemed to have been badly damaged by a combination of bombing, burning-out of homes and shops and looting. Black-edged death notices pinned to trees and telegraph posts testify to the fact that many Serbs died here during the war.

However the streets in the Serbian part of town are clean (which may have given the impression that it escaped damage) unlike the Albanian area where rubbish in the form of clothes, rotting food and animal carcasses lines the streets. French gendarmes with Kfor have tried to organize a rubbish collecting system, but no one seems to have offered to take part yet. If this mass of garbage is not removed soon it could be a serious health hazard.

There have been many newspaper articles about extremists in both communities. We stopped people at random in the street to gain their impressions of inter-community relations since the war. None of these people seemed to be 'extreme'. The paramilitaries have departed and left ordinary people to pick up the pieces. Serb residents say they can live with their neighbours from Mitrovica but complain about Albanians from elsewhere in Kosovo (Drenica, Jablonica) and from Albania itself arriving and demanding to live in the town.

Matters are not helped either by the evident KLA presence in the Albanian part of town - there is a large barracks cum police station. French Kfor soldiers laughed when we pointed out that KLA soldiers were still wearing their uniforms despite commitments to return to civilian dress. They showed no interest (or desire) to put a stop to this.

Local Albanian boys confirmed what two French gendarmes had told the observers: the town's Gypsy quarter had been ransacked by returning Albanians and those who had never left and they had evicted the Gypsies. The observers were able to film some looting continuing.

It is a sad irony that the achievement of the official NATO war aim - to stop ethnic cleansing - has simply seen a reversal of roles. Now instead of the Albanian majority, it is the non-Albanians who are driven from their homes. Although the total number of Albanian refugees may have been higher after 24th March, in practice the proportion of non-Albanians in flight seems to be higher.

SHORTAGES OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES

NATO bombed Yugoslavia's main pharmaceutical plant, INC, early in the conflict. This means that the country has lost its domestic production of a whole range of medical products.

Specially urgent needs are:

Drugs of all kinds from antibiotics to chemotherapy treatments
X-ray film both for ordinary purposes and mamography
Equipment (catheters etc.) both for hospital and peritoneal dialysis
blood transfusion equipment
surgical gloves and instruments
obstetric drugs and instruments

Even soap and handcream is in short supply.

The Yugoslav and Serbian Red Cross have lost most of their direct sources of information from Kosovo. All 29 local Red Cross secretaries were Serbs and have fled during the weeks since 10th June. Although the ICRC and some other national Red Cross Committees (including the British Red Cross) have continued to co-operate with the Belgrade-based Red Cross committees and do provide some assistance to refugees and hospitals in un-occupied Serbia, several national committees have started to operate directly on the ground in Kosovo without consulting the Yugoslav/Serbian Red Cross. This is not just a lack of courtesy between sister organizations, it opens the possibility that the Yugoslav Red Cross will be de-recognised even in the limited humanitarian work it is still able to do in Kosovo and that its facilities will be confiscated. At present there is no Kosovo -based Red Cross/Red Crescent organization.

The normal functioning of the medical system across the boundary between Serbia and Kosovo has been disrupted since the war. Although the Group's observers saw that Albanian staff (who had been dismissed or boycotted the hospital after 1990 out of solidarity with sacked colleagues) had returned to the main hospital in Kosovska Mitrovica to work alongside the remaining Serb staff, the insecurity of the district has discouraged both Albanian patients crossing to the hospital located in the Serb part of town but also patients from further north in Kosovo and southern Serbia are afraid to go to the hospital. The hospital in Kosovska Mitrovica provided various regional services like dialysis to patients in southern Serbia as well as northern Kosovo before the war. The presence of French troops guarding the entrance to the hospital does not seem to have reassured potential patients and it is uncertain how these people will receive the appropriate treatment in the future.

CONCLUSION

The Kfor contingent in Kosovo is still well-short of the promised complement of 50,000 troops. Rather than increasing its presence in Kosovo Kfor is, in fact, decreasing its commitment there: British Minister of Defence, George Robertson, has announced that 3000 British troops will have left the province by October 1999. The idea is to encourage other countries in Europe to participate in the operation but already there is wrangling among the allies over who should provide (and pay for) what.

In the meantime the Kosovo Liberation Army and the shadow government of Haxim Thaci continue de facto to take over the running of the province which is, strictly speaking, under UN control.

The Albanians have returned in their thousands but ethnic cleansing has been reversed and Kosovo emptied of its Gypsies as well as the bulk of its Serb minority. As of now, none of these people seem likely to return. What kind of future ordinary Albanians face remains to be seen. But the future does not augur well: from Vietnam to Northern Ireland crime and corruption in the form of drug dealing, protection racketeering and smuggling have been the norm in situations like this.

Apportioning blame for this war will not in itself restore order or produce the much-vaunted ideals of civil society. However, for many people, both Serb, Albanian and Gypsy, the NATO-led operation in Yugoslavia has brought nothing but disaster. It is a pity that serious help from the outside world only seems to be forthcoming for one group of people affected by the tragedy.