

MACEDONIA IN CRISIS

Introduction

The upsurge of fighting in Macedonia since March, 2001, reached crisis point on 26th June, when NATO forced the Macedonian government to allow US troops to escort bus-loads of armed guerrillas out of their base in Aracinovo, 10km from the capital Skopje. The anti-government and anti-Western rioting which broke out in the capital afterwards showed that NATO's intervention had exacerbated the situation severely. Relations between the Slav Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority have been complicated by the mediation or even meddling of the USA and EU states.

Exactly ten years after old Yugoslavia began its bloody implosion in June, 1991, Macedonia, its most peaceful republic until now, seems set to spiral downwards into the maelstrom of civil war. Just as Western mediation and intervention made matters worse and prolonged the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and helped to provoke the conflict in Kosovo, now Macedonia appears set to be the victim of the same process. This report based on a fact-finding mission to Macedonia by regular visitors to the region examines the internal and external causes of Macedonia's current crisis.

Although there has not been a census since 1991, it is widely believed that Albanians make up to 30% of the population of Macedonia. Even though the country's constitution has been praised for its inclusiveness towards the country's ethnic minorities, there have been occasional flare-ups between the two communities over the past 10 years. For example, in 1997 3 people were killed and many wounded when police removed Albanian and Turkish flags from Gostivar town hall. The privately-funded university in Tetovo has also been regarded in some quarters as a hot-bed of Albanian nationalism.

However two events occurred in 1999 that were to prove crucial to the country's future and its independence. Firstly, the war in Kosovo drove hundreds of thousands of Albanians into Macedonia where they were accommodated in refugee camps. The Macedonians were praised for their handling of the crisis albeit some foreign politicians (like Britain's Clair Short) carped from the sidelines. By autumn 1999 most of the refugees had returned to Kosovo but the legacy of the war remained in its most ugly form. The mainly Albanian-occupied border regions became havens of drugs and weapon trafficking. In January 2000 three Macedonian police officers were killed as they sought to arrest such criminals in the village of Aracinovo near Skopje.

It should also be added that Albanians living in the border regions with Kosovo seem to have become significantly more prosperous since the war. Tetovo has been a veritable building site for the past 18 months with large houses appearing at great speed both in the town and surrounding villages. BHHRG election observers visited a first-grade school embellished with marble floors in the small village Debresh in September 2000. It is alleged that much building material has been diverted from aid convoys destined for Kosovo – tiles on many buildings are from a common design produced in West Germany. However, whatever the causes of the building boom, its reality contrasts starkly with repeated complaints of poverty and second-class status put forward by Albanian activists. Macedonian areas of the country, and even the Slav enclave in Tetovo, are notably poorer.

The second event that soured ethnic relations in Macedonia in 1999 was the presidential election held later that year. In the first round of voting the Socialist candidate, Tito Petkovski, had a handsome lead of c. 100,000 over his rival a little-known employee in the foreign ministry called Boris Trajkovski. However, in the run-off held on 14th November Trajkovski turned the tables and won. BHHRG observers monitored the poll and found evidence of massive voter fraud perpetrated by the leaders of the Albanian community in the west of the country, especially

around Tetovo and Gostivar. (Aracinovo was also a centre of irregular election practices). Even though the official OSCE observers had to recognize the problems with the polls they were downplayed in their final election report giving the impression that President Trajkovski enjoyed democratic legitimacy. In fact, because his victory was based on an unholy alliance with Albanian nationalists who might have been expected to oppose his own Macedonian nationalist party, the Internal Revolutionary Movement (VMRO), Trajkovski's election was a stepping stone on the way to the crisis of the Macedonian state.

At demonstrations held after the elections by ordinary Macedonians it was obvious that the Albanians were blamed for the fraud. Posters were held up showing those Macedonian politicians deemed to have cooperated with the Albanians in bringing about the result. The crowd was basically good-humoured but the episode undoubtedly left feelings of resentment and betrayal in the minds of ordinary Macedonians. It should be added that Trajkovski was the West's favoured candidate for the presidency and, at first, during the crisis this year received glowing testimonies from NATO and EU leaders.

Recent Events

In March 2001 ethnic Albanian guerrillas took up positions in the hills above the small Western Macedonian town of Tetovo (which, despite insistent media reports that it is Macedonia's "second city," is in fact the fifth largest town in the country). Macedonian police units responded with a desultory shelling of the houses where they believed the rebels were hiding. The following month, the same thing happened in a string of villages around the Northern Macedonian town of Kumanovo and then later in the village of Aračinovo, some 5 km from Petrovec airport near the capital Skopje. In these villages, rebels took control and declared the territories "liberated" from the Macedonian state. They cut off the water supply to the major town of Kumanovo by occupying the nearby reservoir. Police again took up positions at a safe distance from the villages, where they were the object of sporadic attacks. It is alleged that as many as 50,000 civilians have now fled into Kosovo and into other parts of Macedonia but as of now there are no refugee camps. When ethnic Macedonian policemen were killed and brutally mutilated by rebels, Macedonians from their home town, Bitola, some 180 km to the South of where the fighting was taking place, rioted and smashed the windows of houses belonging to ethnic Albanian families on 30th May and 6th June.

NATO and the European Union immediately became actors in the crisis. As soon as the first shots were fired, the media carried dire predictions of a new Balkan war. NATO used vehement language to denounce the ethnic Albanian rebels - even though the rebel army had the same acronym, UÇK, as the Kosovo Liberation Army which had been NATO's ally in the Kosovo war and whose leader, Hashim Thaçi, many Western leaders, including the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, used to be delighted to meet. The Secretary-General of NATO, George Robertson, who had been British Minister of Defence during the Kosovo war and who had become notorious for his attacks on "Milošević's murder machine" now denounced, with equal ferocity, the Albanian rebels as "a bunch of murderous thugs". Javier Solana, who had been Secretary-General of NATO during the Kosovo war and who is now EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, also denounced those who seek to use violence to pursue their political goals. However, as we shall see, Albanian activists were to show resilience in riding out these early harsh words and pressing forward until the West's spokesmen began to shift their line to pressing the Skopje government to appease them.

Both NATO and the EU also moved immediately in March to become "mediators" in the talks between ethnic Macedonian and Albanian politicians in Skopje. It was thanks to the active intervention of NATO and the EU that, in May, Macedonian politicians were more or less instructed to form a grand coalition involving all the major political parties. This demand by the international community that all Macedonian and ethnic Albanian parties be included in the governing coalition came in spite of the fact that both ethnic groups have been in the government since Macedonia became an independent state. It also served another purpose in that *all*

Macedonian political parties (including opposition parties) could now be blamed for the situation as it seemed set to worsen. There will be no political alternative if or when the current government fails.

Macedonia and Kosovo

The verbal attacks launched by NATO and the EU representatives against the Albanians sit oddly with the fact that, without exception, all the rebellions in Macedonia have broken out on the border with Kosovo and in close proximity to NATO bases or logistical centres in Tetovo, Petrovec and Kumanovo. Local police and other observers told BHHRG that the rebellions in Aračinovo and in the villages around Kumanovo were being led by local criminals who ran drug and cigarette-smuggling operations out of their cellars. This report has already referred to the killing of Macedonian police in Aracinovo in 2000. However, the geographic position of all these rebellions on the border with Kosovo, and next to important NATO bases within Macedonia, suggests that they could not have prosecuted their rebellion successfully without logistical support from their comrades in the NATO-occupied hinterland.

A Western resident in Skopje who has worked with BHHRG on many occasions testified that he had seen a truck waved through the border into Macedonia by US Kfor troops, who then observed it unloading its cargo of guns. One senior police commander in Kumanovo told BHHRG, "This insurgency could not have occurred without support from Kosovo." He added, "If there were the political will, this crisis could be resolved very easily." Certainly, common sense itself suggests that thousands of armed personnel from the most powerful military alliance the world has ever known should have been able to see off a few lightly armed 'rebels'. At least, if the will to do so was really there.

At the very least, it seems beyond doubt that the NATO occupation of Kosovo has failed to provide even elementary security on the borders of this Yugoslav province – even though there are 50% more soldiers now in Kosovo (38,000) than there were British soldiers in the similarly-sized province of Northern Ireland at the height of the troubles there in 1975 (c. 20,000). But it has also fanned suspicions among both ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians that the rebels have some form of Western support.

Not one of the Albanians whom BHHRG interviewed, whether they were politicians or civilians, lent any credence to the denunciations of the ethnic Albanian rebels by NATO or the EU. Instead, they all said that they thought that a NATO presence in Macedonia would be the solution to their problems. One ethnic Albanian politician told BHHRG quite explicitly that he and his colleagues wanted Macedonia to become "a protectorate" and that "it should be ruled by outsiders". The BBC has carried interviews with Albanian representatives making similar calls for a protectorate.

By a similar token, many ethnic Macedonian officials told BHHRG that they were convinced that Western intelligence services were implicated in stirring up the trouble in order to end their country's self-government. These suspicions seemed to be confirmed in May when a senior OSCE official, the US Balkan expert, Robert Frowick, went to Prizren in Kosovo to negotiate a deal with the Albanian rebels behind the Macedonian government's back. When the "deal" was discovered, the government in Skopje furiously distanced itself from it and there was much open speculation in Macedonia about Frowick's real employer. The effect of the affair was to allow the government to appear to distance itself from a deal which it then set about negotiating, namely an agreement by which the rebels would be disarmed and NATO troops would enter Macedonia with a mandate. One official from the Macedonian Social Democratic Party told BHHRG, "I am convinced both sides are deliberately escalating the conflict as a provocation which will encourage NATO to intervene": she blamed the nationalist Macedonian VMRO party, which has always enjoyed Western support, as much as the Albanians.

In assessing NATO's role, it is illustrative to compare the situation in Macedonia with that in the Preševo valley in Serbia, a short drive north from one of the main rebel-held areas. In the early months of this year and towards the end of 2000, an Albanian rebellion flared up in the region, although it was never very clear why since Milošević had left office by then. The same Albanian politicians who had co-operated with Serbia during the ten-year boycott of the institutions of the Yugoslav state by their compatriots across the non-existent border in Kosovo, and who had participated in all Serb and Yugoslav elections including the presidential elections on 24th September 2000, suddenly decided, with Milošević gone, to boycott the parliamentary elections in Serbia on 23rd December 2000.

NATO responded to this inexplicable rebellion by actually allowing the Yugoslav army to reoccupy the buffer-zone between Kosovo and the rest of Serbia. Lord Robertson said that he felt confident that the Yugoslav soldiers would act "considerately and with moderation" - even though this was the very same army, with the very same supreme commander, General Nebojša Pavković, which he had accused only a year previously of committing genocide in Kosovo. In other words, the suspicion must be that the rebellion was bogus in the first place and that it was got going largely to provide a pretext for the response eventually provided. That response could lead to the Yugoslav army returning to Kosovo. NATO has in the mean time opened its Yugoslav office in the capital of Kosovo, Priština, and shows no sign of granting the province full independent statehood.

If a provocation can justify an intervention in one part of the Balkans, why not in another? Could it be that the Macedonian rebellion will have the same effect? After all, there is simply no rational explanation for the Albanian rebellion in that country, which has always had an exemplary minority rights policy (see below). No sooner had it broken out, however, than NATO was warning of a new civil war and suggesting that the only solution was intervention.

Even without subscribing to such conspiracy theories, it is certainly beyond doubt that NATO's massive presence in the region (not only in Kosovo but also in Bosnia) has magnified everything out of all proportion. To this extent as well, the Alliance contributes to instability rather than stability. The level of fighting in Macedonia has been low. This explains why Western television channels have repeatedly shown the same pictures of the same houses being shelled. During BHHRG's recent visit there was little sign of violence – the odd shot or bang here or there but no sign of casualties or fear. Reports of refugees seemed grossly exaggerated. No-one in Tetovo (apart from local Slavs) knew any refugees.

The troubles in Macedonia are comparable to the cottage-burning campaign conducted by Welsh separatists in Britain in the 1970s, while the riots in Bitola are comparable to those which occurred in Oldham in England in May 2001 or in Northern Ireland in late June 2001. A senior police officer told BHHRG that the villages around Kumanovo could be re-taken in a matter of 6 to 10 hours but that this had not been done because the political imperative (dictated by NATO and the EU) was to show restraint. If it were not for the presence of tens of thousands of troops from the world's most powerful military alliance just over the hills, the Macedonian troubles would be completely ignored. The Balkans may be a tinder box but if there were not explosives next door, there would be nothing for the tinder to ignite. NATO's misguided intervention in 1999 has made Kosovo into a cancer which is contaminating the whole surrounding area.

Pipeline politics

BHHRG last visited Macedonia in October 2000. Since then work on the main highway between the capital, Skopje and the west of the country – to Tetovo and beyond, has increased dramatically. Bridges are also being constructed to facilitate road construction between Macedonia and Bulgaria to the east. The road under construction known as TRACECA (funded by international financial institutions) will link the port of Bourgas in Bulgaria to Vlore in Albania on the Black Sea. The Albanian end of this trans-European strategic highway was ceremonially

opened last week. Running parallel will be a pipeline to transport crude oil from the Black Sea terminus to Western Europe. Many large Western oil companies including Texaco, Chevron and Amoco are interested in the scheme. The source of the oil will be the still largely undeveloped fields around the Caspian and in post-Soviet Central Asia. It is usual for the Balkans to be discussed as a separate issue from the Caspian basin, but to Western strategists and oil men you cannot have one without the other. Human rights advocates would understand the politics of both regions better if they linked them to the oil and pipeline issue.

It is also the case that many political players – both from the US and Europe have oil (and infrastructure related) interests in the project. Brown and Root a subsidiary of the US company, Haliburton of which Dick Cheney was formerly head, has a factory at Kumanovo in Macedonia. UN Balkans envoy, Carl Bildt, is a director of the Swedish company Lundin Oil. On 17th March, The *Financial Times* reported “Pressure on Bildt over Sudan link.” “Mr Bildt... believes that oil could ‘contribute to peace and development’ However, the crisis in Macedonia has meant he has not had time to examine the latest information from the Sudan.”

Although Macedonia's government would be happy to play host to the pipeline – in fact, in theory, the country stands to gain financially from transportation revenues – Western interests would probably be happier to have a colonial relationship rather than dealings with a sovereign state. In which case, a plan to discredit and ultimately side-line the country's government and replace it with some kind of protectorate is not such an outlandish proposition. NATO forces frequently exercise across the Black Sea in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Central Asian states as well as in Bulgaria and around their bases in Kosovo and Bosnia. The infrastructure for imperial control under the banner of peacekeeping and human rights is rapidly developing on both sides of the Black Sea.

The Albanians in Macedonia

Feelings are running high in Macedonia in both of the two main ethnic groups. All the Albanians BHHRG spoke to expressed the view that NATO was on their side. This was despite the severe condemnations of the Albanian rebels which NATO has issued in public. One student in his final year of dentistry studies in Tetovo told BHHRG that these statements were merely for public consumption and did not reflect NATO's true orientation. The Albanians all said they wanted NATO to intervene, just as all the Macedonians BHHRG spoke to said they did not. Young Macedonians in Kumanovo interviewed by BHHRG insisted that NATO was the cause of the trouble and that Macedonians were peace-loving people who did not want war. They said that ordinary Macedonians were very angry with NATO. Citizens collecting water from a tank in central Kumanovo refused to speak to BHHRG observers saying they “did not want to speak to the BBC”. Independently of them, another young man interviewed by BHHRG on the road leading to Aračinovo said that NATO itself was the cause of the trouble, while a drunken adult man on the same occasion had to be physically removed by police from BHHRG representatives whom he was abusing because they came from NATO states. He claimed that his brother was being held hostage in the village.

One of the most obvious political effects of the NATO intervention in Kosovo has been on the mentality of ordinary Albanians and their politicians. BHHRG interviewed numerous Albanian civilians, community leaders and politicians – even an old man who guards the mosque in Tetovo: all of them expressed support for the men with guns. Students at the University of Tetovo told BHHRG representatives that they all supported the rebels but that they also supported their own (Albanian) politicians, even though the rebels had, one assumes, taken up arms because the politicians had proved ineffective in realizing the aims of the Albanian community. It is perhaps a consequence of NATO's own willingness to use force to resolve political problems in neighbouring Kosovo (by bombing Yugoslavia) which has encouraged many ordinary – even intelligent – Albanians to think that violence is the appropriate way to achieve results.

The students at the University of Tetovo were a particularly revealing example of all that is wrong with this current Albanian attitude. Both they and ordinary Albanians in the streets of that town (i.e. those not directly connected with the university) referred to the demand that the degrees of Tetovo university be recognized as one of the key issues in the conflict. Under repeated questioning from BHHRG representatives, they insisted that the men with guns were fighting for their university. Yet a moment's thought proves the absurdity of this statement. Even if the demand were legitimate, it is simply incomprehensible that it could ever be justified to fight for such a goal with guns. It is also inconceivable that the men with guns care about university degrees. It is an indication of the bizarre reasoning thrown up in this dispute that intelligent young people could not see this. It also indicates the poverty of their case as a disadvantaged minority which would surely demand something a little more serious to legitimise the taking up of arms. They also made the extraordinary allegation that the rebels were simply defending themselves against the provocations of Macedonian soldiers, whereas of course, in reality, the rebels had started to occupy villages and shoot at soldiers and police.

The publisher of one Albanian-language newspaper, *Fakti*, Emin Azemi, involuntarily expressed the extreme attitudes of some Albanians when he responded to a BHHRG representative who asked him whether his newspaper supported the rebels: "Where is the journalist who does not support his own rebels?" If an opinion-maker regards it as self-evident that an ethnic group should support men with guns who kill policemen and take innocent civilians hostage, then it is hardly surprising that ordinary Albanians follow their lead. This tolerance is especially disappointing in view of the criminal nature of the men with guns. The Albanian Mafia is notorious in Europe for drug-running, arms-smuggling and pimping: according to senior police officers in Kumanovo and to other ordinary local people in the rebel areas, the men with the guns are simply local gangsters. Police records show that crime has risen in Kumanovo, for instance, since the Kosovo crisis because of the rise in drug-related crime. However, burglaries and robberies have fallen dramatically since the recent troubles began as the perpetrators are now with the rebels fighting the Macedonian police and army.

Despite this, even Albanian politicians seemed reticent when it came to condemning violence. One of them, Hisni Shakiri, even declared in parliament that he would take up arms to fight for Albanians' rights.¹ At best, Albanian politicians seem resigned to the men with guns as a fact of political life rather than an evil to be combated; at worst, they actively support them and profit from the crisis. It is striking that NATO's attacks on the Albanian rebels have never been conjugated with a demand that the chief Albanian political leaders condemn the rebels. Such condemnations are invariably demanded of other rebel leaders in other high-profile conflicts around the world, such as in Palestine or Northern Ireland. No doubt such condemnations, when proffered, are not meant sincerely; but why has NATO now shifted (as of the week ending 23rd June) from condemnation of Albanian violence to severe condemnation of Macedonia police actions against the rebels? Why does NATO not demand even lip-service to the policy of non-violence, something which must surely be an obvious litmus test of civilized behaviour?

It was notable, indeed, that NATO dropped its attacks on the Albanian rebels and started to criticize the Macedonian authorities for not seeking a "political solution" when the Macedonian police began a sustained period of attack on the village of Aračinovo on 22nd June. As the Macedonian prime minister, Ljubco Georgevski remarked, the EU itself would not behave differently if a group of armed rebels seized a suburb of Brussels. This Western position – which delivers public statements in favour of the territorial integrity of the Macedonian state while condemning the use of force to protect it – recalls the same position taken towards old federal Yugoslavia in 1991: the West supported the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia in public but said that Belgrade should not use force to prevent Slovene and Croatian secession.

¹ Macedonian Information Agency, 29th March 2001, <http://www.mia.com.mk/ang/Tanusevci/tanusevcivest.asp?vest=\Tanusevci\COPY%20of%20MVR%20soop%20stenie0.htm>

These changes in NATO's attitude perhaps explain why Albanians always thought NATO was on their side. Indeed, Albanian politicians said quite clearly to BHHRG that they wanted the Western powers to come in and run the country instead of its elected leaders. BHHRG interviewed Dr. Azis Polozhani, Vice-President of the Democratic Party of Albanians, who had just returned from a string of visits to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, to the State Department in Washington DC and to the Foreign Office in London. "What we want is for Macedonia to be a protectorate," he told BHHRG, "run by outsiders." "We consider that Macedonia fulfils all the criteria [to become a protectorate]."

Macedonia and minority rights

The difference between the Albanians and the Macedonian government, indeed, turns on whether the state should be unitary or federal, based on citizenship or on ethnicity. (This is the substance of the demands made on behalf of the rebels by Albanian politicians; however, they are often presented to the public as if they did not imply federalism. Ordinary Albanians interviewed by BHHRG also claimed that they did not want any territorial partition of the Macedonian state, even into federal units.) Dr. Polozhani seemed to be saying that Macedonia could be both a unitary state and have positive discrimination quotas and other preferential treatment for Albanians. However, this is both a logical inconsistency and a political dead end. It suggests a constitution modelled on the Lebanese one which foundered in civil war after 1978.

For instance, the Tetovo students interviewed by BHHRG also insisted that one of their other main demands was that they be given state jobs in order to secure their pension rights. This demand contains several layers of difficulty. First, there are hardly any states in the world which operate quota systems for their various ethnic groups. Those states which have tried such policies have often abandoned them: the US state of California recently voted to abolish the positive discrimination system which liberals had set up there. It is a very widely-held view that such quota systems generate more problems than they solve. First, quotas and positive discrimination create resentment among the majority population. Second, quotas for an ethnic group – such as those used for university degrees – debase the value of a degree even when it is truly deserved. Third, group-based politics are not subtle enough to take account of the numerous ethnic groups which exist in Macedonia. The national Slav majority would become the minority in Albanian areas if the country were divided up, while in any case there are numerous other ethnic groups there. Such policies are therefore never-ending. Far better to say that all are equal before the law, regardless of ethnicity.

It is precisely for this reason that the mono cultural model has a very great deal to recommend it. Countries like France and, to a lesser extent, Britain and the USA, which are explicitly citizenship-based, have generally achieved a fairer model of integration. Even in prosperous Western countries, the principle is accepted that there is a state language in which all official business must be conducted: in France, you cannot vote or address a court room in Arabic, for instance. In France, indeed, the widespread imposition of the French language in the 19th century was precisely encouraged as an egalitarian measure designed to liberate and emancipate French people into citizens.

Further, it is not clear why a job in a state office – the Post Office, say, or running the local drains – is necessarily the road to advancement. It is very difficult to see why young dentistry students, whose incomes and social status from dentistry will presumably be comfortable, should regard a job for life in a bureaucracy as a legitimate goal. It is certainly inadmissible that violence should be used to fight for such an aim.

These demands by the Albanians are even more bizarre in view of the extraordinary lengths to which the Macedonian state has gone to ensure that cultural rights are protected for minorities. There are 4 – 5 hours of Albanian language TV per day on state television, as well as broadcasts in other minority languages like Vlach. Indeed, a BHHRG report authored in 1994 by the eminent historian of the Balkans, Dr. Noel Malcolm - who can hardly be accused of hostility to

the Albanian cause - stressed the highly satisfactory level of minority rights protection in Macedonia. Moreover, although under the present arrangements, the Albanians get preferential treatment as the largest and most vociferous minority, other minorities such as Serbs and Gypsies do not get the same preferential treatment. Neighbouring Kosovo, where Serbs and Gypsies were brutally ethnically cleansed by the Albanians, shows how little the armed Albanian guerrillas there really cared for anyone's rights except their own.

In other words, the demands of the Albanian rebels simply do not make sense in the terms in which they are presented. The strong suspicion, therefore, must be that there is an ulterior motive and that this motive is close to the one set out to BHHRG by Dr. Polozhani, namely that of making Macedonia into a Western protectorate.

Intervention and democracy

No doubt NATO and the EU have their own reasons for desiring such an outcome. It will certainly not be the first time that Macedonia has been placed under foreign administration and it is a well-known phenomenon of history that one intervention leads to another. According to the ineluctable logic of empire, stabilizing one region required the neighbouring region to be stabilised as well. Interventionism is an escalator from which it is very difficult to get off.

It is also not impossible, if Macedonia were to become the third Balkan country in which Western forces intervene, that the European Union might have a go at administering it. The EU is determined to make a success of its "European army," the very *raison d'être* of which is to engage in peace-keeping interventions when NATO decides not to do so. The EU, like many international organizations, often undertakes new missions for self-referential reasons such as giving itself more powers. Although there have been no suggestions so far that the EU might indeed take on this task, it has been noteworthy that the EU's special envoy, Javier Solana, has taken a key and high-profile role at every stage of the crisis.

It seems that a specially EU-administered protectorate is on the cards with the appointment (on 25th June) of former French Minister of Defence, Francois Leotard as "resident" EU representative in Skopje. It is worth noting that this appointment has been accompanied by EU bullying of a familiar but still distasteful variety. Commissioner Chris Patten warned the Macedonians to 'do as they were told' or risk losing their recently acquired EU aid package.

Dr. Polozhani's remark emphasizes the truly colonial nature of the Albanians' demands. He insisted repeatedly and explicitly to BHHRG that he and the other Albanian parties wanted the Western powers to come in and administer Macedonia because he felt that the elected politicians were themselves incapable of resolving the crisis. No doubt President Trajkovski, a lowly Foreign Ministry official and American-trained Protestant pastor fished out of obscurity to become president, has his failings. No doubt it seems odd that the government led by Georgevski should have enjoyed such unconditional Western support despite the fact that it is composed of a radical nationalist party with a past history of terrorism (against the Ottoman and Yugoslav states). On the other hand, many people in many countries can rightly conclude that their elected leaders are inadequate. The democratic solution, however, is to elect new ones, not to invite a foreign power to come in and administer the country instead.

The demand that Macedonia become a Western protectorate chimes in with another anti-democratic demand which the Albanians have made. They have asked for a "Council for Inter-ethnic relations" to be formed which would have the power of veto over parliamentary decisions. The idea is that seven members would be Macedonians, seven Albanians and a certain number representing the other nationalities. As Dr. Polozhani confirmed, this is little other than a blatant attempt to subvert the rule of the majority, i.e. the democratic process. Although the Albanians regard this as the solution to what they call the misuse of majority rule, it is obvious that subjecting the will of the Macedonian parliament to the say-so of a QUANGO (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization) would simply suspend democratic rule in that country and

immediately lead to equal and opposite resentment by the ethnic Slav Macedonian majority. All the Slav Macedonians BHHRG interviewed expressed the view very firmly that Albanian rights are already adequately protected in Macedonia and that the terrorists should therefore be crushed.

Conclusion

The West is indeed trapped by its own expansionist logic. It looks to the Balkans and sees only instability, as if it were not itself a factor in creating that instability. This blind spot is becoming increasingly dangerous for the peace and prosperity of the region: as BHHRG's other reports have shown, for instance on Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo & Metohija the effect of Western control has been the active encouragement of a culture of illegality and impunity for those its favours in the provinces it administers. Sadly for all the Western rhetoric about promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the evidence on the ground suggests that the contrary is happening. Far from being the solution to Balkan quarrels the intervention of the West looks increasingly like one of their causes. The influence of the West in the Balkans has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished.