

Kosova: one year after NATO's victory

Fri, 12/05/2000 - 17:06

It is now one year since NATO bombed Yugoslavia in an alleged attempt to save Kosova from ethnic cleansing. As talk of partition persists, violence escalates and the UN presides over chaotic conditions, many Kosovars may justifiably ask just what they were saved from.

Australia has dispatched Kosovan refugees homeward on the comfortable assumption that all is now well, the war is over, and reconstruction is under way.

Not only is this an inadequate excuse for deportation, it is also false.

Throughout Kosova there is a lack of basic amenities such as drinking water and shelter. Food rations consist of flour, oil and sugar. Thanks to the bombing and the ruthless ethnic cleansing of Milosevic's paramilitaries, almost no services or amenities remain intact.

Reports consistently indicate that reconstruction is being hampered by corruption and feather-bedding at every level of the UN administration. As usual in such operations, more is spent on inflated salaries and perks than on those who are in need of help.

Worse yet, violence is endemic and getting worse. On April 18 a KLA general in charge of the new quasi-police force was killed by gunmen just 50 metres from the UN headquarters. All over Kosova gangs and ex-KLA factions are engaged in black marketeering, profiteering and standover tactics. On the ethnic boundary violence and revenge attacks remain a daily occurrence.

At the city of Monrovia grenade and automatic weapons attacks have been initiated on both sides. UN troops rush back and forth arresting victims and aggressors alike.

Partition Kosovapress, the propaganda arm of the KLA, quoting Deutsche Welle (a German media agency), reports that the Bundestag, the German parliament, is engaged in a debate over the future of Kosova. The KLA report that at least one parliamentary faction is intent on ending the "peace keeping" mission by partitioning Kosova into a Serb and an Albanian part.

While the report comes from a partisan source, it is entirely credible. Partition is a key tactic of imperialism when faced with instability in its colonies and neo-colonies. The technique was developed by the British in dividing and ruling the sub-continent after Indian independence.

They perfected the method in Ireland after the war of independence.

Lately the US and NATO used it to settle the instability caused by the wars of succession in Yugoslavia, by creating two pseudo-states within Bosnia. One is a so-called Serb republic, the other a Croatian-Muslim entity.

Given that Serbian operations in Kosova seemed to concentrate on securing the so-called "horseshoe"

enclave bordering the rest of Serbia, partition is both possible and potentially effective.

Once it occurs both sides may settle for it for the foreseeable future.

This must not be allowed to happen.

Beyond nationalism The KLA itself admits that the ethnic Albanian Kosovars have engaged in revenge attacks and ethnic cleansing since they followed NATO back into Kosova. Serbs are being kidnapped and killed, and evicted from their houses. In towns like Mitrovica the ethnic divide is like a scar running across the land-scape.

The UN is busy keeping the sides apart, even while it attempts to ensure a continuing Serb presence in parts of Kosova.

If this ethnic divide is entrenched in Kosova it will ramify the tragedy by making permanent the losses and enmities of both sides. It will also play into hands of the imperialists who are seeking to divide the people of the Balkans all the better to ensure that the whole region remains a plaything for foreign powers. Only Balkan unity can ensure genuine peace and real freedom.

We have already seen what occurs when partition is touted as a solution.

In Bosnia ethnic and nationalist demagogues have a virtual stranglehold on local politics. As a result UN troops remain in place. The whole country is under military occupation and has been for years.

The people of the region are robbed of any chance at normalcy and will be pre-vented from forming any institutions that conflict with the interests of the imperialist powers that have armed forces literally on their doorsteps.

That is why we must support the reintegration of the ethnic communities of Kosova as a part of their self-determination.

Serbs as well as Albanians in Kosova must see that unity is their only path to freedom - both from the oppression of Milosevic's crumbling regime, and from imperialist intervention. Serbs must collaborate in an independent Kosova if this is the will of the majority.

This is also why Australians must fight for the right of Kosovar refugees to stay in Australia. Many of those forced to return come from the Presevo valley which remains in Serbia proper. By sending these people to Kosova, where they have never lived, we are collaborating in the process of partition by assuming that all Albanians can and should live in the imperialist-created ethnically Albanian zone.

We must fight the partition of Kosova, must fight for the right of all persons to return to their homes, and must support all moves for unity in the Balkans. We can do this both by fighting the murder-ously nationalist Milosevic regime in Yugoslavia, and by insisting that the UN and NATO withdraw from Kosova and the Balkans entirely.

We stated during the bombing that NATO intervention spelled disaster for the Kosovar people and all the people of the region. We were right. The threat that Kosova will become an armed imperialist camp has been realised. Partition will serve to make this camp permanent.

Nobody - Serb or Albanian -will be able to practice self-determination while these forces remain in place.

Instead, all progressive people must accept the right of self determination for Kosova and commit to fighting imperialism and the imposition of the post-Stalinist "solution" that has made life a living hell in neighbouring countries like Albania. Only unity and a recognition that imperialism will never bring lasting peace, can save the Balkans from a grim future.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/kosova-one-year-after-natos-victory>