

Nato's "messy peace" in Kosova

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What has been the outcome of the war in Kosova? The bosses' magazine, The Economist, euphemistically calls it a "messy peace".

Hundreds of thousands of refugees returning to homes which have burnt to the ground; people searching for fathers and sons in mass graves, gypsies being beaten and dragged from their homes; 70,000 Serb civilians fleeing to Serbia; the numbers of dead can still only be estimated as each day reveals more bodies, more mass graves to be investigated - some say 50,000, others say 100,000.

It was a bloody war, a vicious war, a tragic war - and the peace seems likely to offer the Balkan people more of the same.

The war ended with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 on the 10 June 1999. Kosova has become a United Nations (UN) protectorate. The towns and villages of Kosova will be patrolled by 55,000 Nato troops. The Kosovar Albanians were cheering as these troops arrived, but the soldiers do not bring independence. And the killing continues. This is not a messy peace, it is a reactionary peace.

The Security Council Resolution is deliberately vague about the future of Kosova. There is no time limit on the protectorate but everyone involved says it will last for many years. They have only to cite the experience in Bosnia where UN troops were sent in for two years in 1995 and where they remain to this day.

What will the peace mean for the people of Kosova? They have been able to return to their homes and are being promised aid to help them rebuild. ?1.5 billion is being sent by the European Union alone. But there is a price to pay. The troops which oversaw the withdrawal of Serb soldiers are the same troops that will disarm the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA). The early signs are that those who resist will be shot. Two ethnic Albanians were shot dead by British soldiers in the first days of July following a victory party at which they were firing into the air.

KLA leader Hashim Thaci has signed a deal with KFor to disband the KLA within 90 days. The KLA are being told to hand over their weapons with no promise of independence for Kosova now or at any point in the future.

For other ethnic minorities in Kosova, the Nato victory has meant terror. Revenge attacks are being carried out by Kosova Albanians as Nato troops stand by. These troops claim they are there to protect everyone, but in reality all the protection they can really give is an escort out of the area as a new group of refugees is created.

And what of the Serbs? Milosevic has been keen to portray the withdrawal from Kosova as a victory. He is able to point to the fact that the two clauses of the Rambouillet agreement that he refused to accept: the right of Nato troops to be stationed in Serbia and a referendum on independence for Kosova - are not

included in the UN peace deal. But the military defeat is clear to Serb soldiers and Kosovan Serb refugees. Milosevic has lost any authority over Kosova for now.

The economic consequences of the war remain to be seen. Current reports suggest that Nato decimation of the Serb army was a figment of Jamie Shea's imagination and most of their heavy weaponry remains intact. The bombing of factories, hospitals and bridges, however, was real enough and has put a huge strain upon the already chronically weak Serb economy. Currently one third of Yugoslavians are unemployed.

Opposition to Milosevic, however, remains weak and divided. On 22 June, the smaller opposition parties formed the Alliance for Change, but Vuk Draskovic, leader of the main opposition, the Serbian Renewal Party, refused to join. There have been demonstrations against Milosevic in towns such as Cacak where the opposition already controls the administration and 10,000 took to the streets. However, in Belgrade Milosevic's security police continue to hold a firm grip on power. Significantly, the Serbian Orthodox Church, with an eye to the future, has come out strongly against Milosevic. Milosevic, even with tight control over the media, may only record 20% in the opinion polls, but that represents his bedrock support and is far more solid than the support his opponents can call upon.

Internationally, the peace deal will have far reaching consequences. Not surprisingly, Nato are claiming total victory. Certainly imperialism's place in the Balkans has been confirmed and consolidated. No doubt US and European companies will be lining up to see who can make a profit out of the aftermath of the war. Aid packages, so far being denied to Serbia, will not come without strings and foreign capital will no doubt want to dismantle what is left of the old "planned economy" of Yugoslavia.

But there are problems for imperialism. Milosevic remains in power and there seems to be little that the West can do to remove him in the short term. The war gave him the opportunity to attack those on the left who refused to support his ultra-nationalism in Kosova. The right wing opposition supported the war and whilst they can criticise Milosevic for losing, they are as divided as ever.

Instability in Serbia is likely to continue and with Montenegro currently looking for its own independence from Yugoslavia, the fuse on the Balkan powder keg is still smouldering.

The war has had a serious impact upon relations with both Russia and China. Many pro-Western politicians in Russia such as Anatoly Chubais were shocked at the shift in public opinion caused by the war. The vast majority of Russians opposed the bombing and supported Serbia. This has led to a strengthening of the right wing in the Russian parliament. It has also undermined those too closely identified with the West and economic reforms. Thus the momentum to create a stable capitalist economy in Russia has been severely weakened.

Relations between the imperialist powers have also been damaged by the war. The divisions were clearly visible within a few weeks of the bombing campaign beginning. The cost of the war was high. The US estimates it spent \$4 billion on the bombing campaign and is already demanding that the EU should take responsibility for funding reconstruction.

What is the future for Kosova? Are the victims of Milosevic's pogroms doomed to see their country taken over by foreign corporations and a small local elite of exploiters? Certainly that is a very real danger but, in the dislocation and uncertainty of the aftermath of war it is not an inevitability.

A clear break with imperialism is necessary. The lessons of Bosnia must be learnt quickly. A UN protectorate brings you only a protection racket. "Give us your factories and your labour and we will protect

you, if you don't - we'll shoot you".

But neither should workers put their trust in the KLA or the bourgeois nationalists of the Democratic League of Kosova who are already falling over themselves to win favour with the imperialist forces.(see box). KLA fighters and workers in Kosova should refuse to disarm. There is undoubtedly a need for armed force to keep the peace but not for a foreign one. An armed workers' militia should be formed.

The investigation of war crimes, plans for reconstruction, aid to the dispossessed and protection of all citizens rights all require a new public administration, but this should be under the control of the Kosovars themselves. Councils of workers' and peasants' deputies should be elected. Against Nato or UN attempts to impose a tame civil administration, workers should demand and organise a constituent assembly.

Already, KLA leaders are moving in to establish themselves in government posts. These people are not elected and are not accountable to anyone. They will use these positions to ensure that the state is controlled by the bosses, not the Kosovan workers and peasants.

Rebuilding will require a massive programme of public works, this must be organised under workers' control. Aid money from the West and the money being held by the LDK should be allocated according to democratically decided priorities. Land should be given over to the peasants.

While Kosova is under the "protection" of Nato, there will be no peace in Kosova and across the Balkans. Only a revolutionary solution - culminating in a voluntary socialist federation of the Balkans - can bring lasting peace and protection from imperialism to the workers of the region.

Where is the KLA going?

Hours after the Serb Army left Kosova, the leader of the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA), Hashim Thaci, signed an agreement with the commanders of KFor to disband the KLA within 90 days. No commitment to independence for Kosova was on the table. The KLA had been allowed no role in the negotiations for peace.

The betrayal of the national aspirations of the ethnic Albanian Kosovars was swift and decisive. For anyone who believed that the bourgeois nationalist leaders of the KLA would bring independence for Kosova, it is a clear lesson.

Under the terms of the agreement, the KLA agreed to an immediate ceasefire, to no more check points, no mining and to hand over "prohibited" weapons within 30 days. KFor have made it clear that they will impose the agreement by force. Ironically, the commander of KFor told the press that the Kosovars had to understand that he would not allow any guns on the streets, and there he was surrounded by his own heavily armed troops waving their guns about.

During the war, when ethnic Albanians were being driven from their homes and the KLA was the only force on the ground to protect them from ethnic cleansing, it was correct for revolutionary socialists to critically support the KLA. But that support was tied to their role in the war, not to the politics which lie behind the KLA. Now that the war is over, the role of the KLA has changed. It is now working alongside Nato to impose a reactionary peace settlement. We do not support this settlement and we do not support any parties that subscribe to it. The central task now is to split the KLA's mass base from the leadership and win it to a revolutionary socialist programme.

The KLA leaders are happy to work with Nato. They believe that they are in a strong position to form the new political leadership of the Nato protectorate. Thaci has set up a provisional government in Pristina. This is a direct challenge to the authority of the government in exile led by Bujar Bokoshi in Bonn. This

"Government of the Republic of Kosova" is dominated by the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK) led by Ibrahim Rugova. The LDK were the largest political force representing the Kosovar Albanians prior to the war. The KLA leadership realise that they have to rapidly establish a political organisation capable of challenging the LDK.

The KLA will also have to fight to win the confidence of the West. Prior to the war the KLA were suspected of having links with drug trafficking. Rugova's passive resistance to Serb aggression was preferable to the guerrilla tactics of the KLA. The West also dislike the KLA links with the socialist led administration in Albania. The LDK, on the other hand, are supported by the right wing former Albanian leader, Sali Berisha.

In their struggle for power, the KLA have the advantage of their record during the war and the fact that they are actually in Kosova now. Early reports are that KLA leaders are taking off their uniforms and reappearing the next day in suits in government or council offices.

Of course, it is likely that some KLA members will resist disarming. No one is sure of the exact number of fighters involved in the KLA. But what is clear is that the make up of the KLA has changed radically during the war.

It is estimated that the KLA has 10,000 organised troops and 30,000 irregulars. Political opposition to the disarmament and the disbanding of the KLA could emerge to challenge the Thaci leadership from these ranks. The masses of Kosova should foment such opposition by demanding that the KLA fighters put their arms at the disposal of an a workers' and poor peasant militia, not hand them over to Nato.

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