

Jens Reuter

Kosovo 1998

The International Community and the Kosovo Problem 1991-1997

The Kosovo problem is a classic example of a territorial conflict in which claims based on history and those founded in ethnic considerations collide. The Serbs stress their history and never tire of pointing out that in the Middle Ages Kosovo was the cradle of their culture and their church as well as the political centre of their empire. They describe Kosovo as the "Serbian Jerusalem" in order to express their strong emotional ties to this territory.

The Kosovo Albanians counter with the argument that they are the descendants of the ancient Illyrians and, hence, the original inhabitants of this region. What is of critical importance for the defence of their claims, however, is that the ethnic facts are on their side. No less than 90 per cent of the 2.15 million inhabitants of Kosovo are Albanians. Compared with that, the 180,000 Serbs who still live there are a group of modest size.

The international community - the European Union and the United States - failed to put the Kosovo problem on the agenda when the time was ripe for that action. At the Yugoslavia conferences, starting in The Hague in 1991 and ending in 1995 in Dayton, the Kosovo problem was swept under the carpet. The international community imperiously ignored the fact that Yugoslavia, according to the valid federal constitution of 1974, was constituted not by six but by eight units. The two autonomous provinces - Kosovo and Vojvodina - had, *de facto*, the same status as the six republics. Like them, they had a veto right against legislation and, like them, they assumed in the regular rotation the offices of State President of Yugoslavia and of party leader at the federal level. The European Community's arbitration commission, under the chairmanship of Robert Badinter, did not recognize the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina as sovereign parts of the Federation and as a consequence did not grant them the right to create states of their own.

At the end of the eighties Slobodan Milošević withdrew Kosovo's autonomy. In a breach of the Yugoslav constitution, the province was *de facto* degraded to a part of Serbia without rights and the Albanian population subjected to brutal repression. The European Community and the United States tacitly accepted this *coup d'état* by treating Kosovo as a part of Serbia not capable of independent action on the international stage. At the beginning of 1992 Western diplomats - off the record - justified this position by arguing that it would be necessary to impose substantial sacrifices on the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and for that reason one could not demand that they relinquish

Kosovo as well. There were rumours at the time that the West had explicitly concluded a deal with Milošević on this matter - that, in return for the Serbian President's agreement that Blue Helmets could be stationed in Krajina, the Kosovo problem would not be put on the international agenda.

Thus the Kosovo issue was not internationalized and was not treated as a problem of self-determination of peoples, even though there were good reasons to do so. The German international law expert, Theodor Schweissfurth, says that if a people are denied elementary human and minority rights for a substantial period of time in a given country they should be given the right of secession. But the international community was not prepared to concede to the Kosovo-Albanians a right that they had willingly given to the Slovenes and the Croatians - i.e. to separate themselves from Yugoslavia.

In 1991 the unofficial parliament of the Kosovo-Albanians proclaimed the independent state of Kosovo. This "Republic of Kosovo" was thereupon recognized by the parliament in Tirana although, prudently, not by the Albanian Foreign Ministry. All other countries in the world ignored the "Republic of Kosovo", as it called itself. The international community could not at the time recognize an independent state of Kosovo without risking an expansion of the bloody war in Yugoslavia. The European Community, from that point on, spoke of the "legitimate desire of the inhabitants of Kosovo for autonomy". And for the first time those concepts came into currency within the Community which still today characterize the EU's approach to a solution: "dialogue" and "confidence-building measures". The weakness of this approach lay and still lies in the fact that the Kosovars are supposed to enter into dialogue with a political figure who violently withdrew their autonomy in 1989 and who bears personal responsibility for the recent massacres. At most, it might have been possible to think in terms of confidence-building measures if the Serbian opposition had succeeded towards the end of 1996 in overthrowing Milošević. Today it sounds like an anachronism to call for them.

In its Declaration of Lisbon (June 1992) the European Council reminded "the inhabitants of Kosovo that their legitimate quest for autonomy should be dealt with within the framework of the Conference on Yugoslavia". The Declaration of Edinburgh (December 1992) demanded that "the autonomy of Kosovo within Serbia must be restored".¹

In the period that followed, the European Union's efforts were directed towards preventing violence and the outbreak of hostilities in Kosovo. The policy of non-violence proclaimed by Ibrahim Rugova and the Albanian shadow state set up under his leadership received moral support everywhere in the Western world. Rugova should not, however, be described (as hap-

¹ Quoted from Stefan Troebst, *Conflict in Kosovo: Failure of Prevention?* (ECMI Working Paper 1), Flensburg 1998, pp. 48/ and 49.

pened often in the Western press) as the "Gandhi of the Balkans". In 1991 he told this writer: "We are not pacifists. We simply don't have enough weapons and for that reason cannot rely on violence."

The policy of the unofficial President of the Kosovars was very convenient for the West because for seven years it kept things quiet in a region that had again and again been described as a potential source of war. During this time Rugova tried persistently to internationalize the Kosovo problem. But his visits to the most important EU countries produced no tangible results. Everywhere he met with understanding and a co-operative spirit but his core requirements remained unfulfilled. There was no international Kosovo conference.

The idea of a UN protectorate for Kosovo was never even entertained. The notion of an independent state of Kosovo was rejected, at first in moderate tones and later brusquely. Rugova's hopes were gradually destroyed. "Kosovo - Dayton's stepchild" was the way journalists described the fact that the last and most important Yugoslavia conference did not mention the Kosovo problem with a single syllable.

The countries of the European Union proved unable to develop a common strategy and policy with respect to Kosovo. After the Dayton conference it was agreed in Brussels, at first, that normalization of relations with Belgrade should be made dependent on substantial improvements in the human rights situation in Kosovo.

In February 1996 France pushed rapidly ahead with the recognition of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, probably because it had promised this step in secret negotiations with Belgrade that had been conducted in 1995 to obtain the release of two French bomber pilots. The United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy and Germany soon followed the French example. Once again the EU had proved incapable of co-ordinating its policy towards Belgrade and of making the move to recognition jointly and under certain conditions. It was of little help that the European Parliament, referring to the continuing violations of human rights in Kosovo, criticized the EU members that had been the first to recognize Belgrade.²

At the end of October 1995 and in April 1996 the European Council appealed to Belgrade to grant Kosovo "a large degree of autonomy" and expressed its "concern" about the human and minority rights situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.³ The European Union wanted no change in the *territorial* status quo in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and once again proclaimed the old ideas of "dialogue" and "confidence-building measures". In doing so it risked falling into a trap of its own making. Once it had been accepted that Kosovo was a part of Serbia or Yugoslavia the Kosovo

2 Cf. Fabian Schmidt, Supporting the Status quo, in: War Report, May 1996, p. 32.

3 Quoted from Troebst, cited above (Note 1), p. 49.

problem appeared to become an internal affair of Belgrade's. If now the objective was to internationalize this problem as, for example, the German-French initiative of autumn 1997 attempted to do, then there would have to be a declaration in advance that only an improvement of the status quo with regard to autonomy, human rights and minority rights was being sought, excluding *a priori* any option for an independent state of Kosovo. The Serbian leadership perceived statements of this kind as a sign of weakness. For if the EU accepts Kosovo's belonging to Serbia as right and final, its demands for substantial improvements in the region could be rejected as "intervention in the internal affairs of Belgrade". Milan Milutinovic, who was then the Yugoslav Foreign Minister and is today the President of Serbia, rejected the German-French initiative of autumn 1997, saying that foreign mediators would be tantamount to intervention and could not be accepted. After all, Belgrade was not writing any letters to Paris on the situation in Corsica.

When the German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, and his French colleague, Hubert Védrine, repeatedly called for dialogue and compromise between the parties in Kosovo, they failed to take one fundamental problem into account: the positions of the adversaries are diametrically opposed. No compromise is possible. Theoretically, the Albanians might be satisfied with a very high level of autonomy within the Serbian state and the Serbians might with great effort bring themselves to grant it. However, that is not a practical possibility because autonomy is worth nothing in Albanian eyes as long as the Serbian army and police are subjecting the province to a kind of occupation regime. And the leadership in Belgrade, for their part, will never voluntarily withdraw their security forces from Kosovo because they would see this as an invitation to the Albanians to secede.

Unlike the EU countries, the United States has not given diplomatic recognition to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. There is no US Embassy in Belgrade and when Washington calls the unloved state by name it always speaks of "Serbia and Montenegro". Moreover, the United States has given vigorous support to Rugova's non-violent policy. He has been a relatively frequent guest in Washington, where he has always enjoyed recognition and encouragement. But on the decisive point - the question of an independent state of Kosovo - opinions differ. It was owing to Kosovo that Washington, with the help of the UN Security Council, set up the so-called "outer wall" around the new Yugoslavia, cutting it off from international capital markets. Because of Kosovo and the "ethnic cleansing" that was threatening there President George Bush sent a confidential message to Milošević at Christmas time 1992. He threatened unilateral US air strikes against strategic targets in Serbia if Serbia attacked Kosovo with military force. This warning was repeated by President Bill Clinton on 10 February 1993. At the beginning of March 1998, Washington's special representative, Robert Gelbard, declared that

US policy had not changed and that President Milošević had been given appropriate warnings. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said shortly afterwards that one would not look on idly while the Serbian authorities in Kosovo do there what they can no longer afford to do in Bosnia.⁴

Despite these clear words American policy towards Kosovo has remained ambivalent. Washington has stated that an independent state of Kosovo would be inconsistent with American policy towards the Balkans and has characterized the Albanian Liberation Army (UCK), in the style of Belgrade, as "terrorists". The people in the State Department were obviously convinced that the Kosovo conflict first had to be contained, i.e. that it was important to prevent any spilling over into the neighbouring countries of Macedonia and Albania. After that, calm and stability could be re-established by a fair compromise between the adversaries.

The OSCE and the Kosovo Problem

In early summer of 1991, at the beginning of the war in Yugoslavia, the then CSCE had been playing a role for only a relatively short time. A war that had already broken out was too much for it, in both technical and organizational terms; and so it asked twelve of its participating States - the members of the EC - to handle the task of crisis management and withdrew itself into the background. But in the autumn of 1995 - by this time restructured as the OSCE - it returned to the Yugoslav stage where it was meant to play an important role in the peace-building process in Bosnia.

In Kosovo, where it was still a matter of conflict prevention, there was no withdrawal at the beginning of the nineties and no interruption of the CSCE's activity there. The CSCE issued a strong criticism of Serbia's Kosovo policy in July 1991 on the occasion of an experts' conference in Geneva dealing with minority issues. In May 1992 the CSCE sent its first fact-finding mission to Kosovo. In the same year the CSCE's Long-term Mission to Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina was established. Between September 1992 and July 1993 the CSCE monitored the human rights situation in Kosovo with the aid of an observer team that maintained offices in Priština, Pec and Prizren. This team was a part of the Long-term Mission. The Mission had the following responsibilities:

1. to promote dialogue between the authorities and representatives of the local population;
2. to collect information on all kinds of human rights violations and contribute to a possible solution of the problem;

4 Cf. The New York Times of 8 March 1998.

3. to make informational material available as needed for the legislation process in the fields of human rights, protection of minorities, independent media and democratic elections.⁵

Permission for the establishment of the CSCE Long-term Mission was given by the then Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Milan Panic, an American businessman of Serbian origin. He wanted to put relations with the Kosovars on a new basis and promised them autonomy, free elections and the restoration of research and teaching in the Albanian language at the University of Priština. But Panic lost his office shortly afterwards, in December 1992, so that he was unable to carry out his plans.

Once the war in Bosnia had broken out, in February 1992, and Belgrade's role in that war had become clear, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's CSCE participation was suspended - as a kind of punishment. This understandable but rather unfortunate decision gave President Milošević a pretext to put an end to the Long-term Mission of the CSCE. The Mission had to leave Yugoslavia at the end of July 1993; its unconditional reestablishment was called for at all OSCE Summit Meetings between 1993 and 1996.

In 1997 the former Netherlands Foreign Minister, Max van der Stoel, was appointed as Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE for Kosovo. He was to examine the possibilities for reducing tensions and creating a constructive dialogue in Kosovo. His options were limited, however, because he received no permission to visit Kosovo. Moreover, the Kosovars themselves had reservations about van der Stoel because he is the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The Albanians do not want under any circumstances to be treated as a minority as they constitute the overwhelming majority of the population in Kosovo.⁶

In January of 1998 there was a meeting in Warsaw of the OSCE Troika of Ministers under the leadership of the new Polish Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek. It was decided to send the Polish, Danish and Norwegian Ambassadors in Belgrade on a fact-finding mission to Priština. Upon their arrival there the diplomats were not received by the representatives of Serbia. Finally, in February, van der Stoel received a visa for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia so that he was able to carry on conversations in Priština with Rugova and other leading Albanian politicians. On 2 March 1998 the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Geremek, issued a press statement saying that he was deeply shocked and disturbed by the armed clashes in Kosovo. He called upon all sides to refrain from any further acts of violence and to enter into a meaningful dialogue.⁷ Surprisingly, it was not

5 Cf. Report of the International Crisis Group Kosovo of 24 March 1998, p. 46.

6 Cf. Troebst, cited above (Note 1), p. 30.

7 Cf. OSCE Press Release 15/1998.

Max van der Stoep but the former Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe González, who shortly afterwards was named as the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with a mandate which expressly included Kosovo. This decision was clearly made in co-ordination with the Contact Group and the European Union which, for its part, provided González with a mandate as mediator in the Kosovo conflict.⁸

At this point a diplomatic tug-of-war began over the mission of Felipe González. President Milošević was only willing to accept the González mission if his mandate was confined to the normalization of relations between the OSCE and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At the same time Belgrade made clear that any reestablishment of the long-term missions would only be possible when Yugoslavia was again able to participate fully in the OSCE.⁹

There seemed to be a ray of hope when Serbian and Albanian members of the "3+3 Commission" on 23 March 1998 signed an accord on implementation of the education agreement in Priština and, a week later, the Institute for Albanian Studies opened its doors. In a report to the Contact Group the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE called this a "positive step forward" but at the same time warned that there was a long way to go towards full implementation of the agreement.¹⁰

The referendum that President Milošević held in Serbia on 23 April 1998 was perceived as an affront to the OSCE and to all mediation efforts at other levels. With a great outpouring of propaganda, 95 per cent of the population were persuaded to vote against the involvement of international mediators in settling the Kosovo conflict. It sounded like mockery when the Yugoslav Foreign Minister invited the OSCE to monitor this pseudo-referendum. The OSCE rejected the "invitation" with the observation that it was mere rhetoric, not a serious effort to improve the situation.¹¹

On 23 June 1998 Geremek spoke out in favour of immediate negotiations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its participation in the OSCE. That, he said, would be the only possibility for carrying out OSCE missions in Kosovo. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office asked Felipe González to evaluate the democratization process in Yugoslavia with a view to restoration of its OSCE participation. At the same time he emphasized that the OSCE was prepared at any time to despatch a delegation to mediate between the parties to the conflict in Kosovo.¹² At the beginning of July the OSCE accepted an offer by Belgrade to send only for a limited period of time a fact-

8 Cf. Troebst, cited above (Note 1), pp. 30f.

9 Cf. Report of the OSCE Troika Pursuant to the Contact Group Statement on Kosovo of 25 March 1998.

10 OSCE Newsletter 4/1998, p. 2.

11 Cf. Information of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office of 23 April 1998.

12 Cf. Süddeutsche Zeitung of 25 June 1998.

finding mission which would also have access to the province of Kosovo. The OSCE spokeswoman, Melissa Fleming, stated in Vienna that the offer had been made by the Yugoslav deputy Foreign Minister, Branko Brankovic, during negotiations in Belgrade and that it had been taken as a gesture of good will, especially because it might ease the way for the mediation efforts of Felipe González.¹³

When violent clashes started in Kosovo in early 1998 the OSCE was in an unfortunate situation because it was not officially allowed to be represented in the disturbed province. It tried to compensate for this weakness by sending to Kosovo diplomats of OSCE participating States who were accredited in Belgrade. At the same time it made use of the border monitors it had sent to neighbouring Albania and Macedonia and who are now providing valuable information on developments in Kosovo. In addition, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office presented in March an action plan calling on the Yugoslav authorities to reduce the police presence in Kosovo and demanding of both parties to the conflict that they abandon violence and prepare for a dialogue. The OSCE pointed out that the Kosovo problem was not exclusively an internal affair of Yugoslavia's, because it involved human rights and the security of the whole region.¹⁴ As the OSCE itself has admitted, its fundamental requirements were not met. The necessary dialogue did not come about and there was no solution of the crisis in sight.

Just as in the Yugoslavia war at an earlier time, it has become apparent in Kosovo that the OSCE's options for action once violence has broken out are severely limited. In Kosovo the OSCE never even had a chance for conflict prevention as it had been denied a local presence. Still, it used all opportunities available to it to warn, at least, of the threatening dangers. The only possibility of conflict prevention did not, in any event, lie in the hands of the OSCE. It would have involved honouring Rugova's seven years of non-violent policy with visible successes, thus taking the wind out of the sails of the apostles of violence.

The UCK and the Guerrilla War in Kosovo

The Kosovo Liberation Army, UCK (*Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosoves*), is a union of various underground organizations. All of these organizations were involved in the effort, ultimately frustrated by the Serbian authorities, to provide a kind of army for the Albanian shadow state in Kosovo at the beginning of the nineties. Scattered sections of these shattered organizations appear to have joined together in 1993. Since autumn 1997 the liberation army

13 Cf. Süddeutsche Zeitung of 11/12 July 1998.

14 Cf. Neue Zürcher Zeitung of 12 March 1998.

has attracted attention by attacks on Serbian police stations and barracks but also by assassination attempts against presumed Albanian collaborators. More than forty communiqués issued by the UCK have served the purpose of claiming responsibility for such actions and have also named the goals of the organization: liberation from Serbian rule by military means and the establishment of an independent state of Kosovo.

At first, the political leadership of the Kosovars grouped around Ibrahim Rugova firmly denied the existence of the UCK or claimed that the so-called liberation army was a marionette in the hands of the Serbian secret service. After more than fifty Serbian policemen and a number of "collaborators" had fallen victim to the UCK, the group's existence could no longer be denied. It was considered certain that it was not an army but a group of lightly armed fighters, whose total numbers at the beginning of 1998 were estimated by the Serbian Ministry of the Interior at no more than 2,000. But it was also clear to the Serbian authorities that these numbers would grow like an avalanche if they were unable to smash the organization in time. In the spring of 1997, in the course of political unrest in Albania, more than a million rifles had been stolen from army stocks. They were offered for sale on the open market, where the bottom fell out of the price owing to the oversupply. Eight US-Dollars per rifle was the lowest price but even today they cost no more than 140 US-Dollars apiece. As a result, the UCK has a reserve supply estimated at more than 100,000 light weapons that can be enlarged without any difficulty. On the other hand, there are obviously no heavy or anti-tank weapons in their arsenal.

The personnel reserves of the UCK are substantial because far more young Albanians are trying to join the forces than can be trained by the army. Among them are Kosovars from Western Europe and young Albanians from the motherland and from Macedonia.

At the end of February 1998 the Serbian special police started their effort to nip the liberation army in the bud. The Albanian stronghold of Drenica was stormed, resulting in the deaths of 25 Kosovars. There were more heavy attacks on 5 and 7 March which took 58 lives. Serbian state television and the print media supported these actions by a hate campaign against the Kosovo Albanians. The Serbian President, Milutinovic, thanked the police chiefs for the successful actions of their units in Kosovo and announced an "energetic and efficient reckoning" with the "Albanian separatists and terrorists".¹⁵

On 23 April, 22 armed Albanians are killed in an effort to reach Kosovo from Albanian territory. In May there is a big Serbian offensive in the centre and western part of Kosovo. The UCK strikes back in the west, i.e. in the city of Pec and in the area bordering on Albania. In July there are battles to the south-west of Kosovo in the course of which the Serbian border police kill

15 Politika of 8 March 1998 (own translation).

110 Kosovars. At this point, the UCK leadership forgets the basic rule for every partisan movement that is still being built up. Instead of striking quickly and then making themselves invisible, they establish themselves in small towns such as Orahovac and Mališevo and rather than just cutting important roads attempt to control certain segments of them. These strategic mistakes are mercilessly punished by the Serbian security forces. Using their superior heavy weapons they retake the villages occupied by the UCK and also recover control over the most important traffic arteries. The UCK had tried, far too early, to put into practice the concept of "liberated territories". They managed in fact to get as much as 40 per cent of the territory of Kosovo under their control, but it was precisely that that made them an easy target for a much better armed opponent.

By the beginning of August it could be seen that the Serbian forces had for the most part destroyed the Kosovo Liberation Army and were once again in control of the situation. But that is by no means a final victory. The UCK has lost more than 500 fighters and key strategic positions as well, but they will learn from the defeat and return to the concept of a war of attrition. The UCK has not been defeated because it still (or again) has more than 35,000 fighters and because its logistic base and military nerve centre is unassailably located in northern Albania. It can be seen as adding to the UCK's strength that in July the unofficial Kosovar parliament recognized it as "the legitimate fighting force" of the Kosovars and accepted military force as a means of liberation. It is significant that Tirana and the political leadership of the Albanians in Macedonia also took this step. The UCK will recover from its severe defeats, not least because it receives financial support from Albanian emigrants in Western Europe, the US and Australia. It has also become an open secret that substantial profits from the international drug trafficking are among its resources. The Albanian Mafia not only controls the drug market in Hanover (the biggest trans-shipment centre in Germany) but the one in Munich as well. According to Hungarian authorities the Albanian drug Mafia also has a leading position in Budapest.

The Serbian forces have about 50,000 men in Kosovo. It is estimated that Belgrade has to provide 1.95 million US-Dollars a day for their support. It is hard to see how the Serbian economy, ruined as it is, can find the capital to carry this war on over the long term.¹⁶

The war in Kosovo has caused substantial flows of refugees. More than 200,000 Albanians have become refugees, according to information supplied by international assistance organizations. Only a few tens of thousands succeeded in fleeing to Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia; the rest live in other villages or towns of Kosovo or are hiding in the forests. The number of Serbian refugees is around 20,000 of whom almost all have fled into the Ser-

16 Cf. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of 14 August 1998.

bian interior of the country. If the guerrilla war continues there will be further flows of refugees who, after some detours, will find their way to Western Europe, particularly Germany.

The West's Options

The European Union and the United States have committed themselves with regard to a solution of the Kosovo problem. They emphatically reject an independent state of Kosovo and argue, instead, for the greatest possible autonomy for the Kosovars within the framework of the Serbian/Yugoslav state. Washington favours a restructuring of the Yugoslav federation, so that Kosovo would become the third republic in that association of states, along with Serbia and Montenegro. This concept is rejected not just by Serbia but also, with particular bitterness, by Montenegro.

A new domino theory has been worked out in the Foreign Ministries of the EU and also in the US State Department. The argument goes that any border alterations in the sensitive Balkan region will result in a chain reaction. An independent Kosovo would be like a magnet to the Albanians in Macedonia (25 per cent of the total population) and their compatriots in Montenegro (seven per cent of the population). And a greater Albanian state that would result from unification with the mother country would also threaten the northern border of Greece. Once the borders were open to change, Bulgaria too would raise territorial claims against Macedonia, resulting in a perfect scenario for a new Balkan war.

Even if this horror scenario is not plausible, we must assume that the West will not depart from its dogmatic position of "independence no, autonomy yes". In the view of the Americans, which is certainly shared by the English and the French, much will have been achieved if the conflict can be held in check, i.e. if its overflow into Macedonia and Albania can be prevented. This solution is less satisfying from the German viewpoint because Germany is likely to be flooded with refugees from Kosovo if the guerrilla war goes on. On the other hand, it is not clear how German foreign policy could lessen this danger or turn it aside.

One policy option that the Americans toyed with, at least for a short time, has proved to be unworkable. The idea was to find a way of supporting the UCK with weapons and trainers, as Washington had done with the Croats and later with the Bosnian Muslims. But the UCK, poorly organized and subject to no central controlling authority, was obviously not the partner for this kind of approach.

It is noteworthy that the EU countries are displaying a unified position when it comes to the Kosovo problem. There is not a sign of the rivalry and divi-

sions in the European Union that were precipitated by the war in Croatia and later in Bosnia. Even so, the result in both situations is similar. Delays and procrastination alternate with verbal threats directed at Belgrade, but nothing of a concrete nature happens. The deeper reason lies in the fact that the concept adopted by the West is not attainable by military means. A generous autonomy regime cannot be brought about by bombs. The only effect of possible air strikes against the Serbian forces in Kosovo would be that the UCK would take over the positions abandoned by the Serbs. Support for the UCK could not be seriously considered, however, not least because it is a self-appointed force which persists in its anonymity and obviously does not think much of the rules of democratic life.

Thus Washington and Brussels seem to have taken the option of holding the guerrilla war in check and preparing military intervention only for the event that the atrocities and the shedding of blood reach a level that is no longer tolerable.