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Kosovo - A Missed Opportunity for a Peaceful Solution to the Conflict?

The Kosovo Verification Mission was a big challenge for the OSCE - the most difficult operational task that it has had to deal with since its founding. Linked to this Mission was the hope for a peaceful solution of the Kosovo conflict. Did it have any chance at all of meeting the expectations attached to it? Was the use of military force in the final analysis inevitable in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe?

This article undertakes to provide answers to these questions. Of course it represents no more than an initial effort, written mainly from an OSCE perspective. There must be further studies if we are to have a full picture of the development of this conflict.

The Holbrooke-Milošević Agreement

Background

For a long time the Kosovo conflict stood in the shadow of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was not dealt with in the Dayton Peace Agreement of 14 December 1995 because at that time it was not yet so virulent, no quick solution seemed possible and any attempt at one would have put at risk the urgent ending of the Bosnian war.

Resistance on the part of the Kosovo Albanians against Serbia's policy of oppression, for a long time peaceful, had enjoyed no success. At the beginning of 1998, the "Kosovo Liberation Army" (KLA, also known as UCK) began to carry out attacks against Serbian security forces and civilians and against Albanian "collaborators". Their goal was to win Kosovo's independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) through guerrilla warfare. The KLA carried out its operations from villages located in the vicinity of the Albanian border and in central Kosovo inhabited mainly by Albanians. The Yugoslav security forces struck back, often with disproportionate violence. The civilian population as is customary in this kind of warfare were misused as living shields by the partisans and thus suffered as well. They fled from the areas where fighting was going on. In June 1998 the KLA had 30 to 40 per cent of the territory of Kosovo under their control. The Serbian special police who were brought in, occasionally supported by the army, intensified their operations in summer 1998 and drove the KLA back.

The United Nations Security Council intervened in the conflict through its Resolution 1160 of 31 March 1998. In this Resolution it condemned both the

excessive force used by Serbian police forces and "all acts of terrorism by the Kosovo Liberation Army". Both parties to the conflict were called upon to enter into a political dialogue without preconditions. With a wealth of initiatives and conversations at the highest level, the OSCE tried to stop the violence and promote a political solution. However, the attempt to establish an OSCE mission in Kosovo failed due to resistance from the FRY. It wanted first to renew Yugoslav participation in the OSCE, which had been discontinued in 1992. But the United States and Albania opposed this with particular vehemence in Vienna. The Balkan Contact Group, the European Union and Russia also joined the search for a political solution. NATO, too, had taken up the Kosovo problem in early 1998 and over the summer had produced a barrage of threats which, however, were directed exclusively against the Yugoslav leadership.

In September and at the beginning of October 1998 the situation reached the crisis point. In mid-September and later in that month the number of refugees was estimated at 300,000 of whom about 50,000 were living out in the open, mostly in forests. On 23 September 1998 the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1199. What was new in it was a sharper condemnation of the violence being used by the Yugoslav side, concern over an impending humanitarian catastrophe, and the assertion that the worsening of the situation in Kosovo constituted a threat to peace and security in the region. This meant that the conflict had taken on a new character for the UN.

In the United States pressure was being applied by the media at this time to bring about a military intervention in Kosovo. But Russia had declared unambiguously that it would not vote for any UN resolution that provided for the use of military force. A number of European countries also had reservations about NATO action without a mandate from the UN Security Council. And in Bonn a change of government was about to take place.

In this situation, the American diplomat, Richard Holbrooke, the master builder of the Dayton Peace Agreement, undertook along with his colleague Christopher Hill a final effort to work out a political solution with the Yugoslav leadership. During his talks in Belgrade he urged NATO to increase the military pressure on Yugoslavia by threatening to intervene. Indeed, on 24 September 1998 NATO had already threatened Yugoslavia with air attacks in unmistakable terms. On 13 October 1998, the day on which the Holbrooke-Milošević agreement was concluded, the NATO Council authorized the Secretary-General of the Alliance to begin "air strikes" against the FRY, in other words to start a war. In the opinion of participants at the negotiations in Belgrade these impending air strikes were an unmistakable threat of war causing the Yugoslav leadership to concede to the agreement.

The Most Important Provisions of the Agreement and Its Further Development

The Holbrooke-Milošević agreement is a political framework agreement that sets forth certain essential points. The most important results of this agreement were:

- The deployment of an OSCE mission, the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM), with up to 2,000 unarmed, international "verifiers" (this concept was important to Holbrooke in order to emphasize the more active role of verifiers as compared with simple observers). The Mission was to be responsible for verifying compliance with UN Resolution 1199, supervising elections in Kosovo, and providing support in building institutions and setting up a police apparatus. Not specified in the agreement but important for developing a climate of trust and security, the ubiquitous presence of the OSCE in Kosovo was supposed to create an international public in Kosovo and persuade the refugees to return.
- The creation of an air surveillance system to supplement the observation activity of the OSCE using manned aircraft and unmanned spacecraft. This system, to be operated by NATO, was supposed to be stationed outside of Yugoslavia, in Macedonia.
- A declaration of commitment by Belgrade to conclude an agreement with the Kosovo Albanians by 1 November 1998 providing for extensive self-government of Kosovo within the Yugoslav state in accordance with the terms of Resolution 1199.

This basic agreement had to be supplemented by separate specific understandings in order to be implemented. Thus agreements were concluded in quick succession on 15 October 1998 between NATO and the FRY, with regard to the air surveillance system, and between the OSCE and the FRY on 16 October, with respect to the OSCE Mission. The Yugoslav side turned out to be co-operative in these follow-up negotiations, so that the agreements were reached in a very short time. During the negotiations, the Yugoslav side repeatedly demanded that NATO's threat of war be withdrawn. But the threat potential remained and may well have hastened the negotiating process.

Assessment of the Agreement

The agreement of 13 October 1998 was the last chance to avert a war. Without an accord, NATO would have started the air war against the FRY on 17 October 1998. Now there was widespread relief that it had once again proved possible to prevent a war. And so, many participating States at the meeting of the OSCE's Permanent Council on 15 October expressed a favourable view of the agreement. Albania also gave its approval in principle on this occasion

but pointed out that the Albanian government still regarded the stationing of NATO troops in Kosovo as a necessity. The Kosovo Albanians were dissatisfied because they had not been involved in the negotiating process and the result seemed to push their goal - a Kosovo independent of the FRY - a long distance away. They had hoped that NATO military action, which they still favoured, would hasten the move towards independence. The United States had demonstrated once again that it could also get results at the negotiating table; it saw its view confirmed that a credible threat of military action could bring about desired political results and all in all it welcomed the fact that NATO had emerged stronger from this crisis.

Holbrooke had indeed managed to extract substantial concessions from the Yugoslav President. Milošević accepted a strong OSCE presence in Kosovo, something which he had always made dependent on certain conditions in the past, even when much smaller numbers of personnel had been involved. The verifiers were assured of complete and unimpeded freedom of movement. The FRY accepted responsibility for their security. It undertook to provide administrative support to the OSCE Mission in carrying out its responsibilities, to set up liaison offices and to co-operate with the Mission. The army and the police were to inform the OSCE of troop movements. Military forces and special police in Kosovo were to be reduced to a certain strength. This was worked out in detail on 25 October 1998 in a special agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav General Staff.

This new responsibility represented a quantum leap for the OSCE with regard to operational tasks. For a long time it had established and led only small missions of up to 25 members. With the Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Croatia the number of personnel went up to 400 for the first time. The deployment of up to 2,000, and occasionally even more, international staff, along with several hundred local employees, far exceeded the planning and leadership capacity of the OSCE's small staff in Vienna. And time was of the essence! The OSCE had to show the flag quickly in Kosovo and cover the region with a dense surveillance network. This would only be possible if the OSCE participating States quickly reinforced the Vienna staff with qualified personnel, speedily provided experts and verifiers for use in Kosovo, supplied equipment and vehicles, and expanded the Organization's financial resources. It is a simple fact that the OSCE does not - as NATO does - have troops available on short notice and experienced leadership staffs; rather, it has to ask the participating States for the personnel in connection with each operational task individually, select the people and train them. This is no big problem for small missions, but in the case of one the size of the Kosovo mission it would take months if the normal routine were used. There was general agreement, however, that the time immediately after conclusion of the agreement would be of decisive importance for any lasting success.

Thus the OSCE was at a crossroads. If it succeeded in mastering the terribly difficult task in Kosovo it would emerge strengthened and with enhanced

prestige from this test. A failure of the OSCE Mission would inevitably result in a lessening of the OSCE's significance in the system of international organizations.

Organization and Increase in Staff at the Kosovo Verification Mission

The basic outline of the organizational structure of the OSCE Mission was set forth in the agreement between the FRY and the OSCE. However, the agreement provided for enough organizational flexibility so that the structure could be adapted to the requirements of the task. The Mission was divided into:

- a headquarters in Priština,
- five regional centres in fairly large cities,
- field offices in small towns and communities,
- groups of verifiers working out of the field offices,
- a training centre, and
- a liaison office in Belgrade to maintain contact with the Yugoslav government.

There were Yugoslav liaison officers to facilitate co-operation between the Yugoslav government and the OSCE.

The United States had already presented its views on the Mission's structure and working methods on 16 October in Vienna. This unexpectedly rapid presentation of their standpoint caused a certain unease amongst a number of countries. Although the American speakers described their ideas as suggestions, the polished and detailed presentation gave a clear indication of the American desire to control proceedings for which the other countries had as yet no definite conception. American resolve was further reflected in the fact that on 17 October 1998, i.e. before the OSCE Permanent Council had even officially adopted the decision to establish the Mission, and without prior consultation with other countries - which is the usual practice in making such appointments - the American diplomat William Walker had been named Head of the Verification Mission by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, the Polish Foreign Minister, Bronisław Geremek. The Europeans, who had also been interested in the top job, were left with the deputy positions. A Frenchman, Gabriel Keller, became First Deputy. An Englishman, a Russian, an Italian and a German were chosen as additional Deputies.

On 17 October a 13-man OSCE delegation was already in Belgrade to work with the Yugoslav side in preparing the deployment of the Mission. NATO started its air surveillance on the same day.

On 25 October 1998 the Permanent Council of the OSCE made its formal decision on the establishment of the Kosovo Mission, the way having been

paved by the adoption of Resolution 1203 by the UN Security Council on the previous day.

Under the circumstances, it was clear that it would not be possible for the verifiers to show up on the scene immediately. In order to have limited monitoring, an agreement was reached with the FRY to temporarily expand Diplomatic Observer Missions that had been set up in summer of 1998. They were to carry out surveillance activity on behalf of the OSCE and later be absorbed into the OSCE Mission. Thus there was a limited international presence on the scene, at least for a transitional period.

On 16 November 1998 in Kosovo, there were 60 OSCE employees in the headquarters and in the training centre as well as nearly 300 members of the Diplomatic Observer Mission, of whom about 60 per cent were Americans. A month later the Mission had grown to 803 members although almost half of them were local employees (drivers, interpreters, secretaries and the like). Approximately one third of the international personnel were verifiers in the area to be observed. Taken together with the remaining 200 diplomatic observers, they were still far too few to ensure a permanent presence even at the most critical points. On 16 February 1999 - i.e. five months after conclusion of the agreement between the OSCE and the FRY - the number of international OSCE workers had climbed to 934, still less than half of the target figure. Shortly before the Mission was withdrawn, on 18 March 1999, about 65 per cent of the agreed-upon maximum number of members had been reached. This unsatisfactorily slow growth in personnel corresponded to delays in other areas. The security of OSCE personnel was of major concern to the countries that sent them and to the OSCE itself. Yugoslavia had, to be sure, agreed to guarantee the security of this personnel. But their rescue system was not very efficient in emergencies. Hence Switzerland made a rescue helicopter available to the OSCE, but despite intervention at the highest levels the Yugoslav government refused to let the helicopter enter the country, pointing instead to its own rescue system. Appeals by the OSCE to participating States for a mobile medical core and medical vehicles went unanswered for a long time. A team of German medics was the first to arrive, but not until 7 December.

Armoured vehicles, which because of the danger of mines and of armed attacks provided important protection to personnel, represented a further problem. From the beginning diplomatic observers had had such vehicles - about one for every three people. The OSCE Mission did not receive its first vehicle of this kind until the end of November 1998 and by the end of December had about 40 of them - one for every seven verifiers!

On 2 December, at the OSCE's Ministerial Council in Oslo, the German Foreign Minister criticized the OSCE in unusually sharp terms. Fischer stated: "We are not unaware of the difficulties in setting up the KVM. Nevertheless, we are worried about its slow progress, its lack of transparency and the application of unequal standards in the choice of personnel. The planning proc-

ess has scarcely begun for some of the core responsibilities of the KVM. This is particularly true with regard to the police." In principle the Foreign Minister was right. However the German government had only a few days before that, i.e. on 25 November, decided to deploy 40 police officers!

There is no doubt that there were organizational gaps and other weaknesses in the staff organs of the OSCE. Nor was the leadership style of the American Head of Mission particularly helpful to the rapid construction of the Mission. He did not arrive in Kosovo until three weeks after his appointment. Because he had reserved all decisions on organization and personnel for himself, there were repeated delays. Experienced candidates often had to spend some weeks waiting before finally being accepted. Even so, the main problem lay with the participating States themselves where there was often a huge gap between verbal support for the OSCE and the contributions actually made in personnel, material and financial resources. Nor did the new German government give the impression that it attached top political priority to the Kosovo Mission. Governments which later sent thousands of soldiers to Kosovo with heavy equipment obviously had problems making a few hundred unarmed verifiers rapidly available.

Events in Kosovo from October 1998 until March 1999

The objective here is not to provide a chronological account of all events. Rather, our attention will be focused first on the initial weeks after conclusion of the Holbrooke-Milošević agreement, because key accents were set during that time. Second, we shall attempt to provide an accurate picture of the immediate pre-war period, i.e. from the beginning of March 1999 until the outbreak of war. The highly detailed daily reports of the OSCE are the main source.

On 29 September 1998 the Serbian leadership declares that the KLA has been defeated. On 6 October 1998 the picture in Kosovo is as follows: Police control points have been reduced in number; the special police are hardly visible; the military forces have been almost entirely withdrawn into their barracks; army units not belonging to the Priština-Corps, which is permanently stationed in Kosovo, are being transferred to barracks outside of Kosovo. Refugees are returning to their villages, hesitantly thus far, and are beginning to prepare for winter there. Only a few refugees are still seen out in the open, although the supply situation remains critical. However, in those places where the Serbian military and police have pulled back the KLA are returning. They are using northern Albania as a base for attacks against the Serbs and also as a place for withdrawal. The Yugoslav side has obviously started to meet the requirements of UN Resolution 1199. The KLA, with word and deed, is working against it.

After conclusion of the Holbrooke-Milošević agreement the picture does not change much. On 17 and 18 October the KLA carry out a number of raids against Yugoslav security forces. Four policemen and two soldiers are killed in the process. On 20 October the KLA abducts two Tanjug correspondents. KLA leaders call for a continuation of the armed struggle. Yugoslav troops from Priština are transferred to the areas where KLA operations are concentrated. The Serbian police remain present in many places, but they are less visible. At the end of October the situation continues to be ambiguous. The Yugoslav side still appears to be on course in fulfilling UN requirements. The Yugoslav army has withdrawn a large portion of the troops that were to leave Kosovo. Police forces have also been reduced. Their control points are now manned only by traffic police. Refugees are returning to their places of residence in larger numbers. But the KLA is filtering back as well, using refugee camps for protection; it continues to attack Yugoslav security forces and has regained control over a number of villages. Members of the KLA express their disappointment that NATO has not yet intervened but are confident that they can still bring this about. On 23 October, after pressure has been put on him by EU ambassadors, the Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova speaks out publicly for the first time in favour of the Holbrooke-Milošević agreement and calls on the armed Kosovo-Albanian groups to exercise restraint.

In mid-November the overall situation is outwardly calm but there is tension in certain regions. Most of the refugees have returned. The Yugoslav side is obviously determined to observe the agreement for the most part while the KLA is expanding and reinforcing its positions, again and again attacking the police and the army in guerrilla warfare style. By this time the KLA is better armed and equipped, has reorganized itself and is taking over sovereign responsibilities in the areas it controls. The Serbian side complains that there are still no OSCE verifiers on the scene. Representatives of the Serbian security forces warn that they cannot tolerate the present situation much longer. They themselves have to comply with the limitations of the agreement while the KLA is operating without interference.

A tense calm continues to prevail until the end of November with scattered incidents in very limited areas. As of 20 November there are no more refugees living in the open; international assistance has begun to arrive on a large scale. The KLA is continuing to mount attacks from the protection of villages. The diplomatic observers, who are still the only OSCE presence on the scene, are much more than passive onlookers. Their presence strengthens the sense of security of the civilian population; they exercise a moderating influence on the parties to the conflict and mediate in the event of disputes. Cooperation between the diplomats and the Serbs and Albanians is generally good.

After the beginning of December developments, which have hitherto been for the most part favourable, no longer continue that way. On 2 December Belgrade sends a memorandum to the OSCE charging that international organi-

zations and representatives of certain countries are maintaining contact with "terrorists, killers, kidnappers and other criminals calling themselves KLA". On 5 December the general staff of the KLA declares that they stand firm to their commitment to "the just fight towards the creation of our independent and democratic state". Rugova states at a press conference that the stationing of NATO troops in Kosovo would ensure lasting security. The armed encounters between the Serbian police and the KLA grow in number. The Serbian civilian population in Kosovo becomes hostile towards international assistance organizations, which they reproach for giving one-sided help to the Albanians. The deputy commander of police in Kosovo on 15 December expresses his growing disappointment. He says he is trying to keep the "terrorists" under control but the international community is reinforcing them.

The American Christopher Hill and the Austrian Wolfgang Petritsch are not making headway in the political negotiations they are trying to conduct. On 18 November Hill had declared in Vienna that it was realistic to expect Belgrade and the Kosovo-Albanian side to find a provisional political solution before Christmas. On 7 December Hill's proposal is rejected by the Albanians as unacceptable. In the Permanent Council of the OSCE Petritsch expresses the view on 16 December that the prospects for substantial steps towards a political solution are not good at the present time. According to Petritsch, the central problem remains the divisions on the Kosovo-Albanian side. And this is not so much a question of arguments over substance as of personal differences. Petritsch also asserts, all Kosovo-Albanian representatives continue to stand uncompromisingly for independence.

On 11 December the OSCE carries out its first weapons inspection of the Yugoslav army without finding anything significant to take exception to. More inspections follow.

On 14 December there is a serious incident in the vicinity of the Albanian border. The Yugoslav army stops 140 armed Albanians on their way into Kosovo, shoots 36 and takes nine prisoners who are later freed. On the same evening two men shoot indiscriminately in a bar frequented by young Serbs in Peć, killing six students and seriously wounding three.

At this time protests by Kosovo Serbs against the OSCE begin. It and, in particular, the United States are accused of supporting the KLA and of doing nothing to clear up the whereabouts of 2,000 Serbs the KLA is supposed to have abducted and imprisoned. These protests are later directed against the leadership in Belgrade as well; the Yugoslav and the Serbian President are given an ultimatum to come to Priština.

The time from mid-December 1998 until the end of February 1999 is characterized by stagnation in the political negotiating process in Kosovo and by a growing number of armed encounters - for the most part initiated by the KLA and met by the Yugoslav police and army with a disproportionate use of force. Working conditions become more difficult for the OSCE verifiers. There are new movements of refugees in the fighting zones. Both sides com-

ply less and less with the Holbrooke-Milošević agreement. Again and again the OSCE is able to intervene and de-escalate the situation, stabilizing it to a certain - although very tense - level. But in the absence of a political solution there does not appear to be any likelihood of lasting control over the conflict. But there are many encouraging events as well. On 25 January 1999, Head of Mission Walker reports in Vienna that the people in Kosovo are coming more and more to realize that the Mission is a useful institution. For example, it had protected Serbian electricians when they were carrying out necessary repairs on the destroyed electrical facilities in Kosovo-Albanian villages. And it had mediated in the question of whether to open schools. On 15 February 1999 the buildings of the colleges of law, economics and pedagogy are given back to the Albanian academic authorities in Priština. (Albanian students had been excluded since 1991.) Clear progress in ensuring the due process of legal proceedings is ascribed to the presence of OSCE human rights experts.

In the middle of January 1999 NATO had already started to give thought to how pressure on the Yugoslav side could be increased. The use of NATO ground troops in Kosovo was discussed in the North Atlantic Council as was the possibility of an ultimatum tied to a threat of air attacks. On 1 February, in the Permanent Council of the OSCE, the United States called for arrangements to withdraw the OSCE observers quickly in the event of threatened NATO strikes. France opposed such measures, however, since negotiations were still determining the logic of events. On 6 February, negotiations begin in Rambouillet.

At the end of February and the beginning of March 1999 increased preparations for war by the Yugoslav army are detected. Reservists are called up, weapons are issued to civilians, bridges are primed to be blown up, troops are regrouped and transferred out of barracks to field exercises and stationed in the regions near the borders to Albania and Macedonia. There is no doubt that these activities are a violation to the agreement. The Serbian justification - that these were measures to protect against the threat of a NATO attack - cannot from a military point of view be denied. As a consequence of a growing military presence and increasingly frequent heavy fighting the Albanian civilian population start to leave their villages again. There are reports from Albanian villagers on the plundering of their houses by Serbian soldiers.

The final reports of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo between 15 and 18 March 1999 permit the following summary: the armed disputes are local and of limited duration; they are concentrated in the areas around Priština and Mitrovica. The Yugoslav army is bringing in new troops and expanding the defence positions on the border to Albania and Macedonia. The Kosovo-Albanian civilian population leave territory being fought over but return to their villages when the danger is past and start reconstruction work. There has been considerable violation of the October agreements by both sides. Developments are again moving towards a crisis. On 19 March 1999 the negotiations in Paris are broken off.

On the same day the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, now the Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, decides on the recommendation of Head of Mission Walker to withdraw the OSCE Mission from Kosovo. The justification is that the security of Mission members can no longer be guaranteed and the Mission can no longer fulfil its responsibilities. The actual situation in Kosovo does not support this rationale, however. For example, the OSCE reports on 18 March: the situation in the region remains generally tense, but calm. On this day the OSCE carries out 120 patrols with no difficulty. The main reason for the decision to withdraw the Mission before NATO air attacks began was no doubt to protect international verifiers from exposure to Serbian violence. President Bill Clinton also explains the planned air attacks in a speech on 19 March. The decision had obviously already been made. On 18 March, in Vienna, Russia had continued to argue that the Mission should remain in Kosovo because it was the only stabilizing factor there. But the withdrawal on 20 March 1999 begins anyway. At 12 o'clock the last OSCE vehicle crosses the border into Macedonia. Following the example of the OSCE, the employees of other international organizations also withdraw from the province. Kosovo is largely free of international control and assistance.

Unused Opportunities for Peace?

The events show that there certainly were opportunities for a peaceful solution of the Kosovo conflict. The opportunity was ready to be grasped between the middle of October and the beginning of December 1998. During those weeks the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had been steering a course towards peace. The doves in that country had obviously got the upper hand. The Kosovo Albanians ought to have been brought or forced onto the same course. A rapid and omnipresent deployment of the OSCE Mission would have been able to secure the path to peace. Neither succeeded.

But even thereafter there were frequent periods of relative calm and opportunities for a peaceful solution of the conflict still existed. Beginning in December 1998, however, the hawks were circling once again. Both parties to the conflict escalated their use of force. The KLA felt that it was close to the goal that it had so doggedly pursued - a NATO attack against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav hard-liners had been seeking to eliminate the KLA and its entire infrastructure. Neither had much consideration for the civilian population, which was used for the purposes of each side. However, there is no evidence that a carefully prepared and systematic plan to drive out the Kosovo-Albanian population existed before the beginning of the air attacks. The OSCE had always been able to contain the conflicts and, on a case-by-case basis, to bring about a fragile stability.

After the end of January 1999, however, the pressure for a military solution through NATO, with the United States in the lead, became ever stronger. It is

clear that the United States wanted to end the conflict quickly. NATO's credibility appeared to be at stake. And all of this just a few weeks before the NATO summit in Washington celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Alliance. This was another reason why the time for a negotiated solution became very short. What happened afterwards was, more and more, determined by the logic of war.

Those who ultimately decided to begin the air attacks must have known that the Yugoslav leadership would do everything possible to destroy the KLA, using all resources and without regard for the civilian population, and that the Yugoslav army, police and bands of soldiers who were no longer under international observation - and even more inflamed by the air attacks - would commit acts of violence against the Albanian civilian population. It ought to have been equally clear that the NATO air attacks would require weeks in order to bring about a real weakening of the Yugoslav military potential. A horrible humanitarian catastrophe following the beginning of the air attacks was in fact quite predictable.

In view of this predictability, the question remains why the small risk of continued negotiations and of giving peace a chance was not taken and why, instead, the high risk that war necessarily entailed was chosen. This question, however, will have to wait some time for a convincing answer.