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BY

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Review article

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Anyone wishing to study the current situation in Kosovo/a must look back at the historical record and learn to discriminate between its widely differing versions. Too many 'specialists' have taken up the story from 1999 without reference to the decades, even centuries, which have shaped the present in a profound way. The books reviewed here do not always reflect properly much of the deeper scholarship about the region.

An exception to this generalisation is provided by Noel Malcolm's well-known (and not so short) history. It is based on an analysis which is both convincing and clear. He does a superb job of dismantling the complex processes long described

as the Battle of Kosovo, 1389, known as the Field of Blackbirds saga, which is so distorted in the later Serb popular saga and even educated imagination. History and mythology have merged so as to be a ludicrous pastiche which somehow ignores the fact that Albanians fought alongside Serbs with the typical mixture of groups and allegiances which makes any single interpretation problematic. He also explains the piecing together of the legend of the Great Migration of Serbs from Kosovo after the Austrian (Catholic) defeats of 1689-90, and the errors and interpretation - or misinterpretation - of a series of events. He shows that what really happened was a dispersion and probably an extensive intermingling of populations in this period because of complex alliances of different peoples; but no mass exodus of one ethnic or religious group ever transpired. What was confused, transient and covering a considerable period, was given a legendary unity. The fact that one of the leaders of the process was a Catholic Albanian hardly fits the legend of Serb Orthodoxy. Nor does he accept the idea that Kosovars were simply Albanized Serbs - another piece of myth debunked in the book. Indeed the contrary is more true: that a large number of Albanians (he suggests at least 150,000) were assimilated during the early Serb state of the 12th century, abandoning their language in the process. Moreover, Malcolm to some extent deals with the relativism of ever changing borders, and their creation based on different factors, not least external intervention (in effect, where wars ended). From this point of view, a 'Daytonian' solution in the 1990s was nothing new in the history of the area. Boundaries have been drawn and redrawn with extraordinary regularity, indeed in an almost whimsical way - witness 1912, which of course followed a Serb campaign of claims over the area that is now Kosovo/a.

While Malcolm's book is enormously enlightening, it lacks coverage of the remarkable non-violent struggles and parallel institutions of the Kosovars between the

early 1980s up until the war of 1999. It is this extraordinary non-violent movement which Howard Clark, in his *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, analyses with enormous understanding (having been deeply involved with many of its leaders for at least the last decade of that period). Clark approaches the subject as a peace theorist and activist who had worked hard to avert the war: 'Why was the war most warned about not prevented?' (p.213). He provides a minutely detailed account of these unique developments throughout the decade up to the eruption of the extreme violence of 1998-99. Using a wide variety of sources, especially interviews and discussions with policy makers and dissidents within the movement, he pieces together the intricate picture which few outside Kosovo/a followed so closely. He charts the course of the non-violent strategy chronologically, describing the movement's growth, enthusiasm and success from the early 1990s up to the time of the Dayton Accords in November 1995. Thereafter, when Kosovo/a was dropped from the discussions, disillusionment set in and the non-violent movement lost its momentum. Clark considers that in any case the process needed re-invigorating to maintain the intense efforts and extreme hardships required to run parallel schooling and parallel health clinics when all state facilities were inaccessible to the 90% Albanian population of Kosovo/a (i.e. from 1991 when 90% of that population was fired from state employment and replaced by Serbs). Clark's object is to discuss neither the NATO actions, nor the tactics of the UÇK (KLA). But he points out that by the end of 1999 there were 325 international agencies in Prishtina, 48,000 international soldiers and 4,700 international civilian police (for a population of 2 million people), and that far fewer would have been needed to prevent conflict had it not been for the failure to esteem and reward those who rejected the war option' (p.214).

A final chapter includes a 'Balance Sheet on Civil Resistance' where he suggests that the 1990s have added a fourth dimension to Johan Galtung's tripartite division of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding: namely, peace enforcement. It would be interesting to hear Clark in discussion with Iain King and Whit Mason, authors of *Peace at Any Price: How the World Failed Kosovo*, both of whom served for several years in the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo/a for several years.

They succeed in providing a very detailed and ethnically unbiased analysis of the changing role of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as they saw it from the inception of UN administration, immediately after the end of the 78-day NATO intervention in 1999. They conclude that Kosovo/a remained in a peculiar legal limbo six years after that war ended, even if it might be seen as a success when compared to 'the debacle in Iraq' (p.viii). The authors set out with the intention of filling a 'surprising' void in literature both on Kosovo/a and on nation-building, noting that there have been a great number of books on the collapse of Yugoslavia, but claiming this to be the first book 'explaining the international protectorate in Kosovo as a whole' (p.xi). They also observe that the world invested 25 times as much money and 50 times as many troops here as in Afghanistan (p.21).

The clarity of King and Mason's portrayal is evident as they first describe the Humanitarian Intervention up to 1999 and then divide the rest of the text between an outline of the four major phases of International Administration and finally address their main concern: why the world failed to transform Kosovo. There is also a detailed chronology of events, a map and a 3-page list of acronyms. The book is well documented.

It is noted that the single promise that UNMIK officials were initially expected to deliver on was to 'transform Kosovo into a society in which all its members could live in security and dignity.' The authors see this as an impossible expectation, but that, in the failure to achieve it, at least lessons in peacekeeping should be learned from the experiences which they describe and analyse. The eruption of violence in 2004 (with at least 33 riots) is seen as a major setback. The various methods of dealing with this, as used by the different nationality peacekeeping forces, made manifest a significant disparity of response. Critics labelled the province UNMIKistan.

The book is organized to reveal four phases of international administration in Kosovo: Emergency (June 1999-October 2000); Consolidation (October 2000-June 2002); Confrontation and Stagnation (June 2002-February 2004); and The Reckoning (March 2004-May 2006). One may wonder which phase the authors consider Kosovo/a to be in currently.

During the first phase, great strides were made on the humanitarian side - rewarding work with good supplies of donated material and help, all assisted by eager and hard-working returnees. Less positive was the development of law. UNMIK struggled for years to counteract the 'no-holds-barred Hobbesian politics (which) left a lasting legacy of contempt for legally constituted authority' (p.51). The various international authorities were cautious to take full responsibility for enforcement of non-existent law. The different international forces had differing mandates, and degrees to which they were expected to interact with local people. In the first two months, the international police were not even present, and when they came their numbers were very low and their preparation for the mission minimal. In the name of 'stability' some crimes were overlooked, especially those of former KLA members. In

turn the few remaining Serb inhabitants felt obliged to use the protection of paramilitaries (they were particularly strong in Mitrovica, under French watch, where they became known as The Bridge Watchers). Many other relevant issues are discussed, explaining the tremendous challenges faced by those involved in UNMIK administration. Bernard Kouchner, who was the second to take up the Kosovo/a SRSG position (mid-July 1999) is given much credit for the progress made in the first years of the administration. He summarised the importance of the lesson on how, to avoid criminal behaviour from flourishing in a post-war vacuum of authority, 'peacekeeping missions need a judicial or law-and-order 'kit' made up of trained police officers, judges and prosecutors, plus a set of potentially draconian security laws or regulations that are available on their arrival' (p.67).

With the aim of creating a multi-ethnic state, UNMIK was forced to make efforts to ensure that Serbs would receive employment alongside Albanians. Yet, so shortly after the intense hostilities of the War, this was unrealistic to enforce. Some felt that the insistence on such collaboration made the institutions unworkable. Such was the failure of the 'confidence area' - an area in which were several municipal institutions employing all ethnicities. There was the added disruption that Serb municipalities were supplied with pensions and other benefits from Belgrade, and were thus easily persuaded to boycott all involvement with UNMIK.

Given the problems outlined above, UNMIK was slow to take controlling action in respect of the new media, only becoming involved when it was used specifically to incite murder (and not before the media succeeded in this). Likewise UNMIK was slow to control provocative nationalist symbols, and did so unevenly around the country. UNMIK left the development of the education system to the local

people, yet these people had been involved in war and oppression for decades and therefore were without suitable training to set up a whole new system.

The set of eight 'standards', imposed in 2003 was expected to bring an early solution to the final decision on Kosovo/a's status. Events have certainly moved a long way since that time, but there remains little hope of a solution to which the governments of Belgrade and Prishtina could agree.

The constitution of 1974 gave Kosovo/a autonomous status. However, while the Slavs of the six Yugoslav republics were considered to belong to 'nations', the Albanians in Kosovo/a were thought of as merely a 'nationality'. The effects of this difference were little felt during Tito's lifetime, but after his death in 1980, lacking the stability he brought to proceedings, the situation became uneasy. Things escalated quickly until the Serbian leadership of Slobodan Milosevic instituted repressive measures throughout the 1990s. Rugova's nonviolent leadership prevented retaliation for several years until killings, counter-killings and massacres led to the NATO bombardment in 1999. The authors point out that such intervention is not new: for example they have occurred in the cause of peace, 'since the Delian League in ancient Greece' (p.46), although they concur that modern peacemaking really began with the creation of the League of Nations after the First World War.

It is exactly this intervention about which David Chandler, in *From Kosovo to Kabul: Human Rights and International Intervention*, shows himself to be so incensed. His is not a book about Kosovo/a, nor about Kabul. Nor are they even comparable one being a province or region, the other a city. It just happens that the author used casual alliteration in mentioning two of the most recent places (at the time of writing) to have attracted substantial international intervention in the name of human rights. Even to make the comparison he uses two very different situations. The

claim of international human rights intervention in Kosovo/a was plausibly motivated by public concern for extreme human rights abuses, whereas, despite using claims for a similar motivation in Afghanistan, this basis is not at all clear. It was clear that this was a frantic move on the part of the US to react to the September 11th attacks, allowing them the claim that their own country was under attack from the 'axis of evil' - of which the Bush regime asserted that Afghanistan, by hosting 'terrorists' - was a part. As events played out, the results of intervention in Kosovo/a show outcomes much closer to those desired than in Afghanistan, where reportedly the human rights situation of the majority of inhabitants is becoming in reality very much worse now than before the intervention.

The first chapters of Chandler's book give a useful history of the developing field of human rights, tracing the first instances back to the founding of the Red Cross in 1859 and the Geneva Convention in 1864. At this meeting, twelve countries signed an agreement for wartime access to battle zones for medical purposes. The UN's first solely humanitarian bodies were founded in the 1940s; Oxfam started in 1942 and Amnesty International was founded in 1961. More recently MSF (Doctors without Borders) have taken the logic of NGO intervention one step further, in a transnational direction.

Chandler shows how the work of these and other relief charities thrived during the Cold War and 'Their non-governmental nature meant that they could function despite political pressure' (p. 25). He sees a gradual change towards the politicisation of aid with growing Western involvement in the internal affairs of developing countries from the 1970s, turning into 'humanitarian militarism' with the fall of Communism in the 1990s. Chandler brings to light many contradictions in US

policies, for example its retention of the death penalty in many states despite the fact that this is widely accepted as an abuse of human rights, and banned in Europe.

Most of the book is taken up outlining countless instances of Western government actions where political aims may be seen to take precedence over humanitarian concerns. While it may very often be true, Chandler does not accept that there has been any benefit at all. The arguments given are conservative, returning to a traditional concept of human rights based on enforcement of law only by sovereign states rather than an international regime based on universal principles. Whilst it is true that interventionism in the name of human rights can be cynically misused, this is usually by large nation states, e.g. imperial powers such as the USA, taking virtually unilateral action without international consensus or UN approval. The model of transnational NGOs like Amnesty International, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and the International War Crimes Tribunal, suggest a move away from the old liberal internationalism, which one might describe as 'Wilsonian Westphalianism' that was based on unilateral state action - towards a more global system. This would take us significantly beyond Pax Americana, towards the imposition of humanitarian standards through international and political consensus and action. The USA has yet to affirm this trend, as its actions in the Gulf since 9/11 so starkly illustrate.

Returning to Mason and King's book, they give a clear picture of the development of UNMIK's personnel and changing mandates. Hans Hakkerup, a former Danish Defence minister, took over early in 2001 just three days after Kouchner completed his service. Hakkerup's achievements were to adopt a constitutional framework for the institutions of self-government; he also organized province-wide elections enabling a government to be formed. Thirdly he managed to

conduct a working relationship with the new regime in Belgrade. He was, however, unable to control massive unplanned construction, much of which was not completed. The lack of properly enforced law continued to be a problem, exacerbated by a 'code of silence' among Albanian citizens who in turn feared reprisals should they make reports to the police of Albanian criminal activity. Additionally the traditional laws of Lek Dukajini also deterred any interaction with police. In turn, legal action was seen to be weak and criminals became more assertive. Murders often preceded high profile visits. The authors speculate that these may have been instigated by Serbs who could then highlight Kosovo/a as still unprepared for independence.

Quick turnover of UNMIK's personnel in the department of justice, obviated the development of institutional memory. Working under intense pressure was not conducive to giving inexperienced local lawyers and prosecutors a necessary training situation. Procedures were set up whereby multi-ethnic meetings could be monitored, but the process was often too complicated to enforce. When Milosevic was replaced in Belgrade, this might have improved the relationship with Kosovo/a (though reporting of Milosevic's fall was barely mentioned in the Albanian media, as it could not actually anticipate much improvement of attitude towards Kosovo/a). The International Crisis Group warned that once Belgrade was accepted amongst the international community, Kosovar Albanians would inevitably demand equality – a seat at the international table.

The November elections of 2001, might have led to major developments in health, education, welfare and transport. However such progress was hampered by each party vying for votes through their particular methods of obtaining independence. At the same time, Hakkerup, in order to prevent a Serb boycott of the vote, worked with Belgrade to ensure these votes. Only two weeks before the election,

he gave them in return a promise that the election would not be related to Kosovo/a's final status. Thus most of the purpose, for the Albanians, for the election, was taken from them. Morale around Hakkerup was deflated and many idealists who had been with UNMIK from the beginning, became discouraged. The problems faced by the international administration were growing, while Albanians were becoming impatient. Solutions to political challenges were much harder to resolve than the earlier logistical tasks. Smuggling of all kinds became rife. By December, Hakkerup resigned. Michael Steiner ('the most ambitious of the SRSG's' [p.139]) took over six weeks later. It is interesting to note that Kosovo/a was probably the first entity to adopt the euro as its main currency (1st January 2002). Kosovo/a's new government was sworn into office six months later. Although Steiner was keen to see a transfer of power, there were obstacles to this. Firstly, the authors assert much of the new government's time and attention was taken up with denouncing UNMIK. Furthermore many UN staff who had set up good working relationships in the municipalities, found it hard to give up their roles. The authors explain also that in their relationship to Belgrade, the Kosovars felt at a disadvantage, both by the fear of selling out to their own people, but also for their lack of diplomatic advantages, training, etc. (having lived for over a decade without normal educational advantages).

There followed a period of improvements in many spheres, the TV programme *Dosja e Krimet* (Crime Files) helped to resolve several criminal cases, and an ambitious marketing programme was set in motion (essential after the peak of donor money of 2002 passed). The situation of property rights was very fraught, however. UNMIK was wary of imposing a solution to the chaos caused by the destruction of ownership documentation during 1999, fearful of making the difficult situation worse. This resulted in appropriation by the KLA of much of Kosovo/a's industry.

Privatization was handled so cautiously that few dared to put signatures to documents. In banking, Kosovo/a was forced to work with the National Bank of Yugoslavia (in Belgrade) to use the SWIFT code system (since only recognized nation states may access this system).

With the arrival of Soeren Jessen-Petersen, the SRSG to take over from Harri Holkeri in August, 2004, new urgency was emphasised for the solution of the final status of Kosovo/a. One move in this direction was to lower the demands of the 'Standards' (known by some as 'Standards Light'). Another step was to quickly cover repair, through a government reconstruction programme, of the damage caused by the March attacks, even though, for lack of willing witnesses, the inter-ethnic violence which had caused the damage was not properly addressed. Returns of Serbs, after March 2004, dwindled as they saw the poor means for their protection. A suggestion was made to allow Serbs returnees to take up residence in areas where they had not lived before, provision was made for Serbs living in northern Kosovo/a to reach Serbia on a road to be newly asphalted (offer of Nebojsa Covic, the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister).

The general elections of autumn 2004 resulted in the formation of a government with Ramush Haradinaj as Prime Minister. 'Virtually all observes in the international community credited his government with accomplishing more in one hundred days than had been achieved in the previous three years' (p.212), creating structures leading to progress on 'the Standards' for the first time, including preparing the way for Serb returns. His efforts attracted international funding. Despite all this and more to his credit, in March 2005, Haradinaj was indicted by the international tribunal in The Hague. He acted with exemplary dignity urging his ministers to keep pursuing the Standards, and to remain calm. He then flew to The Hague to turn

himself in. Robin Cook declared that with these acts Haradinaj brought Kosovo/a nearer to international acceptance of eventual independent status than in all the years since 1999 (p.213). However, generally international support for Haradinaj waned.

In a brief chapter 'Measuring Success', the authors take each of the eight 'Standards', but find none of them satisfactorily fulfilled. They name six sources of failure: understanding, ideology, unity, structure, will and time, pin-pointing the over-hasty declaration of success of elections which themselves had been too hastily carried out.

The final chapter, 'Doing Better', lists ten lessons learnt from UNMIK's management of Kosovo/a. If this compact little book is to be used as a manual for bringing order after a war's end, it would be useful for the reader to start with these last few extremely useful pages.

It is particularly relevant for us to consider what those inside Kosovo/a think and write. The book, *Who is Kosovar? Kosovar Identity: a debate*, edited by Migjen Kelmendi and Arlinda Desku is an important English language source of many views from the region. It is a volume thrown together in rather too great a rush, so that unfortunately there are several detrimental points. The English translation is extremely poor for at least three of the contributions and almost none of the contributions read in perfect English which detracts seriously from the whole. Many of the contributions can be set at any historical time, but some are very specific and would better have been placed in such context within the book. Probably this could have been well achieved by allocating the chapters to different sub-sections of the book, ending with the contemporary. However, inevitably 'contemporary' is always outside publishing time, and the fact that these were all written 3-4 years before publication should be borne in mind while reading them. Scant, and sometimes no,

information is given on the contributors. Some of the approximately 30 writers make references to published works, but there are no bibliographical notes either for the chapters or for the whole book.

The book's back cover claims: 'in the latest updated edition of the Oxford dictionary there is one new word: Kosovar.' Certainly this volume provides ample discussion of the meanings of the word whose use seems to have emerged only in the last couple of decades. Kosovar identity is analysed from a variety of angles, several written by well known writers (e.g. Janusz Bugajsky and Arbën Xhaferi, President of the Democratic Party of the Albanians in Macedonia, and the archaeologist, Neritan Ceka). More than one of the writers argue that it took the violent War of 1999 to bring Kosovo/a to world attention, where the nonviolent struggle in Yugoslavia's poorest region, of the decades prior to the War, passed almost unnoticed. Many of the writers refer to the crucial division of the Albanian population in 1913, leaving half of them just outside Albania's borders.

Possible independence for Kosovo/a brings with it dilemmas such as which Albanian nation would have the right to the flag? Kosovars claim to have lost more blood over the Albanian flag than have Albanians from the 'motherland'.

Kelmendi's chapter 'Lack of Debate' (pp.79-87) (which should have been placed as an introduction to the book), explains how the current selection of contributions evolved as responses to *Java* magazine's debate in its first issue at the end of 2001, on the Kosovar identity. In a later chapter, he interviews both Teuta Arifi (Vice-President of the Democratic Union for Integration) and Xhaferi, concluding that it is preferable to accept self-imposed restrictions than to have them imposed from outside.

Muhamedin Kullashi refers to the issue of Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs, pointing out that although many understand these definitions, rarely are Kosovo's Roma or Bosnians given any Kosovar identity. He finds that the Kosovar Serb identity is defined by martyrdom, and that of Albanian Kosovars is shaped mostly by the will to resist the violence of the Serbian state, resulting in 'two contradictory identities based upon mutually exclusive political and cultural mythologies' (p.19).

Kosvar identity is exactly the topic of Ger Duijzings's book *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. The book, published in 2000, is the result of many years of research and focuses on various arenas and contexts where identities are formed and transformed as a result of wider political developments. The complexities of ethnic and religious identities are investigated in considerable detail. He makes the point that censuses can distort identity, since there is not a single standard set of categories.

Returning to *Who is Kosovar?*, Besnik Pula uses several well known sociologists' and anthropologists' writings to back up his discussion on nationalism and the 'Cultural content' of the Albanian identity. He also explains post-socialism and the crisis of 'enverist Albanism' – a useful piece on 1980's Kosovo/a, leading into discussion on the present.

Janusz Bugajsky looks at Dependency versus Democracy, asserting that Kosovo/a's 'intellectuals, politicians and opinion makers need to agree which identity will most effectively promote the drive for independence, and which identity would stifle and distract these aspirations' (p.40).

Arsim Bajrami analyses the Kosovar identity between the myths of the past and a European future, noting that current unrest is due mainly to its unsolved current

situation, partly blaming Kosovars themselves for not accepting Western democratic values and establishing functioning institutions.

The Norwegian Aasmund Anderson, on the other hand, as an outsider, supplies an objective view of the importance of traditional Kosovar kinship ties and alliances and their effect on the attempts to create a modern bureaucratic culture. Anderson's three chapters, are concerned in part with theory which he applies to the situation especially relating to the UN resolution 1244 following the end of NATO action in 1999. Having been present in Kosovo/a himself for a substantial part of the beginning of the century, Anderson finds 'an internal censorship within the UN administration about discussing any issues that may alter the interim status of Kosovo' (p.52).

Arbën Xhaferi, takes an historical view, looking as far back as the League of Prizren and the Congress of Manastir in the 19th century, to explain how Kosovars arrived at their present situation. He also compares this situation with the French/British idea of the political nation, leading to assimilation, versus the German/Italian preference for ethnic/cultural theories of nation, leading, Xhaferi claims, to differentiation.

Dukagjin Gorani finds that it is through newly gained freedom that Albanians have discovered their differences; whilst under repression they were idealizing their commonalities.

Anna di Lellio, who was involved in the production of the *Who is Kosovar?* *Kosovar Identity* book, has just published her own book (launched at the LSE in London on 14th March, 2007), *The Case for Kosova: Passage to Independence*.

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