



University of Zagreb

Faculty of Croatian Studies

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THE WAR IN KOSOVO AND THE MILITARY INTERVENTION OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO) IN 1999

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Supervisor:

Associate Professor Vlatka Vukelić

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RAT NA KOSOVU I VOJNA INTERVENCIJA ORGANIZACIJE SJEVERNOATLANTSKOG SPORAZUMA (NATO) 1999. GODINE

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Her recent works are:

Komunistički zločini 2: zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa II. Međunarodni znanstveni skup Važnost europskoga sjećanja za europsku budućnost: Komunistički zločini. Vukelić, Vlatka; Šumanović, Vladimir (ur.), Fakultet hrvatskih studija, Zagreb, 2024.

Vlatka Vukelić, Komunistički zločin na Zrinu, u: Komunistički zločini 2, Fakultet hrvatskih studija, Zagreb, 2024.; 55-76.

Vukelić, Vlatka. Projekt sustavnih arheoloških istraživanja Siska 1967. kao dio američke soft power politike. Caritas omnia sperat. Zbornik radova u čast mons. dr. sc. Vladi Košiću povodom 25. obljetnice biskupstva i 65. obljetnice života. Nedjeljka Valerija Kovač, Anđelo Maly (ur.). Sisak: Sisačka biskupija, 2024.; 755-785.

Komunistički zločini 1: zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa Važnost europskoga sjećanja za europsku budućnost: komunistički poratni zločini. Vukelić, Vlatka; Šumanović, Vladimir; Jurković, Danijel (ur.). Fakultet hrvatskih studija, 2023.

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1918. - 2018. Povijesni prijevori i Hrvatska danas: zbornik radova sa znanstvenoga skupa., (ur. Vukelić, Vlatka Beljo, Mijo; Smiljanić, Vlatko) Zagreb: Fakultet hrvatskih studija Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2020.

ABSTRACT

The violence that the Serbian regime inflicted on Albanians in silence in Kosova, for decades in a row, was exposed to the world in February 1998, when Serbian police-military forces started fighting in a scorched earth style, killing, and massacring Albanians regardless of age and gender. Based on these data, this study aims to highlight the persecution that the Albanian people went through, the survival against the Serbian ethnic cleansing, the complete denial of human rights, the efforts for a peaceful solution, until the creation of the Kosova Liberation Army, as the only option left to the Albanians. The main attention of the paper is focused on the war of 1998-1999, on the consecutive crimes that the Serbian regime committed against the Albanian civilian population; to the collection of historical facts which forced the international community to intervene militarily as the only form of stopping the Serbian genocidal policy of ethnic cleansing against the majority Albanian population of Kosova.

The methodology used in the treatment of the topic includes analytical, comparative, and interpretive research with a combination of quantitative (statistics, examination of information on murders, violence, imprisonment, demographic aspects, economic indicators, etc.) and qualitative research (monographs, interviews, reports from international organizations) and local ones. The method of data collection included archival research, secondary sources, journalistic content analysis and partially fieldwork.

The result of this study shows the key factors that led to NATO's military intervention in Kosova in the spring of 1999. As a result, Serbia's actions had left their mark, in the case of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. When it was Kosova's turn, it took time for the international factor to understand that the machine guns were directed at the civilian population. Insisting on dialogue and negotiations constituted an example of international integrity to resolve the situation while avoiding unnecessary catastrophes. As such NATO's military intervention in Kosova is the first military intervention of such magnitude that occurred as a result of the long and painful breakup of Yugoslavia, and marks a new phase in Kosova's history as a successful humanitarian intervention, aiming at the long-term stabilisation of Southeast Europe.

Key words: Ethnic cleansing, Slobodan Milošević, International Community, KLA, Rambouillet, NATO, USA, freedom.

SAŽETAK

Nasilje koje je srpski režim u šutnji nanosio Albancima na Kosovu, desetljećima zaredom, bilo je izloženo svijetu u veljači 1998. godine, kada su srpske policijsko-vojne snage započele borbe u stilu spaljene zemlje, ubijajući i masakrirajući Albance bez obzira na dob i spol. Na temelju ovih podataka, cilj ovog istraživanja je istaći progon kroz koji je prošao albanski narod, opstanak protiv srpskog etničkog čišćenja, potpuno negiranje ljudskih prava, zalaganje za mirno rješenje, sve do stvaranja Oslobodilačke vojske Kosova, kao jedinu opciju koja je Albancima ostala. Glavna pažnja rada usmjerena je na rat 1998-1999, na uzastopne zločine koje je srpski režim počinio nad albanskim civilnim stanovništvom; zbirci povijesnih činjenica koje su navele međunarodnu zajednicu na vojnu intervenciju kao jedini oblik zaustavljanja srpske genocidne politike etničkog čišćenja nad većinskim albanskim stanovništvom Kosova.

Metodologija koja se koristi u obradi teme uključuje analitička, komparativna i interpretativna istraživanja s kombinacijom kvantitativnih (statistika, ispitivanje podataka o ubojstvima, nasilju, zatvaranju, demografski aspekti, ekonomski pokazatelji i dr.) i kvalitativnih istraživanja (monografije, intervjui, izvješća međunarodnih i domaćih organizacija). Metoda prikupljanja podataka uključivala je istraživanje arhiva, sekundarnih izvora, analizu novinarskog sadržaja i djelomično terenski rad.

Rezultat ove studije pokazuje ključne čimbenike koji su doveli do vojne intervencije NATO-a na Kosovu u proljeće 1999. Za posljedice, akcije Srbije ostavile su traga u slučaju Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine. Kada je na red došlo Kosovo, trebalo je vremena da međunarodni čimbenik shvati da su mitraljezi usmjereni na civilno stanovništvo. Inzistiranje na dijalogu i pregovorima bio je primjer međunarodnog integriteta da se situacija riješi uz izbjegavanje nepotrebnih katastrofa. Kao takva, vojna intervencija NATO-a na Kosovu je prva vojna intervencija te veličine koja se dogodila kao rezultat dugog i bolnog raspada Jugoslavije, i označava novu fazu u povijesti Kosova, kao uspješna intervencija iz humanitarnih razloga, s ciljem dugoročne stabilizacije jugoistočne Europe.

Ključne riječi: Etničko čišćenje, Slobodan Milošević, međunarodna zajednica, OVK, Rambouillet, NATO, SAD, sloboda.

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INTRODUCTION

The first political steps towards the inevitable war in Kosova began with the arrival of Slobodan Milošević to power. The violent abolition of Kosova's autonomy and the shutdown of institutional life were only the beginning of the continuous violence that would result in war in the late 1990s. Kosova politics since the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia has tried to build a philosophy of non-violence, believing in peaceful solutions. Despite this, the Serbian government continued its policy of ethnic cleansing in Kosova throughout the 1990s. The political goal of the Albanian Alternative¹ was the internationalization of the Kosova issue through Western values, which suggested avoiding direct confrontation with Serbia. The Albanian leadership believed that the so-called policy of a peaceful solution would find support from the international community. However, in the face of progressive Serbian aggression, all these efforts proved insufficient. Albanians became daily victims, especially during the period of successive conflicts in Yugoslavia. For a whole decade (1989-1998) they experienced a version of European apartheid.² The main forms of oppression applied by the Serbian regime in Kosova were: politically motivated murders, arbitrary arrests, raids, torture and imprisonment for political reasons, denial of education, medical services in the Albanian language and free media, destruction of the economy and exploitation of its main resources, expulsion and forced relocation of Albanians from their homes to accommodate Serbian families, forced military recruitment, arbitrary labor policy that included unreasoned dismissals, ban on returning to the homeland of Albanians who temporarily lived outside Kosova. The population was frustrated by the consequences of these actions and the incidents became more and more frequent.

¹ The political ideology and strategy for solving the Kosovo problem by peaceful means was the Albanian alternative. It was led by the Democratic League of Kosovo and supported by the majority of the Albanian elite of the time. Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 122-157. For more, read Chapter 2.

² Apartheid refers to the implementation and maintenance of a system of legalized racial segregation in which one racial group is deprived of political and civil rights. Apartheid is a crime against humanity punishable under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Cornel Law Shcool, Legal Information Institution LII Wex apartheid (Last updates April of 2022). Based on this model, the Milošević regime established an apartheid system in Kosovo, in which Albanians, although they were the majority, were excluded from institutional life: they were imprisoned and tortured for political reasons, forcibly removed from schools and jobs. For almost a decade, Albanians were deprived of their basic rights to life. [AN].

The policy of the so-called peaceful solution was left without an answer to the increasingly strong Serbian aggression, and a group of young people³ distanced themselves from it and laid the foundations for the creation of the Kosova Liberation Army (hereinafter: KLA). The KLA was born from the darkness of the philosophy of subjugation, it was created with the aim of defending the Albanian people in Kosova, due to the Serbian use of excessive military force and galloping political repression. In Kosova itself, there were reservations about the strength, capabilities and abilities of the KLA. However, the very presence of the KLA, as finally a militarily organized opposing party, led to the culmination of the conflict and the beginning of its armed phase at the end of 1997. Albanians under the leadership of the KLA,⁴ decided to fight to protect their doorstep only after all other hopes and possibilities had been tried.

Thanks to the defensive idea and the joint effort of all Albanian structures, the issue of Kosova has attracted international attention, where relevant military-political actors (USA-NATO) have aligned themselves in the defense of the Albanian people and, in cooperation with the KLA,⁵ abolished the Serbian regime in Kosova.

Since the beginning of the Kosova War, Serbian police and military expeditions have clearly demonstrated, with ubiquitous elements of ethnic cleansing, the intention to use excessive force against the Albanian civilian population. In the first two months of the Kosova War alone, February-March 1998, Serbs committed murders and massacres of hundreds of women, children and the elderly, bombed dozens of villages, burned hundreds of houses, and expelled thousands of

³ Henry H. Perrit.Jr, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës - Rrëfim prej brenda për një kryengritje*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2008), 60. For more read chapter 3.

⁴ In general, the KLA waged a guerrilla war, attack - retreat. Until the summer of 1998, very little was known about its organizational structure. In June, the KLA publicly announced its spokesman, Jakup Krasniq. On August 13, 1998, the KLA presented its General Staff, which consisted of: Jakup Krasniqi, Xhavit Haliti, Bardhyl Mahmuti, Hashim Thaçi, Faton Mehmetaj and Sokol Bashota in the role of political representatives, while Adem Demaçi was appointed as the political leader of the KLA. *Koha Ditore*, 14 gusht, 1998, 2-3; RFE/RL, Newsline - August 14, 1998.

⁵ The first meetings of the KLA with international representatives took place far from the media focus. Of the ones known so far, they start in April 1998 in Tirana, to continue in May and June in Switzerland. The first public meeting, which caused a lot of attention, was held on June 24, 1998, between the American diplomat Richard Holbrooke and a representative of the KLA in Junik, Deçan. The KLA reached its political-military peak at the Rambouilles conference, when the Kosovo delegation appointed Hashim Thaçi, the political director of the KLA, as its leader. Wolfgang Petritsch & Robert Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në Luftë Kosova dhe Bashkësia Bërkombëtare 1989-1999*, (Prishtinë: KOHA, 2002), 176; Christopher Hill, *Pararojë - Jeta në vijën e frontit të diplomacisë amerikane*, (Tiranë: Vetpress, 2016), 164, (Prishtinë: KOHA, 2002), For more read chapter 6.

residents from their homes.⁶ The massacres took place in the presence of powerful international media.⁷ Faced with these facts, as well as the experience of war from Bosnia and Croatia, the international community slowly but realistically recognized the character of Slobodan Milošević's politics.

The basic doubt in the context of international diplomatic efforts regarding the passivation of the War in Kosova was the potential expansion of the war in the Balkans, the consequences of which could destabilize the entire area. The international community initially tried to prevent war through its mechanisms such as: Contact Group, Security Council, OSCE, sanctions, a series of resolutions and calls to reduce tensions and return to the negotiating table, etc. However, while the international community was investing in dialogue, data from Kosova hinted at the beginning of a humanitarian disaster at the moment when the winter of 1998 turned the mountain areas white in snow. International observers reported increased military pressure⁸ by the Serbian forces in June 1998, which burned thousands of houses and hundreds of villages, and the scenes were reminiscent of Vukovar. In short, despite warnings from the international community for an immediate cessation of fighting, the military and political forces of Serbia continued to threaten the stability of all of Southeast Europe.

People were killed and massacred every day.⁹ Faced with such a situation, NATO sends¹⁰ the architect of the Dayton Agreement, Richard Holbrooke, with the task (Activation Order) to present

⁶ Marie Colvin, "Rrëfimi i Besartës për ditën e krimit në Prekaz", *Koha Ditore*, 16 mars, 1998, 2; Steven Erlanger, "First Bosnia, Now Kosovo", *The New York Times*, June 10, 1998; ⁶ Babak Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo*, (New York: Palgrav Macmillan, 2007), 75. For more, read Chapter 4.

⁷ Reporters from the *BBC*, *CNN*, *DW*, *REUTERS*, as well as representatives of many print media, despite the dangers, managed to penetrate the crime scenes and give them an objective character. The Serbs intended to deny the crimes, usually through obstructions and their own counter-propaganda. International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Report*, (Prishtina - Sarajevo: ICG Report, March 20, 1998), 1; Martin Gollmer, "Milosheviqi ishte i involvuar si urdhërdhënës në rastet e dhunës në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 20 prill, 1998, 7.

⁸ Intervistë me Richard Miles, shef i misionit diplomatik të SHBA-ve në Beograd, *Zëri*, 13 qershor, 1998, 10-11. For more, read chapter 6.

⁹ About the murders, the names of the massacred, read: KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator (Prishtinë, 1998), 30-36 and 96; Guy Dinmore, "New Kosovo Massacre May Spur NATO to Act", *The Washington Post*, September 30, 1998; Jane Perlez, Conflict in the Balkans: In Kosovo; Survivor of Kosovo Massacre Describes the Killing Garden, *The New York Times*, October 2, 1998.

¹⁰ In Vilamoura, Portugal, on September 24, 1998, the North Atlantic Council unanimously approved the issuance of ACTWARN, warning Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević that if he did not stop violence and repression against the Albanian civilian population, he would face a NATO air campaign. NATO Press Statement Vilamoura, September 24, 1998.

a final demand to the Belgrade government: "In the event that an agreement is not reached immediately to stop the war in Kosova within 96 hours, the bombing will begin".¹¹ Faced with a direct threat, Milošević "accepts NATO's conditions" on October 13, 1998.¹² However, many things remained unclear, and the main dilemma was over the guarantor of the agreement, Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milošević.¹³

Meanwhile, the case of the Reçak massacre, which took place on January 15, 1999, confirmed the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Albanian civilian population.¹⁴ In response, the international community assembled a negotiating team known as the Contact Group, consisting of the United States, Russia, England, France, Germany, and Italy. At a meeting in London on January 29, 1999, this group presented a negotiating-diplomatic option called "Diplomacy Based on the Threat of Force", giving the parties to the conflict a last chance for dialogue by urgently calling a Conference in Rambouillet. The Conference began on February 6, 1999.¹⁵ The concept of the conference was clear and without great maneuvering possibilities for the participants. From the opening of the conference, both delegations were clearly informed of the consequences of rejecting the agreement. Signing of the Rambouillet agreement¹⁶ made the presence of international forces possible as guarantors of peace in Kosova led by NATO, the disarmament of the KLA, the retention of Kosova within Yugoslavia, the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova with the exception of Yugoslav army forces that would guard the border. While the Albanians signed the agreement, the Serbian side refused, and Milošević made the decision to continue the armed offensive in Kosova. The rejection of the agreement by the Serbian-Yugoslav delegation led to a complex military intervention by NATO.

¹¹ Declassified Documents concerning National Security Council, Situation Room: WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504, Summary of Conclusions of Princip s Committee Meeting on Kosovo, September 30, 1998.

¹² KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told: An analysis of the human rights findings of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission October 1998 to June 1999, 50.

¹³ American General Wesley Clark himself, the author of the Agreement (military part), at the NATO Council session shows dilemmas about Slobodan Milošević keeping his word. Claiming that they violated dozens of signed agreements during the wars in BiH and Croatia. "With the agreement, we did nothing more than buy time, if diplomacy does not work, we will face a conflict very soon." Wesley K. Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, (Prishtinë: Zëri, 2003), 189; Paul Taylor, "Duhet të bëjmë diçka – luftimet do të rifillojnë", *Koha Ditore*, 14 nëntor, 1998, 3.

¹⁴ Special Report: Massacre of Civilians in Racak Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) January 17, 1999.

¹⁵ Statement by the Contact Group issued in London on January 29, 1999.

¹⁶ "Rambouillet Accords, Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo." *United Nations*. June 7, 1999.

NATO intervened militarily on March 24, 1999. The bombing combined with negotiations lasted for 78 consecutive days.¹⁷ During all these days, the bombing campaign did not stop despite requests for a pause, as an opportunity for reflection. The air campaigns took place in three phases and intensified week by week. From the beginning of the bombing, the Serbian leadership pinned its hopes on Russian diplomatic activity that would lead to divisions among NATO allies, which would lead to a cessation of the bombing.¹⁸ However, NATO demonstrated military and political cohesion on the 50th anniversary of its founding in Washington in April 1999.¹⁹ From Washington, the leaders of NATO confirmed a unified attitude towards the solution of the Kosova crisis and determination to continue the bombing campaign. At the same time, exactly the opposite of Serbia's diplomatic aspirations, they left the way open for Russian efforts to mediate in a quick resolution of the conflict over Kosova.²⁰ The Western allies, with particular emphasis on the United States, despite their disagreements with Russia over Kosova, included the former Soviet state in all diplomatic efforts. In order to intensify diplomatic efforts, the United States appointed Assistant Secretary of State Strobe Talbott to the negotiating team in early May 1999, and the Russians appointed their former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. In the following days, they were joined by Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, representing the United Nations and the European Union. All the talks took place in a discourse in which the United States, together with the EU, tried to convince Russia of a common international position that could force Milošević to sign peace terms. Another challenging issue in these negotiations was to convince Russia²¹ that Serbia withdraws all Serbian military and police forces from Kosova.

As expected, there were many differences, which led to several successive meetings between diplomats on one side and Milošević on the other. The diplomatic team agreed that before presenting their final proposal to Milošević, a consensus between NATO and Russia was

¹⁷ Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force ("KFOR") and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, June 9, 1999.

¹⁸ Massimo D'Alema, *Kosova, Italianët dhe lufta*, Intervistë e gazetarit Federico Rampini, (Tiranë: Vegen, 2004), 22.

¹⁹ Ivo H. Daalder & Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 138.

²⁰ Thomas W. Lippman & William Drozdiak, "NATO Softens Conditions on Kosovo", *The Washington Post*, April 24, 1999.

²¹ Martin Walker, "Revealed: How deal was done in Stalin's hideaway", *The Guardian*, June 5, 1999; Strobe Talbot, *The Russia Hand: A memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, (New York: Random House, 2003), 318; Martti Ahtisaari, *Detyra në Beograd*, (Helsinki: Fili, 2000), 117; Talbot – Çernomërdin, *Prapaskenat e kapitullimit të Millosheviçit – Negociatorët e paqes për Kosovën*, (Tiranë: Helga Secrets, 2009), 196-197.

necessary. After several hours of talks, with the involvement of high political levels, it was agreed the Agreement²² being non-negotiable, to be handed to the Serbian leadership on June 2, 1999. Milošević began to falter in several directions: internally, things began to move in comparison to the first month of NATO airstrikes, when there seemed to be complete national unity against it. In the second month, things began to change. The opposition began to confront Milošević.²³ Another sign that Belgrade was feeling the pressure was the victory of the KLA in the Battle of Pashtrik with Operation Arrow (Alb., Operacioni Shigjeta), which greatly worried Milošević.²⁴ Therefore, on June 10, 1999, the Serbian leader finally agreed to peace terms²⁵ and Serbian military and police forces began to withdraw from Kosova. On June 12, 1999, NATO troops entered Kosova, and 9 years later, on February 17, 2008, in coordination with relevant international institutions, Kosova declared independence.²⁶

1. THE RISE OF SLOBODAN MILOŠEVIĆ – EUTHANASIS OF INSTITUTIONAL LIFE IN KOSOVA

1.1 The rise of Serbian nationalism

Serbian nationalist circles accepted the 1974 Constitution with resistance²⁷ which granted self-governing autonomy to Kosova and Vojvodina. However, at that time the protests remained isolated, due to the so-called reform that manifested itself through the alleged comprehensive Yugoslav compromise.²⁸ The period of isolated discontent ended with the death of communist leader Tito on May 4, 1980. Official Belgrade immediately began to find reasons for more intense

²² The ten-point proposal envisaged that NATO would be at the centre of the peacekeeping force and that KFOR would be deployed in every part of Kosovo. Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 145-149.

²³ Gabriel Partos, "Serbia: Cracks begin to show", *BBC*, May 26, 1999

²⁴ William Drozdiak, "The Kosovo Peace Deal", *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999.

²⁵ Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force ("KFOR") and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, June 9, 1999.

²⁶ Chris Bird, "Flowers for Nato, jeers for Serbs", *The Guardian*, June 14, 1999; "NATO peacekeeping commander arrives in Pristina" CNN, June 12, 1999; Dan Bilefsky, "Kosovo declares independence", *The New York Times*, February 17, 2008.

²⁷ The Constitution of 1974 gave Kosovo the right to be one of the eight units of the Federation of Yugoslavia. Article 3 of the Constitution guaranteed Kosovo territory and borders that could not be changed without its consent. Kosovo had a legislative parliament, a presidency as the holder of sovereignty, a government, all levels of courts, a central bank, etc. Kosovo received the right to legal equality with other republics, so any constitutional change required a two-thirds majority of Kosovo delegates. *Kushtetuta e Krahinës Socialiste Autonome të Kosovës*, (Prishtinë: Rilindja, 1974), 7-201.

²⁸ Ivan Miladinović, "Uzaludne poruke Dobrice Ćosića: Početak procesa osamostaljenja Kosova i Metohije", (Novosti, Beograd, 06.08. 2020).

political and police repressive action in Kosova. The Kosova youth demonstrations of 1981 were used as a pretext for such action.

In 1981, Kosova was gripped by a wave of protests demanding social and political equality with other Yugoslav nations. The protests began on the evening of March 11, 1981, when thousands of students demonstrated for their demands for better living and studying conditions.²⁹ While students waited for the reaction of the institutions, they were brutally persecuted by the military police. Despite the violence, the young Albanians persisted in their demands, organizing a second protest after 15 days (March 26). This time, with the support of numerous citizens, they made political demands: "Republic of Kosova".³⁰ On April 1 and 2, Pristina and all of Kosova were involved in other mass protests supported by thousands of citizens, farmers, and workers. The demonstrations of Albanian student youth were ruthlessly suppressed by the Yugoslav authorities, primarily because this uprising threatened the disintegration of the political and territorial system of the SFRY.³¹ Invoking these arguments, the Yugoslav socialist regime, under majority Serb control, used almost all forms of violence against student youth and all their supporters. The protests were suppressed by the Yugoslav military police, with a toll of about ten killed, hundreds injured, and thousands detained.³² The process of differentiation has denied many young people the right to education and work, and has resulted in arrests³³ Hundreds of students and high school students, and tens of thousands of citizens who supported the protests were deprived of their liberty, simply because they demanded political equality within the Republic of Kosova.³⁴

²⁹ Agjencia Shtetërore e Arkivave të Kosovës (më tej, ASHAK), Fondi Gjykata e Qarkut Prishtinë (1981), Dosja, 152-149 Kutia 23, fleta, 1-12.

³⁰ Mehmet Hajrizi, *Histori e një organizate politike dhe Demonstratat e vitit 1981*, (Tiranë: Toena, 2008), 181.

³¹ *Rilindja*, 4 prill, 1981, 4.

³² Official data speak of 9 demonstrators, among whom were Naser Hajrizi, Asllan Pireva, Rizah Matoshi, Sherif Frangu, Salih Zeka, Ruzhdi Hyseni, Salih Abazi, Malush Abrashi, Nesim Dana and 15 injured. Meanwhile, there were two killed and 17 wounded among the police force. Sabile Keçmezi-Basha, *Organizatat dhe Grupet Ilegale në Kosovë 1981-1989 - Sipas aktgjykimeve të gjykatave ish-jugosllave*, (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2003), 62; *Epoka e Re*, 6 mars / 12 maj, 2006, 9.

³³ The legal documents show the determination of judges and prosecutors to take immediate measures to punish the organizers and supporters of the protests. Jurisprudence in the document states that it successfully and smoothly used all legal possibilities, which is why from March 1981 to September 1982 criminal proceedings were conducted against 527 individuals, where very severe sentences were imposed. Of the total number of prosecuted persons, 203 defendants were sentenced to prison terms of 6 to 15 years. ASHAK, Fondi, D. R. Komisije - Dosja, Këshilli Ekzekutiv i Kuvendit KSA të Kosovës, (Tepër rezervat), Raport mbi shpërnguljen e masave dhe aksioneve në pengimin e shpërnguljes së Serbëve dhe Malazezëve nga Kosova, (Prishtinë tetor, 1981), 23 – 34.

³⁴ Muhamedin Kullashi, "Kriza kosovare dhe kriza e Jugosllavisë", In: *Ç 'thonë dhe Ç 'kërkojnë kosovarët*, (Tiranë: 8 Nëntori, 1989), 53-63.

In this atmosphere of growing Serbian nationalism, finding a strong leader "who would restore the identity of the Serbs" was best managed by Slobodan Milošević. In the mid-80s, he began preparations for taking over power in Serbia, and one of his first goals was the defeat of political opponents (former mentor Ivan Stambolić) and control of the media.³⁵ Aware of the importance of propaganda, he soon took control of the state television of Serbia and the very influential newspaper "Politika". Milošević saw the media as an essential instrument of his rule, because through television and its manipulation he would more easily control the party, security services, army, academy, etc., which would eventually become his instruments.³⁶

As a campaign method for winning power, Milošević chose rallies that, in his opinion, could more easily justify political changes with slogans: "the people demand it", "We will reform the political system, in which Serbia will gain its legitimate territory", etc.³⁷ In the so-called "truth rallies" often expressed "solidarity with the Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosova", which, in addition to the conflict between the republic's communist presidencies, announced a propaganda war that prepared the public for a wide-ranging inter-ethnic conflict.³⁸ Milošević, together with his loyalists, went so far in propaganda that he publicly justified the war before it even began.³⁹ Thus, on television and in the pages of newspapers, topics and statements such as: "Serbs are victims, centuries-old victims of Turkish pressure, and now victims of Albanian terror in Kosova. Victims of the Croatian genocide in World War II, also victims of the vile Slovenes who are stealing Yugoslavia's property" increasingly echoed.⁴⁰ It was not difficult to assume that the first and most painless victim of the growing and rather radical and aggressive Serbian nationalism could be the Albanians as the most undesirable and unprotected citizens. As non-Slavs, they could easily be declared "guilty" for the political, economic and national collapse of Yugoslavia.⁴¹

³⁵ Norma Percy, "Death of Yugoslavia" BBC Documentary Series, 1996.

³⁶ Besim Qeriqi, "The Beginning of the Breakup of Yugoslavia – Kosovo as starting point." Kroatologija, vol. 11, br. 2, 2020, 91.

³⁷ Percy, *Death of Yugoslavia*.

³⁸ Dušan Janjić, "Identiteti kombëtar, lëvizja dhe nacionalizmi i serbeve dhe shqiptarëve", në: *Konflikt apo Dialog, Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-serbe dhe integrimi i Ballkanit, Përmbledhje punimesh* (Pejë: Dukagjini, 1995), 145.

³⁹ Pascal Bruckner, *The Temptation of Innocence - Living in the Age of Entitlement*, (New York: Algora Publishing, 2000), 216.

⁴⁰ Adam LeBor, *Milosevic: A Biography*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 102.

⁴¹ Gani Bobi "Në vorbulën e botës jetësore të shqiptarëve sot" në: *Konflikt apo Dialog, Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-serbe dhe integrimi i Ballkanit, Përmbledhje punimesh* (Pejë: Dukagjini, 1995), 217.

All political moves related to Kosova were aimed at destroying Kosova's autonomy, which Serbian leader Milošević had already decided to do in order to ensure the adoption of Serbian amendments⁴² which will enable change, which would disempower and politically marginalize Kosova.⁴³ Milošević achieved his first significant victories at rallies held in Novi Sad and Podgorica. Then he dismissed the old and silent management⁴⁴ to his loyalists, under the pretext of not showing solidarity with the Serbs and Montenegrins of Kosova.⁴⁵ The next step was undoubtedly the replacement of the leadership of Kosova, which made it difficult to implement Milošević's project. The reasoning was based on the idea that the most important problems in Kosova are not being solved with the speed required by the situation, and neither can the rest of Yugoslavia and Serbia solve them without concrete and decisive action in Kosova.⁴⁶

1.2 Suppression of the autonomy of Kosova

Milošević's political path in Kosova was clear: the elimination of Kosova's highest officials, allegedly for encouraging the spread of Albanian nationalism. The main and most influential "target" among them was Azem Vllasi⁴⁷, former head of the Presidency of the Kosova Party, and now its member, and Kaqusha Jashari⁴⁸ as his successor. To facilitate this process, Serbian propaganda started a campaign of division between Albanians, dividing them into two

⁴² It was about putting pressure on the provincial commission, which has not yet given its consent to the 47th amendment, which enabled Serbia to change the Constitution whenever it wants and without the consent of the provincial assemblies. Nikë Gjeloši, *Kosova në udhëkryq* '89, (Itali: Editrice Velar, 1997), 98.

⁴³ Shkelzen Maliqi, *Nyja e Kosovës: as Vllasi as Millosheviqi*, (Lublanë: Knjižna zbirka KRT 1998), 251.

⁴⁴ On October 5, 1988, the party leadership of Vojvodina was overthrown, and on January 11, 1989, the leadership in Montenegro suffered the same fate. Both leaders were replaced by S. Milošević's elected officials, who were ready to accept constitutional changes that would allow Serbia to have control over the autonomous provinces as before. Viktor Meier, *Fundi i Jugosllavisë Goditja në Kosovë*, (Lublanë: Lina, 2006), 129; Slavko Ćuruvija & Ivan Torov, "Marshi drejt Luftës (1980-1990)", në: *Makthi etnik i Jugosllavisë*, (Tiranë: Albin, 1998), 89.

⁴⁵ Branka Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-up 1980-92*, (London - New York: Verso, 1993), 171; Miranda Vickers, *Midis Shqiptarëve dhe Serbëve Një Histori e Kosovës*, (Tiranë: Toena, 2004), 280.

⁴⁶ Kaqusha Jashari, *Do ta vendosim kufirin*, (Prishtinë: KOHA, 2015), 239-246.

⁴⁷ Azem Vllasi was born on 23 December 1948 in Rubovc, Kamenicë. Vllasi graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina. From 1974 to 1978, he was the Head of the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia. In the meantime, in May 1986, he was elected President of the League of Communists of Kosovo, a position he held until the autumn of 1988. Vllasi later worked as a lawyer and political advisor to many Kosovo politicians. Azem Vllasi, *Oral History Kosovo*.

⁴⁸ Kaqusha Jashari was born in 1946 in Skënderaj. She graduated from the Technical and Civil Engineering Faculty in Belgrade. From 1975 to 1988, she held high positions in the Union of Communists of Kosovo, where in 1988 she was the president of the Union of Communists of Kosovo. After leaving that position, she continued to work as the director of the Kosovo Road Fund from 1989 to 1991. From 1998 to 2008, Mrs. Jashari was the president of the Social Democratic Party. in 2007. Kaqusha Jashari, *Oral History Kosovo*.

groups: the one led by Vllasi and Jashari as "rebels" who encourage Albanian nationalism, riots and work to the detriment of coexistence in Kosova, and the so-called "good Albanians", those who have already agreed with Serbian politics, including Rrahman Morina, Hysamedin Azemi and Ali Shukri, and should be the new leadership of Kosova.⁴⁹ In all Yugoslav political forums, wherever the Serbian leadership took the floor, it incited accusations against Albanians. Petar Gračanin's assessment was in this spirit: "Today, terror reigns in Kosova, the likes of which Yugoslavia does not remember in its own territory in the post-war period."⁵⁰ During a visit to municipalities in southern Serbia, Milošević, speaking about Kosova, emphasized that the condition for solving the problem was personnel changes that meant the departure of the then leadership, "we will do that, and in this regard we will not make any compromises with anyone."⁵¹ The pressure was immense. The resistance of the Albanian leadership gave way, unable to resist Greater Serbian propaganda, until it found support at the federal level.⁵² Albanians and their Kosova were essentially "sold" to Serbia in an effort for the republics' leaders to maintain peace at home, Croatian scholar J. Glaurdić writes⁵³

Kosova was involved in a wave of multi-day demonstrations in defense of democratic values. Albanians, who made up the vast majority in Kosova, demonstrated against successive harmful decisions made by the Serbian regime. The first to demonstrate were the miners of Trepça who, as a sign of dissatisfaction, set off on foot for 52 km on November 17, 1988, from Mitrovica in the direction of Prishtina.⁵⁴ Kaqusha Jashari recalling the conversation with the director of the "Trepça" combine, Aziz Abrashi, who announced to her: "Don't resign because the miners are

⁴⁹ Meier, *Fundi i Jugosllavisë*, 127; *Rilindja*, 28 Janar, 1989.

⁵⁰ Maliqi, *Nyja e Kosovës*, 163. Petar Gračanin Perica (22. 6. 1923 — 27. 6. 2004), participant in the National Liberation war, lieutenant general of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and general of the Army of Yugoslavia in reserve, socio-political worker of the SFR Yugoslavia and the SR Serbia and a national hero of Yugoslavia. In the period from 1982 to 1985, he served as Chief of the General Staff of the JNA, from 1987 to 1989, President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, and from 1989 to 1992, Federal Secretary for Internal Affairs of the SFRY. His last military engagement was in 1999, during the NATO bombing of the FR Yugoslavia, when he voluntarily reported to the Ministry of Defense and made himself available to the military authorities. He was activated and wore a uniform until the end of the bombing, but his wish to actively participate in the defense was not granted.

⁵¹ *Rilindja*, 12 nëntor, 1988, 1-2.

⁵² Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 47.

⁵³ Josip Glaurdić, *The Hour of Europe Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2011), 36.

⁵⁴ Julie A. Mertus, *Kosovo How Myths and Truths Started a War*, (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1999), 178.

coming to Prishtina."⁵⁵ This dissatisfaction is joined by dozens of organizations from all over Kosova, thousands of workers, citizens, farmers, pupils, and students who, in the rain and cold, set off by various means of transport or on foot to the capital of Kosova – Prishtina. In order to avoid the interpretation of the demonstrations as provocative, either by the authorities or the citizens, the demonstrators carried the Yugoslav flag in addition to the Albanian flag, and the motto of the demonstrations was manifested in slogans such as: “Long live the 1974 Constitution”, “We want equality”, “Long live the brotherhood of trade unions”, “We do not want resignation”, “We do not want weapons”, etc. In parallel, the slogans that Serbian nationalists carried for months in Serbia, Montenegro and Vojvodina were: “Give us weapons!”, “Death to the Albanians!”, “One government for all of Serbia!”, “A united Serbia - our future!”, “The loss of Kosmet - the disintegration of Yugoslavia!”⁵⁶ Although the reason for the protest was the resignation of Vllasi and Jashari, the real cause of the demonstration was Milošević's threat to the autonomy of Kosova, strengthened by the 1974 constitution.⁵⁷ Delighted by the election of the new Kosova leadership led by Rrahman Morina, Serbian leaders intensified accelerated preparations for constitutional changes. Morina tried to present these changes as positive developments that he believed would not threaten Kosova's autonomy.⁵⁸ In February 1989, at a meeting with miners, Morina promised the participants of the rally that: "the fundamental principles of the 1974 constitution will not be changed, that there will be no changes of cadres under pressure, that the League of Communists of Kosova has the strength to prevent the anti-Albanian and anti-Kosova campaign". This was the naive thinking of one political current and a part of the intellectual elite of Kosova. Time has shown that not only was autonomy suppressed, but what is worse, in the following years everything that was Albanian was destroyed.⁵⁹

When it seemed that change was coming, when February 22, 1989 was set as the date of adoption of the Serbian Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, two days earlier Kosova was flooded with a great wave of strikes and demonstrations that would spread to every corner of

⁵⁵ Jashari, *Do ta vendosim kufirin*, 271.

⁵⁶ *Rilindja*, 18 nëntor, 1988, 1; *Rilindja*, 20 nëntor, 1988, 11.

⁵⁷ Glaurdić, *The Hour of Europe*, 36.

⁵⁸ Maliqi, *Nyja e Kosovës*, 251.

⁵⁹ Aziz Abrashi & Burhan Kavaja, *Epopeja e Minatorëve*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 1996), 29.

Kosova.⁶⁰ This time were the Stantërg miners⁶¹ who changed their strategy and chose a strike as a form of demonstration of dissatisfaction that began on February 20 in the mine shaft in the galleries and horizons that were about 1000 meters underground. Very quickly the news spread throughout Kosova, which forced all Kosova mines to join the Stantërg miners, increasing the number of strikers to several thousands.⁶² In short, their demands were reduced to preserving Kosova's autonomy from 1974.⁶³ Students from different faculties came forward in support of the Trepça miners. Sports hall "25. maj", which was located within educational institutions, was filled by students who showed solidarity, their number approached the figure of 10,000.⁶⁴

During the eight days of the strike, Milošević refused to meet with the miners, and as the days passed, the miners' drama continued. Over 180 of them were hospitalized, while a significant number of others received medical aid.⁶⁵ During this period, and to heighten tensions, the Serbian military and police corps used intimidation mechanisms and a form of state of siege was introduced. Prishtina was surrounded by tanks, only hospitals and the electricity grid were operational, and all schools and the university were closed.⁶⁶

Under pressure from the Serbian Republic, there was increasing talk in Yugoslav party circles about declaring a state of emergency. The Yugoslav People's Army (hereinafter: JNA) was ready to intervene, and it was clear that the crisis in Kosova was moving towards its radical solution. Slovenian political leader Milan Kučan recalls a conversation with Milošević, when the latter emphasized: "We Serbs will act in our own interests. It does not matter whether this violates the Constitution." Slovenians openly opposed the state of emergency and began to show solidarity with the miners.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *Rilindja*, 23 shkurt, 1989, 1-6.

⁶¹ The Trepça mine is located in the village of Stantërg in the municipality of Mitrovica. It is known for the production of lead, zinc, silver, crystals and various minerals. During the 1970s and 1980s, Trepça was the main industrial pillar of the Kosovo economy. Trepça Sh.A. Last updates 14.09.2024.

⁶² Glaurdić, *The Hour of Europe*, 37.

⁶³ Abrashi & Kavaja, *Epopeja e Minatorëve*, 30.

⁶⁴ *Bota e re*, 1 mars, 1989, 4.

⁶⁵ Mertus, *Kosovo How Myths*, 180.

⁶⁶ *Bujku*, 28 shkurt, 1992, 6.

⁶⁷ Percy, *Death of Yugoslavia*.

In light of the upcoming change in the status of Kosova, various associations of Slovenian intellectuals have called for a large gathering in Ljubljana to show solidarity with the Kosovars.⁶⁸ In the great hall of Cankarjev's dom, on February 27, 1989, more than 245,000 citizens signed a petition against the imposition of emergency measures, for peace and common life in Kosova. All discussants expressed great concern for the events in Kosova and the fate of the Trepça miners, stressing that saving human lives is the most urgent. The speakers drew attention to the duality of the criteria by which the Serbian demonstrations were announced as the pinnacle of democracy, while the appearance of members of the Albanian nationality was *a priori* considered unacceptable.⁶⁹ Moreover, Milan Kučan, the leader of the republic, addressing Slovenian citizens, openly stood in defense of the Albanian miners: "the strikers are not only defending the rights of Albanians in Kosova, they are defending Yugoslavia and every republic, including Slovenia."⁷⁰

After just a few hours, Serbian demonstrators flooded the streets of Belgrade. Serbia announced a boycott of Slovenian goods, with the idea of economic destabilization of Slovenia. The message of Serbian politicians was that "no citizen of Serbia will beg Slovenes to stay in Yugoslavia".⁷¹ The anti-Slavic campaign included slogans such as: "Slovenia is lying!" and "Slovenia is a traitor!" Slogans expressed intolerance towards any nation that raises its voice for justice and equality of Albanians. The demonstrators are, as before,⁷² were looking for weapons to go to Kosova.⁷³ The plan was clear, they wanted Slobodan Milošević to address them. Gathered in the central Belgrade square between 27 and 28 February 1989, they could hear his speech: "This participation of yours shows that no one can destroy our country because the people will not allow it and the people are the guarantor, the best defender..." He continued by emphasizing the slogans: "No power on earth can prevent the Serbian people and leadership from doing what they want", "Together we will fight for unity and freedom in Kosova", "We will change the Constitution and that will be progress

⁶⁸ Marie-Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*, (USA: Purdue University, 2019), 285.

⁶⁹ Rilindja, 28 shkurt, 1989, 10; Jashari, *Do ta vendosim kufirin*, 386

⁷⁰ Percy, *Death of Yugoslavia*.

⁷¹ Sonja Biserko, *Yugoslavia's Implosion: The Fatal Attraction of Serbian Nationalism*, (Beograd: The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 2012), 105.

⁷² During demonstrations in the summer and autumn of 1988 in Serbia, Vojvodina, and Montenegro, Serbian demonstrators could hear the slogans: "We are ready to organize volunteers", "We don't want appeals, we want action", "Let's go to Kosovo". There were also requests for military rule in Kosovo. Olivera Milosavljević, "Yugoslavia as a Mistake", in: *The Road to War in Serbia Trauma and Catharsis*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 70-71.

⁷³ Azem Vllasi, *Kosova: Fillim që nuk harrohet*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2017), 546.

for all peoples."⁷⁴ While comments were heard from the crowd demanding weapons and the arrest of "troublemakers," "Arrest Vllasi," and the like, as if provoking the crowd, Milošević responded: "I don't hear well." With this, he justified the protesters' demands. Addressing the angry crowd, he promised that the "inciters" of the miners' strike would be "punished and arrested." His words were greeted with thunderous cheers, to which Milošević replied: "That's how it will be and it can't be otherwise."⁷⁵ Vllasi, Abrashi and Kavaja and hundreds of others were accused and imprisoned as organizers of Albanian demonstrations in Kosova and as counter-revolutionary activists, without indictment, without individual court decisions and without defense.⁷⁶

The continuation of the implementation of Milošević's plan included the siege of Kosova. An urgent meeting of the Presidency of the SFRY was called with an agenda to analyze the situation in Kosova. In this way, the "problem" of Kosova was to be solved within the framework of the federal bodies of Yugoslavia.⁷⁷ In this context, the federal government made a decision to introduce a "state of emergency" in Kosova,⁷⁸ introducing a police and administrative blockade.⁷⁹ Industrial activity was organized as forced labor, strikes were banned, and large numbers of federal military-police forces were ordered into Kosova. It was the fourth time that a state of emergency was declared in Kosova after 1945, 1968 and 1981.⁸⁰ Kosova was overrun by police-military forces, and the JNA also began to appear, demonstrating their strength by taking tanks to the streets and flying airplanes at low altitudes over Kosova's cities.⁸¹ This entire maneuver was justified as "legal" and necessary: "all the changes we made in the Serbian structure were decided entirely by using legal measures."⁸²

For more than a year, Serbia has mobilized all mechanisms for constitutional changes. However, in Kosova, discussions on constitutional changes were not conducted, there was no necessary

⁷⁴ Laura Silber & Allan Little, *Yugoslavia Death of a Nation*, (Boston: Penguin Books, 1997), 68.

⁷⁵ Nebojša Popov, "The University in an Ideological Shell" in: *The Road to War in Serbia Trauma and Catharsis*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 318.

⁷⁶ Abrashi & Kavaja, *Epopeja*, 128-131; *Vllasi, Kosova*, 551-558.

⁷⁷ Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia Nationalism and War in the Balkans*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 107.

⁷⁸ On February 27, the Presidency of the SFRY adopted a decision on emergency measures.

⁷⁹ By order of the Yugoslav Army, 1,500 federal police officers under Serbian command were sent to Kosovo. There were also other nationalities, including 150 Slovenians. Meier, *Fundi i Jugosllavisë*, 137.

⁸⁰ Mertus, *Kosovo*, 181

⁸¹ Jusuf Zejnullahu, *Stuhi Lufte mbi Kosovë*, (Tiranë: Toena, 2007), 49.

⁸² Percy, *Death of Yugoslavia*.

preparation, satisfactory explanations and supporting materials.⁸³ With the aforementioned changes, Serbia was enabled to have full control over the police, judiciary, and civil defense, as well as in other areas of social power such as: economic, political, educational, politics, general administration and imposing the use of the official Serbian language.⁸⁴ Because of these changes, the Serbian leadership demanded mobilization, pressures regarding the implementation of the set goals, intimidation and threats began. According to information coming from Kosova, members of the provincial parliament, who were expected to have a negative attitude towards Serbian constitutional changes, were threatened in police stations. If they were to speak out against the aforementioned changes to the Constitution, their actions would be considered "counter-revolutionary."⁸⁵ The constitutional epilogue, related to the vote on constitutional changes, was devoid of regularity. A day before the vote in Kosova's provincial parliament, heavily armed federal police units patrolled every street in the capital, at a time when all mass gatherings were banned. A state of siege reigned, and the entire Parliament was surrounded by tanks, armored vehicles, helicopters, and special forces. The JNA concentrated more than 15,000 soldiers in Kosova, there were also members of the State Security and high political officials, mostly from Serbia. As a result of this direct pressure, on March 23, 1989, at the session of the Provincial Assembly of Kosova, only 10 Albanian delegates dared to vote against.⁸⁶

It became clear on the day of the vote that the constitutional changes were being introduced without the will of the majority Albanian people, when general demonstrations took place in Kosova, in which the entire population participated. According to the data of the Kosova Provincial Committee, the demonstrations began as opposition to the constitutional changes during the session of the Kosova Assembly on 23 May 1989. When the decision on the constitutional changes was made, the demonstrations spread to the entire territory of Kosova. Serbian propaganda tried to deny the violence that the police and the army used against peaceful protesters. However,

⁸³ Rustem Berisha, *Kosova mjedis tragjikisht i Ballkanit*, (Prishtinë: Fjala, 1994), 17.

⁸⁴ Neol Malcolm, *Kosova një histori e shkurtër*. (Prishtinë - Tiranë: Koha - Shtëpia e Librit, 2001), 358.

⁸⁵ Meier, *Fundi i Jugosllavisë*, 142.

⁸⁶ On this point of view, read: Sibling & Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, 68-69; Malcolm, *Kosova*, 358-359; Mertus, *Kosovo*, 182; Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 52; Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në Luftë*, 52; Oliver J. Schmitt, *Kosova, histori e shkurtër e një treve qendrore ballkanike*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 212), 243.

a large number of journalists from the most powerful world media were in Kosova at that time,⁸⁷ who in their reports pointed to the brutal repression carried out by the police forces against the demonstrators, which resulted in dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries. The official reports themselves list 20 protesters killed, 92 seriously injured and hundreds with minor injuries. 2 police officers were also killed, while 9 MIA officers suffered serious injuries.⁸⁸

According to reports from international organizations, around 900 protesters were sentenced to 60 days in prison. Many members of the intellectual elite, officials and business directors, numbering over 200, including people who signed a petition against the constitutional changes, were arrested and held without charge in administrative detention, known as “isolation”, without the right to a defense.⁸⁹

The violent constitutional change in Kosova caused delight among the political leadership of Serbia, especially since it coincided with the year of the jubilee of the six hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosova.⁹⁰ Slobodan Milošević used peculiar rhetoric: "No one is allowed to beat you" and "Every nation has love that warms the heart forever, for Serbia it is Kosova", which was broadcast dozens of times in the Serbian media.⁹¹ With such a narrative, he gathered a significant number of supporters.⁹²

1.3 Extinction of institutional life in Kosova

The policy of the Government of the SR Serbia in the spring of 1990 was clear in relation to Kosova and the Albanians, and it came down to the tendency of the political and social dominance of the national minority (less than 6% of Serbs and Montenegrins), against the absolute Albanian majority. The social transformation referred to decrees and acts that made it possible to change the names of schools, to remove the busts of significant figures from Albanian history, as

⁸⁷ On this point of view, read: John Tagliabue, “21 Reported Killed in Yugoslavia In Ethnic Albanian Disturbances”, *The New York Times*, March 29, 1989; Richard Nelsson, “How Milosevic stripped Kosovo's autonomy - archive, 1989”, *The Guardian*, March 20, 2019.

⁸⁸ Agjencia Shtetërore e Arkivave të Kosovës, Fondi, Pokrajinski Komiteta Sk Kosova Plenumi XXIII (Prishtinë, prill 1989). Kutia 18. Komiteti Krahinor i lidhjes së komunistëve të Kosovës – Kryesia - Informatë, mbi demonstratat e qytetarëve të kombësisë shqiptare prej 23 mars deri më 28 mars 1989, fleta 11.

⁸⁹ *Amnesty International Report*, (London: 1990), 263; Malcolm, *Kosova*, 359.

⁹⁰ Robert Kaplan, *Fantazma e Ballkanit një udhëtim nëpër histori* (Tiranë: Plejad, 2011), 76.

⁹¹ Malcolm, *Kosova*, 358.

⁹² Aleksa Djilas, “A Profile of Slobodan Milošević”, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 72, No. 3 June 1, 1993, 81-96.

was the case with Hasan Prishtina,⁹³ and the famous writer Hivzi Sylejmani.⁹⁴ However, there were also more radical activities, which can be defined as a form of organized action against public health. From the end of March to June 1990, the clinics of the provincial towns, and especially that of the Faculty of Medicine in Prishtina, were full of primary and secondary school students with symptoms of poisoning. The first recorded cases were from two schools in Podujevë, “Đuro Đaković” and “Osmi (8) novembar.” As reported by the Faculty of Medicine in Prishtina, by the afternoon of 22 March 1990, the influx of poisoned people continued to increase, including other centers, such as Ferizaj, Gjilan, Vushtrri, Prizren, Lipjan, Skenderaj, Mitrovica, etc. The number of students with symptoms of poisoning that day alone reached 417, while the total number of poisoned people reached 7,421.⁹⁵ The poisoning was carried out with white powder - a chemical weapon, sarin or “tabun.” In 1995 it was confirmed that the Yugoslav army was producing “sarin.”⁹⁶ Dr. Bernard Benedetti, a toxicologist who was in Kosova from March 23 to 31, 1990, described the investigation into the poisoning: “The investigation into the poisonings was difficult for us. The police who followed us at every step, which slowed down our work, hindered us the most. The police followed the doctors everywhere, but the worst was when they followed the Albanian population..., the civilian police entered the offices, gave orders to the doctors to treat the sick, I experienced this arrogance myself...”⁹⁷ Serbian journalists, scientists, politicians and diplomats interpreted the mass poisoning as “a matter of practiced theatricality” and that “even the artists at the Cannes Festival would envy the acting of the Albanians.”⁹⁸ In any case, this is just one indicator of the ongoing multidimensional pressure. For example, the replacement of management positions where Albanian employees in management positions were replaced by Serb-Montenegrins.⁹⁹ Police officers were suspended because they did not fire their firearms at

⁹³ Hasan Prishtina is one of the most important figures in the history of the Albanians. As a representative in the Ottoman parliament, he advocated for the protection of the rights of the Albanian people. He was one of the main organizers of the General Uprising of 1912, which resulted in the declaration of independence of Albania on November 28, 1912. After the creation of the Albanian state, he held various positions as deputy, minister and prime minister of Albania. [AN].

⁹⁴ For more on this, read: *Rilindja*, 23 prill, 1990, 5; *Rilindja*, 4 prill, 1990, 4; *Rilindja*, 21 maj, 1990, 2; *Rilindja*, 4 qershor, 1990, 1; *Rilindja*, 15 qershor, 1990, 1.

⁹⁵ Halim Hyseni, *E vërteta për helmimet*, (Prishtinë: Redaksia e Botimeve të Partisë Shqiptare Demokristiane të Kosovës, 1996), 21; *Rilindja*, 23 mars 1990.

⁹⁶ Malcolm, *Kosova*, 360.

⁹⁷ *Koha*, 8 nëntor, 1990, 19.

⁹⁸ Hyseni, *E vërteta për helmimet*, 40-41.

⁹⁹ Zenun Çelaj, “Ik Diferencimi”, *Rilindja*, 5 korrik, 1990, 5.

fellow citizens during peaceful protests.¹⁰⁰ The differentiation and exodus of the intellectual elite took on a transparent form, especially after the declaration of July 2nd.¹⁰¹ In 1990¹⁰² the Serbian government's order of July 3, 1990, was clear: "If Albanian nationalists and separatists continue to oppose the official policy of peace, freedom, equality, democracy and prosperity of the autonomous province of Kosova, as an integral part of Serbia, in order to prevent the full implementation and success of this program, they will be arrested by all means." Therefore, "by their actions, they will cause even greater harm to their compatriots, members of the Albanian nationality."¹⁰³

On July 5, 1990, the President of the Assembly of Kosova, Đorđe Božović, in the presence of Serbian and Montenegrin representatives, read the announcement - the Decree of the Assembly of Serbia, through which the decision was announced to dissolve the Assembly of Kosova and the Executive Council of Kosova, where the officials were dismissed.¹⁰⁴ With this act, the fate of almost two million Albanians was left at the mercy of the police and other bodies of the Socialist Republic of Serbia.¹⁰⁵ The measures used by these bodies against the Albanians in Kosova are characterized as ethnic violence within Kosova distributed in all spheres of public life in the form of discrimination, pressure and segregation of certain ethnic groups, with the majority Albanian population being declared guilty.¹⁰⁶

The situation worsened rapidly, and almost all news and information transmission was completely suspended. An information vacuum has been created. Local radio stations, television of Prishtinë, newspapers in Albanian language were taken over by Serbian communication lobbies by decision of the Serbian Government, while *Rilindja*, the most widely read daily newspaper in the Albanian language, was banned from print on August 8, 1990.¹⁰⁷ The shutdown of RTP's information

¹⁰⁰ Mikel Ndreca, *87 Vjet terror dhe gjenocid shtetëror 1912-1999*, (Prishtinë: Rentabil, 2001), 276.

¹⁰¹ July 2, 1990 marks the day when Albanian representatives in the Kosovo Assembly voted on the Constitutional Declaration, which declared Kosovo an equal subject with the other republics of the Federation of Yugoslavia. *Rilindja*, 3 korrik, 1990, 1.

¹⁰² Zejnullahu, *Stuhi lufte*, 249.

¹⁰³ Peirre Dufour, *Kosova paqja e shpërfillur*, (Prishtinë: Rozafa, 2010), 32.

¹⁰⁴ *Rilindja*, 6 korrik, 1990, 1-4.

¹⁰⁵ Idriz Ajeti, "Lakmi e paskrupullt ndaj Kosovës", *Fjala*, shtator 1990, 19.

¹⁰⁶ Silva Meznarić, "Gjinia dhuna etnike rasti i Kosovës", *Koha*, 8 nëntor, 1990, 23-30.

¹⁰⁷ Mertus, *Kosovo*, 201.

systems was accompanied by the forced dismissal of 1,350 employees (journalists, technicians, editors). Also, 550 journalists voluntarily left "Rilindja".

During 1991, 12 journalists were arrested and sentenced to prison terms of 30 to 60 days. Due to publicly expressed views in the fall of 1991, the following editors-in-chief were sentenced to 60 days each: Jonuz Fetahu, Xhemajl Rexhepi, Sanije Gashi, Veton Surroi, Jusuf Ferizi, Blerim Shala.¹⁰⁸ In this way, the majority population of Kosova was treated worse than the national minority.¹⁰⁹

In addition to freedom of speech and information, freedom of movement was also violated, and Albanian politicians were particularly exposed to it. Persecutions and pressures were carried out with a large police and military presence.¹¹⁰

The report of the US State Department also establishes that after the Serbian occupation of Kosova in 1990, any semblance of independence of the judiciary disappeared. Judicial officials as well as Albanian judges were replaced by ethnic Serbs, and thousands of Albanians were convicted in rigged trials. As a result of this pressure, some provincial Assembly delegates left Kosova to avoid prosecution.¹¹¹

Although there was no declared war, Albanians in Kosova were victims of massive human rights violations: they were killed, wounded with firearms, subjected to physical and psychological torture, deprived of personal freedom beyond the law, punished for their political beliefs, subjected to attacks and robberies, and deprived of legal protection, etc.¹¹²

Ismet Salihu's statistics show that from 1981 to 1992, 183 Albanians were killed, 16 of whom were minors and children. In addition, 63 Albanians serving in the military died under suspicious circumstances, during which forensic investigations were prevented and made impossible. Officially, all of them committed suicide. Also, during 1990 alone, 212 people were injured with

¹⁰⁸ *Bujku*, 22 shkurt, 1992, 11; *Bujku*, 9 prill, 1992, 7.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Krasniqi, "Kush i frikohet plasimit të së vërtetës", *Rilindja*, 10 korrik, 1990, 4.

¹¹⁰ Janusz Bugajski, *Ngritja e Kosovës: Artikuj dhe fjalime nga okupimi deri te pavarësia*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2006), 25.

¹¹¹ *Koha*, 6 mars, 1991, 41.

¹¹² Rifat Blaka, "Dokumentet programore të pushtetit aktual serb për ndryshimin e strukturës etnike dhe kolonizimin e Kosovës", Konferencë Shkencore. (Prishtinë: Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, 1995), 257.

firearms, while from 1981 to 1990, most of the injured did not dare to seek medical help, because the police would arrest them.¹¹³

Elements of Serbian repression were also expressed through education policy. They are noticeable through the dismissal of teachers and the limitation of enrollment in schools in the Albanian language, while finally the funding of such schools was suspended in its entirety.¹¹⁴ Albanian teachers were ordered to "work according to the Serbian curriculum and you will receive your salaries."¹¹⁵ Schools were closed by decrees of the Serbian Government under the pretext of reorganizing the education system in the Republic.¹¹⁶ In general, some researchers believe that the so-called "Serbization" of the Kosova police played a very important role in the implementation of Serbian legislation in the Kosova education system. Namely, in the process of "Serbization" of Kosova, the police took on the role of controllers of Kosova schools and staff, from which Albanians would be excluded for "non-cooperation".¹¹⁷ As Albanians did not want to accept the Serbian curriculum, the Serbian government closed all Albanian-language schools in Kosova in September 1991. Around 320,000 primary school students, 70,000 high school students and 30,000 university students decided to protest because Serbia, with the help of the police, had banned Albanians from entering educational institutions. Despite peaceful protests by teachers, pupils, students and parents, as well as non-governmental organizations, the situation did not change.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Ismet Salihu, "Proceset Penale - Politike si formë e shkeljes sistematike të lirive dhe të të drejtave individuale dhe kolektive të popullit shqiptar në Kosovë", në: *Çështja e Kosovës një problem historik dhe aktual. Simpozium i mbajtur në Tiranë më 15-16 Prill 1993*, (Instituti i Historisë Tiranë & Instituti i Historisë Prishtinë, 1996), 320. Ismet Salihu is a professor of criminal law at the University of Prishtina. He worked at the Council for the Protection of Human Rights in Prishtina.

¹¹⁴ Janjić, *Identiteti kombëtar*, 151.

¹¹⁵ *Bujku*, 15 mars, 1991, 3.

¹¹⁶ Vladan A. Vasiljević, "Kosova: Realizimi dhe mbrojtja e të drejtave të njeriut", në: *Konflikt apo Dialog, Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-serbe dhe integrimi i Ballkanit, Përmbledhje punimesh* (Pejë: Dukagjini, 1995), 3.

¹¹⁷ Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo the Politics of Identity and Space*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 77.

¹¹⁸ Ymer Jaka, "Mohimi i të drejtave të shqiptarëve në fushat e Arsimit të Shkencës të Kulturës në vitet 1981-1992", në: *Çështja e Kosovës një problem historik dhe aktual. Simpozium i mbajtur në Tiranë më 15-16 Prill 1993*, (Instituti i Historisë Tiranë & Instituti i Historisë Prishtinë, 1996), 308-309.

Janjić, *Identiteti kombëtar*, 151.

The further course of repression involved violent measures against Albanian police officers. Every day, dozens of police officers, not supporting the way of working imposed by the work obligations coming from Belgrade, resigned.¹¹⁹

A policy of violent "takeover" was also developed on the economic front, so Albanians were forcibly removed from corporations and companies at all levels and replaced with imposed Serbian-Montenegrin management personnel.¹²⁰ More than 10 million dinars¹²¹ deposited in the Bank of Kosova was diverted through financial fraud. This is money that the Albanian population collected for Radio Television Prishtina. The largest part of this money was "allocated" to the Serbian police in Kosova, and the rest to a railway company in Belgrade.¹²²

With these "economic" measures, the Serbian regime aimed to: first, maximize the exploitation of Albanian resources and plunder the wealth created, as a result of which social funds (pensions, social security, etc.) were seized and transferred to Serbia; and second, impoverishment and material degradation of Kosova Albanian families as a method that directly encourages migration and facilitates the ethnic cleansing of Kosova.¹²³

The result of these measures was that, due to fear of persecution and economic hardship, over 350,000 Albanians left Kosova for Western European countries between 1990 and 1995. This number increased even further in the following years. By January 1998, Germany had 140,000 registered Kosovar asylum seekers, with an increase of 500 to 2,000 asylum seekers each month. Other European countries, such as Switzerland, Austria, France, England, the Scandinavian countries, etc., were also facing a similar influx of asylum seekers.¹²⁴

The exodus of the population inevitably led to an economic decline. In the year of the expulsion of Albanian workers from their workplaces in 1991, economic growth fell by 20%. This decline

¹¹⁹ *Rilindja*, korrik, 1990, 13.

¹²⁰ Marenglen Verli, *Kosova dhe sfida shqiptare në historinë e një shekullit*, (Tiranë: Botimpex, 2007), 348.

¹²¹ The value of that money today would be 750 thousand euros.

¹²² *Bujku*, 15 shkurt, 1991, 6.

¹²³ Haki Shatri, "Gjenocidi serb mbi bazën socioekonomike të Kosovës", në: *Gjenocidi i pushtetit serb ndaj shqiptarëve në Kosovë gjatë viteve '90*, (Prishtinë: Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës, 2001), 109; Musa Limani, *Ekonomia e Kosovës nëpër periudha historike*, (Prishtinë: Kolegji Biznesi, 2018), 103.

¹²⁴ *Bujku*, 25 janar, 1992, 1; *Bujku*, 27 janar 1993, 4; *Bujku*, 14 shkurt 1993, 4; ICG Report, March 20, 1998, 5.

would continue in the following years, so that economy of Kosova and the level of industrial production would suffer a regression (fall) similar to that of the 1940s (1944).¹²⁵

The same repressive model destroyed the health care system. In the summer of 1990, the Albanian doctors, who provided medical assistance to the demonstrators, were dismissed from their service in the hospitals. These departures were preceded by dramatic events.¹²⁶ The culmination of the destruction of the health system was reached after July and August 1990, when the Serbian government applied violent measures also to the health system in Kosova. The consequence of this violence was the dismissal of over 1,862 health workers, including: 155 doctors, 105 specialists, 72 assistant professors, 30 docents, 30 professors, 3 professors, members of the Academy of Sciences.¹²⁷ All health care workers were dismissed based on violent decisions of the Serbian government, implemented in Kosova with the help of the police. There were cases when doctors were taken from their workplaces "in handcuffs", and sometimes they were even forcibly taken from the operating room. On this occasion, a rapid replacement of health care workers was also carried out. Namely, according to the data of the Kosova Health Trade Union, by June 1991, 800 health care workers Serbs and Montenegrins had been hired instead of Albanian health care workers.¹²⁸ Albanian citizens did not trust these doctors. The consequences of these circumstances were, for example, such that pregnant women were left without medical care and often gave birth to children in extremely inadequate hygienic conditions. Distrust was also deepened by rumors that Albanian women were being forcibly sterilized or that their children were deprived of adequate health care due to the negligence of Serbian medical personnel.¹²⁹ In this context, and contrary to international laws and conventions, Albanian children were deprived of protection and health insurance. These actions contributed to a rapid increase in child mortality in the period from 1990

¹²⁵ Mustaf Blakaj, "Rezultatet e rezistencës së afaristëve të ekonomisë së Kosovës në kushtet e okupimit serb", *Zëri*, dhjetor 1992, 22.

¹²⁶ Christine Von Kohl & Wolfgang Libal, *Kosova: Nyja e gordit në Ballkan*, (Prishtinë: Zëri, 1997), 91.

¹²⁷ *Zëri*, dhjetor, 1992, 14.

¹²⁸ About Serbian violence in health institutions, read: *Bujku*, 23 shkurt, 1991, 5; *Bujku*, 17 maj, 1991, 12; *Bujku*, 30 qershor, 1991, 3.

¹²⁹ Von Kohl & Libal, *Kosova: Nyja e gordit*, 92.

to 1999.¹³⁰ According to some researchers, elements of a policy of discrimination, violent political assimilation, and even genocide have been observed here.¹³¹

2. PACIFISM AS A FORCED SOLUTION

2.1 Kosovars opt for democracy

At a time when Eastern Europe was reeling from internal political unrest, it was becoming clearer every day that the events there heralded the arrival of a new political system - democracy.¹³² Unfortunately, due to limited human resources, not all the peoples of Yugoslavia were ready for this new model. However, the political system in most of these European countries was in a state of collapse, the common market had already been dissolved, and national and ethnic divisions pointed to the danger of possible civil wars.¹³³ In such a reality, the Albanians in Kosova (both the political representatives and the people) chose the path of democracy which was necessary to stop the fierce and long anti-Albanian Serbian regime.¹³⁴

Despite the activation of a large number of intellectuals, academics, university professors, writers and journalists, who wrote in domestic and foreign newspapers about the violence caused by the Serbian regime, their activities did not have great political significance, because they mainly articulated personal opinions and were not supported by any organized political force.¹³⁵

Until then, the leading political structure of Kosova, either as a result of pressure or political incentives of the Serbian government, lost the confidence of the Albanian people for representation, which had the effect of creating an "initiative to reject" their legitimacy in Kosova. By the end of 1989, this vacuum of political representation and representativeness will come to an end. A group of Albanian intellectuals, mainly journalists from the from the culture editorial office of the *Rilindja* press, and writers from the Association of Writers of Kosova, with German-

¹³⁰ Bajram Shatri & Halim Hyseni, "Sjelljet dhe veprimet etnocide dhe gjenocide serbe mbi arsimin dhe Shkollën shqipe në Kosovë në dritën e të drejtës ndërkombëtare", në: *Gjenocidi i pushtetit serb ndaj shqiptarëve në Kosovë gjatë viteve '90*, (Akademia e Shkencave dhe Arteve të Kosovës - Seksioni i Shkencave Shoqërore), 64.

¹³¹ Janjić, *Identiteti kombëtar*, 152.

¹³² Walter Lacquer, *Evropa në kohën tonë*, (Tiranë: Dituria, 2003), 453.

¹³³ Glaurdić, *The Hour of Europe*, 78.

¹³⁴ Azem Shkreli, "Pronarët e popullit", *Bujku*, 14 dhjetor, 1991, 2.

¹³⁵ *Zëri*, 22 prill, 1995, 32.

American encouragement,¹³⁶ launched an initiative to establish the Albanian Democratic Party.¹³⁷ The idea was that Kosova should more clearly articulate its political demands, precisely through a subject, through an organization, which will gather more people and articulately highlight the problems in that atmosphere of political and social confusion.¹³⁸ According to the initiators, the discussion consisted of a relatively narrow circle, and some of the main topics were: the issue of collecting signatures for the establishment of a new political party. Namely, according to the laws of the time, a minimum of eleven signatures were needed to establish a political party or association. Without a signature, a political party could not be registered in the Federal Secretariat of Yugoslav Jurisdiction. The initiators were afraid of giving their signatures publicly, because after the suppression of autonomy in March 1989, the regime of Slobodan Milošević placed under special surveillance every Albanian politician in Kosova who was not marked as pro-regime. The arrest of Azem Vllasi confirms this concern. The dilemma was also the question of the leader of the new political option. Two of the most mentioned names were Ibrahim Rugova, president of the Association of Writers of Kosova, and academician Rexhep Qosja. Both agreed on the basic party orientation: equality, democracy and orientation towards the West.

Both openly opposed Serbian violence in Kosova through articles and interviews in domestic and international media, but both had reservations about the way the Albanian political party was run. Rugova explained that he was quite involved in the Writers' Association, while Qosja expressed his doubts about some of the founding members. While the procedural requirement for the election of the party president was his signature on the list of founders/initiators, until half an hour before the start of the party session, it was still not known under what conditions the party president would be elected. Finally, by a unanimous decision in the premises of the Writers' Association of Kosova on 23 December 1989, the first alternative Albanian political and cultural organization was

¹³⁶ There is no official document. One of the main initiators of the establishment of the Democratic League of Kosovo, Jusuf Buxhovi, claims in his book that he had instructions from American and German diplomats for the crime of an Albanian democratic party. Jusuf Buxhovi, *Kthesa Historike - Vitet e Gjermanisë dhe epoka e LDK-së*, (Prishtinë: Faik Konica, 2008), 177-196.

¹³⁷ Buxhovi, *Kthesa Historike*, 177-196.

¹³⁸ Mehmet Kraja, *Vitet e humbura*, (Prishtinë: Rozafa, 2003), 188.

founded - the Democratic League of Kosova (hereinafter: LDK),¹³⁹ with party president Ibrahim Rugova.¹⁴⁰

In its beginnings, this political party was a fairly comprehensive movement, with few attributes of an exclusively political party. The movement's activities were determined by events taking place throughout Southeast Europe. The emphasis was placed on exposing Serbian violence, and the orientation of political activities towards pacifism, in order to ensure the existence of the people.¹⁴¹ Therefore, a significant part of the Albanian intelligentsia supported the LDK. Until then, they were mostly differentiated and excluded from institutional life. LDK managed to somewhat channelize and control the processes of disintegration of the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia and other structures in Kosova.¹⁴² In short, the establishment of the LDK was aimed at continuing the Albanian struggle in Kosova for independence and sovereignty, changing (adapting) the form and methods.¹⁴³ It was against violence and chose political struggle through diplomatic and peaceful means in its programmatic basis, along with dialogue about the equality of Kosova Albanians with other nations and other federal units in Yugoslavia.

Since the foundations of Yugoslavia were seriously shaken, the bidding was on its disintegration. In that case, according to the idea articulated through the LDK, Kosova and the Albanians would act like other federal units, following the path of Slovenia and Croatia.¹⁴⁴ Since it was the first party with a clear national identity and western democratic orientation, the LDK very quickly won the sympathy of the Albanians in Kosova, in ethnic Albanian areas in Yugoslavia, in the diaspora and in the democratic world.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Democratic League of Kosovo, hereinafter: LDK

¹⁴⁰ On the initial points of view of the founding of the Democratic League of Kosovo, read: Ibrahim Rugova, *Pavarësia dhe Demokracia intervista dhe artikuj*, (Prishtinë: Fjala, 1991), 93; Kraja, *Vitet e humbura*, 187-193; Buxhovi, *Kthesa historike*, 177-196; Haqif Mulliqi, *Vitet kur Kosova e njohu vetën - Intervistë me Milazim Krasniqin*, (Shkup: Logos, 2012), 13-23.

¹⁴¹ Ibrahim Berisha, *Utopia Reale*, (Prishtinë: OM, 2013), 18-19.

¹⁴² Mulliqi, *Vitet kur Kosova e njohu vetën*, 14-15.

¹⁴³ Osman Ismaili, *Partitë politike shqiptare dhe çështja e Kosovës*, (Prishtinë: Rilindja, 2001), 61.

¹⁴⁴ Vllasi, *Kosova*, 584.

¹⁴⁵ Ndreca, *87 Vjet terror*, 306.

From all the centers of Kosova came news about the mass dismemberment of Kosovars from the League of Communists and their membership in the LDK.¹⁴⁶ In the first month alone, according to Rugova himself in an interview with the Zagreb newspaper *Vjesnik* on February 3, 1990, a few weeks after the founding of the LDK, 150,000 citizens joined the LDK.¹⁴⁷

2.2 The first legal aspects of the statehood of Kosova

Albanian representatives in the Kosova parliament, motivated by developments in other Yugoslav republics (Slovenia and Croatia), began the process of promulgating a new constitution, which would give Kosova legal status equal to the other Yugoslav republics. On 2 July 1990, Albanian delegates representing the three houses of the Kosova Assembly (Parliament) began the procedure for amending the constitution. On the other hand, the Serbian political leadership ordered that the Assembly be guarded by police forces that day, with members of parliament banned from entering.¹⁴⁸ Human rights lawyer Eva Brentley¹⁴⁹ who had an advisory role in these processes, insisted that the vote on the constitutional change be held as soon as possible. She suggested that it was irrelevant where the meeting was held, in the assembly hall or in the courtyard. The quorum and the elected representatives conducting the process were important for the legality of the procedure.¹⁵⁰ So it happened that the courtyard of the Assembly took on the role of a hall. Since the President of the Assembly was Đorđe Božović, politically close to Slobodan Milošević, he called for a boycott of the session. Nevertheless, the session was held and a new assembly leadership was elected.

Bujar Gjurgjeala was elected President of the Assembly, having proposed the adoption of a new Constitution by adopting the Constitutional Declaration of Kosova. The deputies agreed with this proposal by plebiscite and it was passed with 114 votes in favor and no abstentions or against, with great applause. With this declaration, "Kosova is declared an independent and equal subject of the

¹⁴⁶ *Rilindja*, 7 mars, 1990; *Rilindja*, 14 mars 1990.

¹⁴⁷ Rugova, *Pavarësia dhe Demokracia*, 105.

¹⁴⁸ Hamza Halabaku, *Një ditë midis dy epokash*, (Prishtinë: AP, 2012), 72-73.

¹⁴⁹ She was a Jew born in Poland. Eva was one of the central figures of the Polish Movement led by Lech Walesa. She was known as an expert in international law who had been involved in human rights for years. She was hired as an expert on Kosovo by the Albanian-American League. Her role in the adoption of the Constitutional Declaration was considered exceptional, for which the Serbian regime imprisoned her. Luljeta Pula, *Rrëfimi i një jete për Kosovën*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2020), 16

¹⁵⁰ Pula, *Rrëfimi i një jete*, 168.

future Yugoslav Federation or Confederation, and dialogue is accepted only on an equal basis with all other peoples of Yugoslavia". With the adoption of the Constitutional Declaration: "the decisions of the Assembly of the SAP (Socialist Autonomous Province) of Kosova of 23 March 1989 are repealed".¹⁵¹ The declaration announced the equality of Kosova with other federal units, the equality of all citizens and nationalities in Kosova, the status of Albanians as a complete nation in Yugoslavia, and the respect (from now on) only of the federal Constitution. This meant that Kosova became a constituent republic of Yugoslavia or, as the statement emphasized: "an equal and independent entity within the Yugoslav Federation or Confederation".¹⁵²

Despite the dissolution of the Kosova Assembly on July 5, 1990, by the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milošević, Albanian representatives did not stop working during July and August 1990 on the preparation of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosova, which would materialize the act of declaration of July 2, 1990. Although in very difficult circumstances and under constant escort by the police and the Serbian secret service, the goal of holding coordination meetings and preparing a draft Constitution was achieved.¹⁵³

As the Yugoslav republics began to declare legal independence, the Albanians were convinced that this right belonged to them as well. Thus, on September 7, 1990 at 8:00 p.m., 54 km from the capital of Kosova in Kaçanik, supporting the right to self-determination, respecting the Constitutional Declaration of July 2, 1990, the Assembly of Kosova, at a joint meeting of the three houses, approved and proclaimed the Constitution of the Republic of Kosova.¹⁵⁴ With the new Constitution, Kosova becomes equal with other federal units, the equality of all citizens and nationalities in Kosova is guaranteed, and the status of Albanians as a complete nation in Yugoslavia is guaranteed. That is, Kosova becomes a constituent republic of Yugoslavia. In the press release, the Albanian delegates pointed out that in creating the new Kosova Constitution, they relied on the Yugoslav Constitution from 1974, according to which Kosova was one of the eight constitutional units of the Yugoslav federation.

¹⁵¹ *Rilindja*, 3 korrik, 1990, 1-3.

¹⁵² Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, 258.

¹⁵³ Zejnullahu, *Stuhi lufte*, 445-456.

¹⁵⁴ *Zëri*, 14 shtator, 1991, 9.

At the head of these political movements was the Albanian Alternative.¹⁵⁵ Its goal, its political strategy, was to resolve the Kosova problem peacefully. It was led by the Democratic League of Kosova, headed by Ibrahim Rugova, and supported by the majority of the Albanian elite of the time.

A referendum on Kosova as a free and independent state within the Yugoslav federation or confederation was held from 26 to 30 September 1991. Of the 1,051,357 eligible voters, over 99% voted in favor of independence.¹⁵⁶ It follows from all this that the LDK has organized a parallel political system of governance in Kosova.¹⁵⁷ The referendum was thus self-proclaimed by Kosova Albanians from parallel institutions established after the violent suppression of autonomy by the Milošević regime on July 5, 1990. Although in very difficult conditions, the Albanian people constituted political activity in Kosova and in the diaspora, through political parties, organizations and various humanitarian associations.¹⁵⁸

This form of political and social action was also aimed at financing Albanian education through the Central Council for Self-Finance, which later became the Kosova Financing Council. Fundraising was handled by municipal commissions, which managed to secure 60% of the funds within Kosova, and these funds were used to finance primary, secondary and higher education. The Kosova government in exile allocated one million German marks per month from its funds for the functioning of the education system.¹⁵⁹ By transferring the education system in the so-called private space, the continuity of education in the Albanian language in Kosova is ensured according to the conditions of the Albanians themselves. The renewed Albanian education in private houses and basements became known as "parallel education". It was an act that encouraged the entire Albanian community in Kosova to social action, leading to its homogenization. Albanian "parallel education" in Kosova was created as an embodiment of the peaceful resistance of Albanians and an argument proving the existence of an independent Albanian state in Kosova.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ This movement (structure) consisted of the Democratic League of Kosovo, the Association for Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI), the Council for the Protection of Freedoms and Human Rights, and the Association of Writers of Kosovo.

¹⁵⁶ *Bujku*, 8 tetor, 1991, 1.

¹⁵⁷ Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 95; LeBor, *Milosevic*, 276.

¹⁵⁸ Zekë Gecaj, "Duke pritur njohjen ndërkombëtare të vetëvendosjes", *Bujku*, 30 nëntor, 1991, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Berisha, *Utopia reale*, 35.

¹⁶⁰ Kostovicova, *Kosovo the Politics*, 97.

Another step in the consolidation of the state of Kosova was made at the session of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosova held on October 19, 1991, at which a transitional multi-party Government of the Republic of Kosova was formed, headed by a doctor, human rights activist, one of the founders of the LDK, Dr Bujar Bukoshi.¹⁶¹ According to Prime Minister Bukoshi, the primary goal of the Government was to inform the world public, political and diplomatic circles about the need to recognize the independent state of Kosova. Referring to the results of the referendum, recognition and acceptance of independence were demanded from the former republics of Yugoslavia and the EU headquarters in Brussels. Official recognition came only from Albania. "If recognition does not come from other countries, then we will consider the union with Albania as the only and lasting solution to the Albanian question."¹⁶²

Another constitutive element of the Kosova state-building process was the first multi-party elections on 24 May 1992. The elections were monitored by American and European international observers. A combined electoral system was applied: out of a total of 130 representatives in the Assembly, 100 were elected by direct voting under the majority system, and 30 representatives were elected under the proportional system.¹⁶³ The elections were held without excesses, and resulted in the absolute victory of the LDK and Ibrahim Rugova, as the first president of the pluralistic Republic of Kosova.¹⁶⁴

2.3. Peaceful orientation as a form of national resistance

It was expected, however, that Kosova would be "drowned" in a vortex of internal conflicts and fratricidal revenge, and that neither the political nor the social transition of Kosovars, which included rather rigid traditional social patterns, would succeed.¹⁶⁵ A major problem was the tradition of so-called blood feuds.¹⁶⁶ Among the Albanians, there were dozens of families who lived in isolation and hostility for years. The Belgrade media were very happy to give a wide space to the question of blood revenge, which among Albanians for "serious violations of honor"

¹⁶¹ *Bujku*, 24 tetor, 1991, 3.

¹⁶² *Bujku*, 2 shkurt, 1992, 3.

¹⁶³ Vickers, *Midis shqiptarëve dhe serbëve*, 314-315.

¹⁶⁴ *Zëri*, 30 maj, 1992, 11-12.

¹⁶⁵ *Kraja, Vitet e humbura*, 245.

¹⁶⁶ *Bujku*, 2 shkurt 1991, 4.

included the murder of the "adversary".¹⁶⁷ Faced with the repressive measures of the Serbian authorities and general lawlessness, the towns and villages of Kosova often acted according to traditional concepts, which led to mutual hostilities. It was necessary not only to stop blood feuds, but also to encourage mutual forgiveness.¹⁶⁸

In the early spring of 1990, a group of young people, mostly students and former political prisoners, launched an initiative for the so-called blood reconciliation under the motto "Hands of Reconciliation, Hands of Unity". The action took on a nationwide character. It was led by intellectuals, Muslim and Catholic religious leaders, under the leadership of the intellectual Anton Çeta. The turnout was incredible. Men and women, young men and women, old people and children – they participated in the euthanasia of blood feud among Albanians.¹⁶⁹ "History has taught us what the councils in Lezhë, Arbër and Prizren were, history will also teach our children what the councils of these days were all over Kosova." With the motto: "There is blood forgiveness, there is no blood revenge", every day hundreds and thousands of Albanians extended a hand of reconciliation by forgiving the life of a son, father, uncle, cousin. "Those other "civilized" people who brought us this evil will be surprised by the transformation of our consciousness, they ([AN] : Serbs) will continue to accuse us of barbarity in the name of the Albanian people, but we have decided to extend a hand of reconciliation by suppressing tears and sadness, for the common good of the Albanian people."¹⁷⁰ Thanks to this action in Kosova and other places where Albanians live, around 4,000 family feuds were "forgiven" within a year.¹⁷¹ Consensus was reached among all traditional and political factors on key national issues, while at the political-organizational level, consensus was reached for popular resistance to the ruling Serbian military and political elite.¹⁷²

Ibrahim Rugova, promoted as the leader of the Albanians, held a prayer, in the early spring of 1990, on behalf of the Albanian Alternative,¹⁷³ in which he appealed to stop the street demonstrations. Namely, in the demonstrations of 1988-1989, during the suppression of

¹⁶⁷ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 60.

¹⁶⁸ Anton Çeta, "Brezat që vijnë - Pa plagë të vjetra", *Fjala*, shtator 1990, 27-34.

¹⁶⁹ Drita Statovci – Halimi, "Koha mund kohën", *Rilindja*, 8 korrik 1990, 13.

¹⁷⁰ *Bujku*, 19 mars, 1990, 6.

¹⁷¹ *Bujku*, 2 shkurt, 1991, 4.

¹⁷² *Bujku*, 23 korrik, 1991, 7.

¹⁷³ The appeal was sent on behalf of: the Democratic League of Kosovo, the Association for Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI) with a branch in Prishtina, the Council for the Protection of Freedoms and Human Rights, and the Association of Writers of Kosovo. *Rilindja*, 2. veljaçe 1990., 8.

autonomy, several dozen Albanians were killed. "Let's not allow a civil war to be provoked in Kosova, which is what someone wants."¹⁷⁴ According to researcher Gene Sharp, any peaceful resistance must have at least two ongoing goals: (I) increasing internal support in large numbers and (II) increasing third-party support.¹⁷⁵ In Kosova, in both cases, peaceful resistance proved quite successful. The Albanian people had to make an effort to create a new concept of resistance in order to convince the world of their desire for a democratic solution to the problem.¹⁷⁶ Namely, Albanians had other values in their self-knowledge and self-respect: "mountain honor" and the ethics of the so-called 'clean cheek' (having honor and honesty [TN]) which meant: resistance, courage, defiance, willingness to sacrifice for national freedom.¹⁷⁷

The change in the form of opposition of the Albanians to the Serbian regime in Kosova had its justified reason. Namely, until then, other means of manifesting resistance were used (popular demonstrations, miners' strikes), and the Kosovars had many bitter experiences.¹⁷⁸ In addition, there were indications that in the first phase of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Serbian regime planned to incite war unrest in Kosova in the spring of 1990. The beginning of the Serbization of Kosova institutions, arrests without legal basis, dismissal of Albanians from leading positions, and the mass poisoning of thousands of students were to become *casus belli* for general radicalization.¹⁷⁹ For many Albanians, the renunciation of violence turned into an oppositional stance consciously directed against Serbian propaganda, which depicted Albanians as a people prone to violence.¹⁸⁰ The goal of Serbian policy in Kosova was to find "cover" for the use of "justified" force. However, the Albanians chose patience.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ *Rilindja*, 2 shkurt, 1990, 8.

¹⁷⁵ Gene Sharp, *How Nonviolent Struggle Works*, (Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2013), 84.

¹⁷⁶ "Kujt i pengon autoritetit i LDK-së - Intervistë me Anëtarin e Kryesisë së LDK-së Anton Kola", *Bota e re*, 1 shtator, 1990, 5.

¹⁷⁷ Shkelzen Maliqi, "Vetënjohja e shqiptarëve në Joviolenc (Ndërtimi i identitetit kombëtar kundrejt serbëve)." In *Konflikt apo Dialog, Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-serbe dhe integrimi i Ballkanit, Përmbledhje punimesh*. (Pejë: Dukagjini, 1995) 224-225.

¹⁷⁸ Meier, Fundi and Yugoslavia, 152-153; Clark, Civil Resistance, 46; Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e dila në wāwg*, 59; Raymond Detrez, *Kosova - Lufta e shtyrë*, (Tiranë: Skanderbeg books, 2004), 109; Métais, *Histori e Shqiptarëve*, 379-388; Dufour, *Kosovo*, 35-42.

¹⁷⁹ Maliqi, *Vetënjohja e shqiptarëve*, 224.

¹⁸⁰ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 62.

¹⁸¹ Sabit Rrustemi, "Përmendorja e durimit", *Zëri*, gusht, 1990, 21.

The LDK initiated the coordination of the work of the political parties that collaborated in the coalition government. "Decisions were made together, we decided on the organization of the referendum, the establishment of government and many other vital issues for our national existence. That's how ideas flowed, from one of us, from me to the others. The main idea was to follow a new policy, which, by establishing new Albanian parties and the Democratic League, would primarily cultivate an interest for itself in regrouping within the dominant Albanian forces."¹⁸²

400,000 signatures were collected in a short time for democracy against violence in the coordination of the KMDLNJ (Alb. Këshilli për Mbrojtjen e të Drejtave dhe Lirive të Njeriut, Council for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms) and the LDK. Also, opposition to the measures of the Serbian regime was manifested through some small but legal activities, such as jingling keys and putting lighted candles in the window.¹⁸³ The practice of nonviolence served as proof of the self-respect of Kosova Albanians.¹⁸⁴ The LDK, as the leader of the Albanian Alternative, as well as its leader Rugova, built a platform of nonviolence based on several points: (1) preventing bloodshed - violent revolt, (2) unifying the Albanian factor - national reconciliation, (3) internationalizing the issue - presenting the truth about Kosova at the international level, (4) resolving the status of Kosova through diplomatic means, i.e., through international intervention.¹⁸⁵ The determination of the Albanian people to resolve the Kosova issue peacefully, without the use of force, was in accordance with international law and the new international order that emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The goal was to create a new order by embracing democracy that would take into account the aspirations of the Albanians under the leadership of the LDK, invoking democratic values. It was believed that in this way the Kosova issue could be resolved peacefully with Serbia.¹⁸⁶ This hope was built on a fundamental misconception, which completely ignored the broader geopolitical context in which Slovenes, especially Croats and

¹⁸² Ibrahim Rugova, *Çështja e Kosovës - Biseda me Marie-Françoise Allain dhe Xavier Galmiche*, (Prishtinë: Faik Konica, 2005), 110-127.

¹⁸³ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 61.

¹⁸⁴ Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 68.

¹⁸⁵ Rugova, *Pavarësia dhe Demokracia*, 118-196; Rugova, *Biseda me Marie-Françoise Allain dhe Xavier Galmiche*, 110-140; Malcolm, *Kosova*, 363.

¹⁸⁶ Fejzullah Berisha, "Shtetësia e Kosovës dje dhe sot", *Bujku*, 28-30 nëntor, 1995, 9.

Bosniaks, had to fight for their independence through wars. Kosova had even less chance of a peaceful solution due to many historical political issues.

Fehmi Agani, a member of the LDK Presidency, justified the pacifist initiative in an interview: "Let violence belong to the invaders and let us not legalize the violent countermeasures of the occupation regime, let us not legitimize state violence and terror. Nonviolent resistance, no matter how long the path may seem, can be the most effective and promising path today."¹⁸⁷

On July 5, 1990, Serbian police and military forces invaded the institutions of Kosova. However, Prishtina remained empty. Several foreign journalists were waiting for possible demonstrations, which did not happen.¹⁸⁸ The choice of passivity, according to Rugova, was more of a political resistance that showed that people had begun to think politically and a new awareness was created that Kosovars could and wanted to resolve the accumulated issues through political means.¹⁸⁹ Starting from these principles, the Belgian journalist Karol von Ket, who was familiar with the violence in Kosova, addressed the Albanians: "We know your wound, which is constantly draining, for now we cannot help you more, in this complicated situation. Don't lose hope, don't lose patience! Kosova looks like a big prison, where Albanians have been found guilty, have been convicted, and are being punished because they are seeking to live like others and have the same rights as others, all the people on this globe".¹⁹⁰

At the moment when JNA tanks were passing through Slovenia and Croatia, when their leaders were looking for allies, Rugova refused without hesitation. He warned that the Albanians would be dragged into a general conflict that would be destructive for them, but he openly supported the right of the republics to independence, as Kosova also demanded that right.¹⁹¹ Albanians, in addition to their chosen pacifism, had no military means either.¹⁹² Kosova, unlike Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, did not have its own police force, nor officers capable of structuring a serious military organization. In this context, any attempt at a more active military organization in Kosova

¹⁸⁷ *Bota e re*, 15 shtator, 1990, 5.

¹⁸⁸ Zejnullahu, *Stuhi lufte*, 420.

¹⁸⁹ Rugova, *Pavarësia dhe Demokracia*, 160.

¹⁹⁰ *Bujku*, 9 janar, 1992, 5.

¹⁹¹ Milanka Saponja-Hadzic, "Njeriu me shallin evropian", *Koha Ditore*, 15 dhjetor, 1997, 8.

¹⁹² Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 60.

had potentially tragic consequences for the people of Kosova.¹⁹³ Not only Ibrahim Rugova, but also Alija Izetbegović rejected war as an option, hoping for international intervention.¹⁹⁴

The purpose of postponing the war was to allow time for recovery, an attempt at diplomatic resolution of the problem, and the parallel formation of a new society and army.¹⁹⁵ German journalist Dietrich Willier described how Kosova Albanians have chosen a peaceful democratic political path, which is a new quality and an excellent example in Europe.¹⁹⁶ Over time, Albanian passive resistance gained more and more space and influence on the international factor, related to the violence of the Serbian regime in Kosova.¹⁹⁷ The political leadership of Kosova (LDK) has built a narrative of waiting – patience. According to the Albanian language dictionary, the word Durim (Patience) means the ability to endure, someone's quality of being prudent, restrained and cool-headed, etc. As a sign of solidarity with this political vision, children began to be given names: Durim (which referred to a prayer for patience), Pajtim (as a call to all Albanians for unity), Qëndresë (to be resistant, against any violence and provocations).¹⁹⁸ Rugova pointed out; ... "we were directed by pacifism, non-violence, in the long term, to resist, to restrain our people, to survive. Knowing that it's not about a few days, but a few years."¹⁹⁹ In the following months and years, this slogan was treated as the main refrain: "Patience, patience", which Rugova repeated every Friday, at press conferences and everywhere else in his speeches. It was also an American (Western) refrain, addressed to the Albanians.²⁰⁰

In this period, it was clearly observed that the Serbian policy in Kosova was not spontaneous or accidental, but was designed and given by the Serbian academic and scientific authorities, i.e. the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU). It was a global Serbian policy shaped into a daily policy with the aim of ethnic cleansing of the Albanian people.²⁰¹

¹⁹³ Blerim Shala, "S'ka kthim prapa", *Zëri*, 21 maj, 1994, 9.

¹⁹⁴ Daniel Server, *From War to Peace in the Balkans, the Middle East and Ukraine*, (Washington: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 20-21.

¹⁹⁵ Maliqi, *Shkelzen Shqiptarët dhe Evropa*, (Pejë: Dukagjini, 1994), 143.

¹⁹⁶ *Zëri*, 19 nëntor, 1994, 24-25.

¹⁹⁷ Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 80.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 46.

¹⁹⁹ Rugova, *Biseda me Marie-Françoise Allain dhe Xavier Galmiche*, 132.

²⁰⁰ Buxhovi, *Kthesa e historike*, 339.

²⁰¹ Osmani, *Durimi*, 11.

From the Western perspective, the Kosova problem is primarily seen as a problem of human rights violations.²⁰² During the 1990s, the US Congress, most European Union countries, including the European Parliament itself, passed resolutions condemning the violence in Kosova.²⁰³ It was concluded that the Republic of Serbia is violating human rights and freedoms in Kosova at all levels.²⁰⁴ All of these resolutions proved that the Kosova problem was internationalized in a positive sense, to which the entire Kosova political elite contributed.²⁰⁵ During this period, institutions of government for Albanians in Kosova were created, democratic political parties and their leaders were born, and a general institutional reorganization took place.²⁰⁶ "The Serbs tried to kill our society, but instead we woke up," activist Igballe Rugova said at the time.²⁰⁷ The interest of the international community was to stop Serbian armed aggression in Kosova. Giving in to the Serbian side would radicalize the Albanian population. This would change the tactics of implementing the Kosova issue.²⁰⁸ Senator Robert Dole highlighted the issue of Kosova before the US Senate.²⁰⁹ According to him, the Albanians in Kosova were faced with brutal violence and systematic repression. Dole therefore proposed Resolution no. 257, related to the issue of the Albanian people in Kosova. The resolution requests that the US: (1) exert pressure for the immediate inclusion of Kosova representatives in the EU peace conferences, (2) condemn the Government of Serbia for imposing a state of emergency in Kosova, (3) ask the United Nations to immediately send observers to Kosova to monitor the situation, (4) strongly support the aspirations of the Albanian people in Kosova for democracy and self-determination.²¹⁰ The leadership of the Kosova Albanians did everything to internationalize their peaceful resistance and the Kosova

²⁰² *Bujku*, 2 shkurt, 1992, 12.

²⁰³ About resolutions, international appeals in more detail: *Bujku*, 15 shkurt, 1991, 4; *Bujku*, 16 shkurt, 1991, 11; *Bujku*, 22 shkurt, 1991, 10; *Bujku*, 23 prill, 1991, 10; *Bujku*, 16 qershor, 1991, 10.

²⁰⁴ *Bujku*, 12 mars, 1991, 4.

²⁰⁵ *Bota e re*, 18 prill, 1991, 8.

²⁰⁶ Rrustem Rugova, "Fundit i kohës së luftës ilegale", *Bujku*, 26 shkurt 1993, 4.

²⁰⁷ *Fjala*, tetor, 1991, 9.

²⁰⁸ Enver Maloku, "Testimi i pozicionit të popullit dhe të udhëheqjes së Kosovës", *Bujku*, 25 nëntor, 1992, 3.

²⁰⁹ A former World War II veteran, Dole is known as a person who had a fairly large influence on the political life of the United States. He served in Congress for decades, was the leader of the Republicans in the Senate. In the 1996 elections, he won the Republican nomination for President of the United States. Despite his defeat, he continued to be active in politics. Senator Dole was one of the largest lobbyists for Kosovo, sensitizing international opinion in favor of protecting the rights of Albanians and their democratic aspirations for a free and independent Kosovo. [AN].

²¹⁰ *Bujku*, 1 mars, 1992, 1.

issue. But in 1992 and the following years, it became clear that the international community was overburdened with dealing with the general Yugoslav crisis, especially the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In these circumstances, the "great powers" focus their interest on the events on the battlefields, and not on the pacifism of the Kosova Albanians.²¹¹

3. FIRST STEPS TOWARDS ARMED CONFLICT

3.1 Loss of hope - searching for an alternative

With the intensification of conflicts and wars in the Yugoslav republics, Kosova remained on the margins of international interests. A kind of relative peace was maintained mainly as a result of the balance between Serbs uninterested in inciting and opening a new front, and Albanians who feared that if war broke out, they would be expelled from their homes like thousands of Croats and Bosniaks.²¹² The main dilemma was how long the *status quo* could last and at what cost. Adem Demaçi,²¹³ who spent more than 28 years in Serbian prisons, appealed to political parties to establish proactive policies (let the people stay and endure, but not to sleep). "Not to allow them to be provoked, to enter into a war that would be disastrous for all sides, both for Albanians and for other nations. But with the fact that they are ready to oppose any dark intention of the opponent".²¹⁴ Demaçi continued: "Sovereignty and independence require a lot of work, a lot of effort. Self-organization is an immediate demand for all Albanians. Now there is no room for premature hopes. We must urgently reject the illusions that someone will start taking an interest in our interests".²¹⁵

²¹¹ Schmitt, *Kosova*, 252.

²¹² Vickers, *Midis Shqiptarëve dhe serbëve*, 320; Tim Judah, *Kosova Luftë dhe Hakmarrje*, (Prishtinë: KOHA, 2002), 101.

²¹³ He was born in Prishtinë in 1936. He is one of the most important political names in Kosovo after World War II, becoming a symbol of the Albanian resistance until the liberation of Kosovo in 1999. From a young age, with courage and determination, he began to write about the violence and numerous injustices that the Albanian people experienced in Yugoslavia. As a result of this approach, Demaçi received 28 years in prison: the first from the age of 22 in the period 1958-1961, the second during the years 1964-1974, and the third in 1975-1990. After his release from prison in 1990, Demaçi continued his activity. For several years, he headed the Council for the Protection of Human Rights. During the Kosovo War of 1998-1999, Demaçi was elected political representative of the KLA General Staff with an office in Prishtinë. [AN].

²¹⁴ *Bujku*, 24 nëntor, 1991, 5.

²¹⁵ *Dielli*, 1 nëntor, 1991, 6.

From the adoption of the strategy of so-called peaceful resistance to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, part of the Albanian population in Kosova began to see things more objectively. The peace movement began to lose supporters from within its circle, who began to consider other solutions - including war. Even the international community, which until recently believed in a united Yugoslavia²¹⁶, began to look at the problem of Yugoslavia differently because the war now defined their mutual political relations, but also their mutual relations among themselves.²¹⁷ This was best seen when Kosova remained excluded from the negotiations on the dissolution of Yugoslavia. At that time, the Belgian newspaper *Le SOIR* wrote: "If the European Community does not quickly invite the Albanians to a conference, it risks giving Serbia the illusion that it can win any war with impunity."²¹⁸ It was a very critical time for the Albanians, patience began to be lost, the pressure on the Albanian leadership, which was looking for effective alternatives, increased. Criticism was largely based on the impatience of Albanians towards the aggressive Serbian policy.²¹⁹ Violence could not be tolerated indefinitely: "it will get better, others will help us."²²⁰ There was great solidarity among the Albanians, but as far as patience was concerned, people were running low.²²¹ It seemed that if the international community did not express clear solidarity, the repressive situation in Kosova could quickly reach a climax. It could happen that President Ibrahim Rugova, elected by the Albanian population, who had been pursuing a peaceful policy against the Serbs for years, would gradually lose support.²²² In this spirit, there were proposals and recommendations that came from some international circles regarding the future status of Kosova, which deviated from the legally announced determination of the Albanian people for independence.²²³ Rexhep Qosja, from the beginning of the determination of the Albanian leadership for passive resistance, notes that regardless of the importance that the international factor has and will necessarily have in the choice of the Kosova issue and the Albanian issue in general, Kosova has no right to create the illusion that someone else can bring freedom. He used history as an argument that no people ever "gained" freedom. Therefore, Qosja insisted on the fact

²¹⁶ Statement by US Secretary James Becker and EU Minister on June 23, 1991.

²¹⁷ Behlul Beqaj, "Rishqyrtim i një strategjie", *Shkëndija*, dhjetor, 1991, 3.

²¹⁸ *Bujku*, 23 shkurt, 1992, 9.

²¹⁹ Merxhan Avdyli, "Akrobacionet politike dhe politika", *Zëri*, nëntor, 1992, 19.

²²⁰ *Fjala*, tetor, 1991, 9.

²²¹ *Bujku*, 9 shkurt, 1992, 9.

²²² *Bujku*, 24 nëntor, 1992, 1.

²²³ Avni Spahiu, "Kosova dhe realizimi politik", *Bujku*, 10 prill, 1992, 1.

that Albanians in Kosova must earn their freedom by themselves: through their work, sweat and sacrifice.²²⁴

Critics were convinced that the strategy of patience would not lead to liberation. The creators of this policy (Adem Demaçi) gathered in vain in coordination councils and tried in vain to raise the level of organization.²²⁵ The pacifist policy created the idea that the international community would reward the Albanians in Kosova for their silence, listening and patience by "making" independence for them.²²⁶ When Kosova did not receive support at the conferences organized by the European Community, related to the state heritage of Yugoslavia, first in The Hague and Brussels²²⁷ and then in London and Geneva, a shock followed.

Conference organizers, 12 countries of the European²²⁸ community announced their intention to bring peace to all components of the former Yugoslavia, offering a lasting solution that would justly respond to their concerns and aspirations.²²⁹ The principles agreed upon by international representatives were: (1) There will be no change of borders by force, unless this is achieved by agreement of the parties to the conflict. This was the fundamental concept of the international community during all the wars in Yugoslavia. (2) Human rights and freedoms must be respected in what remains of Yugoslavia and (3) Special attention should be paid to all legitimate principles and aspirations.²³⁰ In all these developments, the Albanians, as the indigenous inhabitants of Kosova, had all the predispositions for a clear definition of a nation (a political category). Demographically speaking, they constituted a population of three million inhabitants.²³¹

²²⁴ Rexhep Qosja, *Strategjia e bashkimit kombëtar*, (Tiranë: Toena, 1998), 129-130.

²²⁵ Përmbledhje artikujsh nga Gazeta "Çlirimi" I, korrik 1993 - shkurt 1996, (Tiranë: EuroRilindja, 1998).

²²⁶ Pula, *Rrëfimi i një jete*, 265.

²²⁷ From September 12, 1991 to August 14, 1992, thirteen plenary sessions were held, eight of which were held in The Hague and the other five in Brussels. The main topic was international efforts to find a peaceful solution to the problem of Yugoslavia. British politician Lord Peter Carrington led the talks. Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, *Diplomacia mbi tehun e thikës: Pengimi i konfliktit etnik dhe grupi i punës për minoritetet i Konferencës për Jugosllavinë*, (Tiranë: Toena, 2010), 45-46.

²²⁸ Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, Great Britain, Greece, Spain, Portugal.

²²⁹ Ahrens, *Diplomacia mbi tehun e thikës*, 44.

²³⁰ *Zëri*, 22 korrik, 1992, 10.

²³¹ Kudret Velça, "Londa 2 duhet ta korrigjojë Kibdrën 1", *Bujku*, 27 gusht, 1992, 4.

The main failure of the conferences brokered by Lord Carrington was most evident with regard to Kosova. The starting assumption, that republics are states, where Kosova was seen as part of Serbia, did not recognize the specificity of Kosova's status, with the argument that Kosova is a federal unit similar to a republic. Also, the aspirations of the Albanian people expressed in legal and constitutional documents were not accepted.²³² such as: the Constitutional Declaration of July 2, 1990, the Constitution of September 7, 1990, as well as the referendum on independence held from September 26 to 30, 1991, the conclusion of which was an independent and neutral Kosova, open to Albania and Serbia, and other neighboring countries.²³³ Carrington himself, during an interview in the Albanian weekly *Zëri* on August 22, 1992, admitted: "I was obliged to seek all solutions within the existing borders. We looked at the Kosova problem within the borders of Serbia, which we did wrong."²³⁴ In response to this approach of disrespect, an invitation was sent to Ibrahim Rugova: "If you are planning to come to London during the Conference (26-28 August 1992), I am happy to inform you that you and your delegation will be able to have access to the 'Queen Elisabeth II' Conference Centre... Since for practical and other reasons it will not be possible to provide your delegation with access to the conference hall, the organizers will provide a 'Salle d'écoute' (listening room) where the proceedings of the conference will be broadcast live."²³⁵ Therefore, the international arguments were that Kosova and the province of Vojvodina are not recognized as sovereign parts of the Yugoslav federation and therefore are not recognized as parties in the question of the succession of Yugoslavia.²³⁶ The situation was even more complicated, as O. Schmitt writes, because many Western prime ministers and their foreign ministers saw Kosova as an internal matter of Serbia, not as a republic with the right to secede.²³⁷ It was a simplistic approach by European conference organizers to quickly find an adequate formula for untangling the Gordian knot in the Balkans.²³⁸ The London Conference (August 26-28, 1992) regarding the Kosova issue finally published documents according to which Serbia

²³² Fehmi Agani, "Konferenca e Londrës ç'është dhe ç'mund të jetë", *Zëri*, 22 korrik, 1992, 6.

²³³ *Bujku*, 26 gushtë, 1992, 5.

²³⁴ *Zëri*, 22 gusht, 1992, 10.

²³⁵ Marc Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar, Administrimi ndërkombëtar i luftës për pavarësi*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2009), 101-102.

²³⁶ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në Luftë*, 77.

²³⁷ Schmitt, *Kosova*, 252.

²³⁸ Nazmi Misini, "Filozofia e durimit dhe e pritjes", *Bujku*, 20 gusht, 1992, 2.

should restore full civil and constitutional rights to the inhabitants of Kosova and Vojvodina.²³⁹ Ignoring the Kosova issue continued at the Geneva Conference (January 2, 1993)²⁴⁰ which was closed, with numerous criticisms and without results.²⁴¹ Qosja then writes that international factors can play a major role in solving the Kosova issue, as well as the Albanian issue in general, only if they are inspired by the demands and resistance of the Albanians.²⁴² On the other hand, the Albanian leadership believed that Kosova was increasingly on the agenda of a general solution to its status. As Agani said at a press conference: "Kosova and the Albanians have finally received the attention they deserve from the international community. The London Conference in particular, he said, very seriously faced the fact that when it comes to Albanians in Kosova and the territories of the former Yugoslavia, there can be no question of any minority issue, but rather the issue of a people of three million, just like the issue of any other people."²⁴³ Or, as Prime Minister Bujar Bukoshi pointed out in an interview, despite statements, the essence of the Kosova problem has not yet begun to be resolved. The range of statements varies among Western governments. Bukoshi points out that the Kosova issue has moved from ignorance to a good knowledge of the historical, political and cultural side, which shows that progress is a certain process where the "peaceful path" is the best for Kosova.²⁴⁴

However, the international community largely focused on appeasing Serbia over the status of Serbs in Croatia and elsewhere. While this was a compromise in Serbia's favor, it did not satisfy the Greater Serbia agenda.²⁴⁵ This position of the European Union was interpreted as unilateral and as a favor to give legitimacy to Serbian actions through force and violence. Serbia took these concessions as a priority for conditioning any agreement.²⁴⁶ The European Community's proposals for a lasting peace in the Balkans were unsuccessful. This meant that the primary principle of stopping the war in former Yugoslavia failed. This led to changes within diplomatic structures. First of all, American diplomacy became directly involved, through the mediation of Assistant

²³⁹ Ahrens, *Diplomacia mbi tehun e thikës*, 98.

²⁴⁰ International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia in Geneva (ICFY), 2 January 1993.

²⁴¹ Glenny, *Histori e Ballkanit*, 639-640.

²⁴² Rexhep Qosja, "Londra e mallkuar", *Zëri*, 5 shtator, 1992, 4-5.

²⁴³ *Bujku*, 29 gusht, 1992, 4.

²⁴⁴ *Zëri*, janar, 1994, 6.

²⁴⁵ Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar*, 99.

²⁴⁶ Mehmet Kraja, "Paaftësi e diplomacisë apo diçka tjetër", *Bujku*, 8 shtator, 1992, 2.

Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke.²⁴⁷ The "Dayton" option came to end the violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995). In this context, D. Server writes: "The US intervened with military force with an American diplomat who took the warring parties to an isolated air base in Ohio, where he left them to their will and enabled them to end the war".²⁴⁸ Shortly before 6 p.m., United States President Bill Clinton announced that the warring parties in the Balkans had agreed to cease further hostilities after three weeks of negotiations in Dayton to end the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II.²⁴⁹ Yet, while the world celebrated the expected end to four years of bloodshed in the Balkans, the place where it all began seemed to be forgotten. While the warring Yugoslav parties signed peace on December 14, 1995 in Paris, the situation in Kosova remained as difficult as ever.²⁵⁰

During the Dayton process, Milošević presented himself as a vital "peacemaker", counting on such an image to allow him greater freedom to act aggressively in Kosova.²⁵¹ According to German researcher Jens Reuter, Milošević was given a free hand to argue that the Kosova problem was an internal problem. When international conferences were held for other parts of Yugoslavia, no one from the international community asked for the Kosova problem to be examined.²⁵² These processes were a deep disappointment for Kosova Albanians, especially after November 1995, when the Kosova issue was not included in the Dayton Conference negotiations, which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and finally sealed the breakup of Yugoslavia.²⁵³ The anger of the Albanians grew even more when they realized that in Dayton almost half of Bosnia was "handed over" to the Bosnian Serbs, responsible for the crimes and genocide. In this context, the recognition of the state of Republika Srpska was the final straw. This destroyed all hopes for peaceful changes in Kosova.²⁵⁴ The Dayton Agreement did not factor Kosova into any solution.²⁵⁵ This is also the moment when discrimination against the majority Albanian population in Kosova reached its peak.

²⁴⁷ Judah, *Kosova*, 123-124.

²⁴⁸ Server, *From War to Peace in the Balkans*, 34-35.

²⁴⁹ Bujku, 22 nëntor, 1995, 1.

²⁵⁰ George Moffett & Jonathan Landay, "Tension Rises in Kosovo, Site Of Kickoff for Balkans War", *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 13, 1995.

²⁵¹ Bugajski, *Ngritja e Kosovës*, 51.

²⁵² *Koha Ditore*, 20-21 prill, 1998, 7.

²⁵³ Richard Caplan, *Europe and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia*, (New York: Cambridge, 2005), 140.

²⁵⁴ Chris Hedges, "Kosovo's Masters?" *Foreign Affairs*, May/June Volume 78 • Number 3, 1999, 30-31.

²⁵⁵ Madeleine Albright, *Zonja Sekretare - Autobiografi*, (Tiranë: Dudaj, 2003), 443.

Kosova faced military police brutality where especially rural areas were subjected to late-night police operations "in search of weapons".²⁵⁶ Worse still, at that time the Dayton Agreement was seen as the end of the Balkan dilemmas and conflicts. This view is confirmed by the journalist and author of several books on the Balkans, James Pettifer, according to whom the dominant view in the first months after Dayton was that the problems of the Balkans had been solved.²⁵⁷ American diplomats who participated in the preparation of the agreement signed in Dayton, however, said something to the contrary. Rudolf Perina²⁵⁸ during a meeting with Albanian demonstrators protesting in front of the US base in Dayton, stated: "We never said that we would examine all the problems in the former Yugoslavia in the Dayton talks. These talks are being held with one goal: to stop the war in Bosnia," assuring Albanian representatives that the issue of Kosova would also come up.²⁵⁹ Another American diplomat, Christopher Hill, had a similar opinion. He recalled that the Albanians' expectations were unfounded, since the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not foresee the inclusion of the Kosova situation. He stated: "I was familiar with the issue of Kosova, working in neighboring Albania, on several trips in 1994 and 1995, I realized that this complicated issue cannot be entangled with the problem of the Bosnian war".²⁶⁰ The Kosova problem was left for a later phase of negotiations.²⁶¹ Various conferences were held for the former Yugoslavia, rejecting the demands of the Albanian people to participate in them on an equal basis.²⁶² Despite the fact that Kosova political activists attempted to build a philosophy of nonviolence by leading peaceful demonstrations at the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia, Western powers did not pay attention to Kosova, due to the fact that there was no two-way use of armed force.²⁶³ Dayton was proof of the failed Albanian policy of peaceful resistance. The basic

²⁵⁶ Robert C. Austin, *Bërja dhe Ribërja e Ballkanit Kombet dhe Shtetet që nga 1878*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2021), 150.

²⁵⁷ James Pettifer, *Ekspres i Kosovës, udhëtim në kohë lufte*, (Prishtinë: Liria, 2004), 144.

²⁵⁸ He was an American diplomat who specialized in East-West European relations during and after the Cold War for more than three decades, with a particular focus on Central and Eastern Europe. Perina worked with fellow State Department diplomat Richard Holbrooke as a liaison to Serbian President Slobodan Milošević during the negotiations to end the Yugoslav conflict. Perina participated in the talks held in Dayton, Ohio, to try to find a diplomatic solution to the Balkan Wars. He met with many leaders of other seceded republics at the time, such as Ibrahim Rugova, Kiro Gligorov, etc. Ronald Regan Presidential Library & Museum.

²⁵⁹ *Bujku*, 21 nëntor, 1995, 1.

²⁶⁰ Hill, *Pararojë*, 151.

²⁶¹ Misha Glenny, *Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999 Nacionalizmi, Luftërat dhe Fuqitë e Mëdha*, (Tiranë: TOENA, 2007), 654.

²⁶² "Çlirimi" I, korrik 1993 - shkurt 1996, 53.

²⁶³ Veton Surroi, "In Kosovo, War Is Peace", *The New York Times*, March 26, 1999.

starting point of the negotiations in Dayton was that parties that did not participate in the war cannot have a place at the negotiating table.²⁶⁴ *De facto*, Albanian patience is understood as weakness, without understanding their hard work and peaceful efforts.²⁶⁵ The entire political activity of the movement for the solution and awareness of the Albanian national question turned into press conferences, where the same things are repeated in a clichéd form from conference to press conference, the statistics of those who are beaten, robbed, killed and those who engage in informative interviews are stated. The brutalities that Serbia is carrying out against the Albanian people were described, but no solution was offered.²⁶⁶ Regardless of the direction determined by international diplomacy in terms of the solution of the Kosova issue, the Albanians had to persist in protecting and implementing their legal demands, expressed in the popular referendum and other constitutional documents. In order to achieve this goal, it was considered necessary, without the slightest nostalgia for Gandhian idealized peace, to correct the existing strategy and instead look for other means and forms of struggle based on the standards and norms of international law.²⁶⁷ Since mid-1997, Kosova students have been losing patience with the seven-year wait to return to educational institutions that the Serbian regime has forcibly banned from them.²⁶⁸ Namely, the agreement of 1 September 1996 between Ibrahim Rugova and Slobodan Milošević reached, with the mediation of the Italian Catholic body, the Comunità di Sant'Egidio, an agreement on the return of Albanian students and teachers to schools, creating a mixed group (three Serbs, three Albanians) to negotiate the implementation of the agreement. In other words, formally there was school, but education did not take place in state-run schools. Since 1991, classes in secondary schools and universities have taken place in private homes, in the previously explained parallel school system. Not even a year after the signing, the agreement has been implemented.²⁶⁹ Under the leadership of the Independent Union of Students of the University of Prishtina (UPSUP), led by Bujar Dugolli, Muhamet Mavraj, Driton Lajçi, Albin Kurti, etc., an initiative was launched to organize a large student protest, at the very beginning of the new academic year. The initiative found great support among the professors, led by the rector Ejup Statovci, who, together with the leadership of the

²⁶⁴ *Koha*, 26 qershor, 1996, 12; Paul Taylor, “Çka u mësua nga Bosnja”, *Koha Ditore*, 18 qershor, 1998, 6.

²⁶⁵ Besnik Mustafaj, “Kosova në syrin e cikloni”, *Zëri*, 14 mars, 1998, 41.

²⁶⁶ Faik Shkodra, “Popullit duhet t’i thuhet e vërteta ashtu çfarë është”, *Bota e re*, qershor, 1996, 9.

²⁶⁷ Mehdi Hyseni, “(D)ështimi i politikës dhe i diplomacisë paqësore gandiste”, *Bota e re*, maj 1996, 3.

²⁶⁸ Përmbledhje artikujsh nga Gazeta “Çlirimi” II (mars 1993 – gusht 1998), 1998, 212.

²⁶⁹ Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 125.

UPSUP, became the leading figure of the large protest.²⁷⁰ On the other hand, the political leadership of Kosova, although in principle supporting the students' right to protest, had doubts about the decision. In a meeting with the leader of the UPSUP, President Ibrahim Rugova suggested that the students postpone the protest in order to avoid dangerous situations that would harm positive initiatives related to the future of Kosova. Diplomatic representatives of Western countries also expressed a similar position: "We recognize the right of students to protest, but we do not agree with the time of their holding".²⁷¹ Despite all these suggestions, the students decided to protest. The Organizing Council made all the preparations to start the protest at 10:30 on October 1, 1997, from the Velania neighborhood, in the Prishtina district, where the Rectorate was located in a private house, and to continue towards the city center and the Student Center, from where the protesters were to return to the starting point. The organizers had foreseen that protests would also take place in other centers of Kosova. In its call, the Organizing Council asked citizens to respect peaceful behavior. In order to ensure all measures, the Council decided that all students must have recognizable features, from the waist up, and wear white, which symbolizes the purpose of the peaceful protest.²⁷² According to the scenario, over 20,000 students, accompanied by professors, parents and pupils, began to gather in the early morning hours of October 1. After the start of the protest route, after only a few hundred meters from the "Taugbahçe" intersection, the protesters were stopped by the Serbian police. Despite the fact that the students and their leadership remained calm in front of the police and did not provoke them, the Serbian police brutally intervened against the protesters without any warning.²⁷³ Violence was used, despite the promises that Belgrade made to Western diplomats. The Serbian regime intervened with tear gas and rubber batons, the police arrested and beat dozens of citizens, including rector Ejup Statovci, vice-rector Ahmet Gecaj, Bujar Dugolli, UPSUP president Albin Kurti and Driton Lajçi, a member of the Organizational Council.²⁷⁴ Despite the violence, students continued their peaceful protests on 29 October and 30 December 1997, sending a clear signal to the Serbian regime that their patience had reached its peak. The student protests of the following days heralded a major change in the content and form of the Kosova Albanian struggle for freedom and independence. In this context, the example of

²⁷⁰ *Epoka e Re*, 6 tetor, 2005, 8.

²⁷¹ *Bujku*, 30 shtator, 1997, 1-2.

²⁷² *Rilindja*, 1 tetor, 1997, 6.

²⁷³ *Koha Ditore*, 2 tetor, 1997, 2; *Rilindja*, 2 tetor, 1997, 1.

²⁷⁴ *Bujku*, 2 tetor, 1997, 2; *Rilindja*, 3 tetor, 1997, 4.

the former Yugoslav republics was clear - only through war can goals be achieved. In such a reality, the Kosova Albanians, in addition to being disappointed, drew key conclusions: the Kosova issue will not be resolved peacefully and without armed struggle, their national aspirations and goals of creating an independent state will never be achieved.²⁷⁵

3.2 War as a last resort - Birth of the Kosova Liberation Army

The failure of the Kosovars to participate in the Dayton negotiations at the end of 1995 pushed the Albanians in the direction of thinking conceptually devoted to an armed uprising. This idea was as old as the Serbian occupation of Kosova.²⁷⁶ The tradition of opposing the Serbian regime has existed since the colonization of Kosova in 1912 and has never ceased. In this context, if we do not count earlier periods, the demonstrations of resistance begin with the protests of 1968, followed by the demonstrations of 1981.²⁷⁷ Men and women who in the 90s of the 20th century took up arms, they saw themselves as the last generation to continue the long-started struggle. In Drenica²⁷⁸ where, more than anywhere else, the sense of tradition had deep roots.²⁷⁹ So it was expected that the first armed resistance would start from this area. Since the end of 1991, Adem Jashari²⁸⁰ began his first armed preparations in Albania with a group of like-minded people.

²⁷⁵ Joshka Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër: Politika e jashtme gjermane – nga Kosova e deri më 11 shtator*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2007), 100.

²⁷⁶ Server, *From War to Peace in the Balkans*, 73; Kudusi Lama, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, (Tiranë: Urtësia Bektashiane, 2005), 133.

²⁷⁷ Shaban Sinani, *Kosova në Gjeopolitikë*, (Tiranë: Dritëro, 1998), 36.

²⁷⁸ Drenica is located in the central position of Kosovo with an area of 6% of the total territory. Many historical events of the Albanian resistance are connected to Drenica. On March 26, 1903, a navy assembly was held in Drenica, led by Ahmet Delia. In the tower of A. Delija, on May 5, 1912, Hasan Prishtina, another Drenica patriot, started organizing a general resistance, which spread to most of the main cities of Kosova. The people of Drenica continued the uprising of the Kachaks detachments in the years 1912 - 1924 under the leadership of Azem and Shotë Galica. The resistance continued during the years 1940-1945 under the leadership of Shaban Polluza. On May 13, 1981, Tahir Meha from Prekaz and Drenica together with father and son offered a one-day resistance to the special units of the Yugoslav police, setting an example of the tradition of fighting for freedom and independence to future generations. *Jasharët, histori e një qëndrese*, (Prishtinë, Rilindja, 2000), 7-8.

²⁷⁹ Judah, *Kosova*, 130.

²⁸⁰ Adem Jashari was born and raised in a well-known patriotic family in Prekaz, Drenica, on November 28, 1955. He is known as one of the main founders of the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA). From the end of 1991, Adem Jashari and his associates launched armed action against the Serbian occupiers, until the liberation of Kosova. Together with his family of 56 members, he gave unprecedented resistance - a sacrifice to the Serbian police and military forces on May 5, 6 and 7, 1998. After his death, Adem Jashari and his family became a symbol of resistance for freedom and independence. On the day of the declaration of independence on February 17, 2008, as a sign of gratitude and

Despite organizational efforts and will, a conspiracy arose upon his return to Kosova. Security authorities learned of the groups conducting military training in Albania, and upon their return to Kosova, pursuits and arrests began.²⁸¹ Adem Jashari informed his like-minded people to be vigilant and encouraged them: "We did not take up arms to hand them over to the enemy, but to fight them to the last bullet."²⁸² His brother Rifat Jashari recalls how the arrests first began in Deçan, in several settlements and villages, and then continued in the area of Prishtinë, Klinë, etc.²⁸³ At that time, Rifat, who had just arrived from Germany for the New Year holidays, was not surprised by the repressive measures at the end of the year.²⁸⁴ The so-called first roundup of the Jashari family was organized by Serbian police forces on December 30, 1991. Police forces, accompanied by armored vehicles and a helicopter, surrounded the village²⁸⁵ Prekazi i Ulët - Poshtëm (Lower) in the early morning hours (5:30) with special emphasis on the neighborhood of Jashari. The action started with a police call from the megaphone "Surrender, Adem Jashari".²⁸⁶ According to the "head of the family", Shaban Jashari, when they saw that they were surrounded and what weapons were pointed at their house, the men decided not to surrender.²⁸⁷ While the police commander continued to speak into the megaphone, Adem and two of his brothers broke through the police cordon with firearms, injuring several police officers.²⁸⁸ However, after receiving the news that Prekazi i Ulët was attacked by the Serbian police, the Albanian population from the area aged 15 to 60, with or without weapons, came to help Prekazi and the Jashari family. The event soon turned into a nationwide mobilization.²⁸⁹ The goal of the Serbian police was to euthanize the first signs of organized Albanian resistance.²⁹⁰ The armed fire between the two sides was stopped at 16:00, after

commemoration, thousands of citizens wore T-shirts with the inscription "Bac u kry", referring to his legacy for liberation. Since 2008, Adem Jashari has held the title of "Hero of Kosovo". [AN].

²⁸¹ Ibrahim Çitaku, *Prekazi*, (Prishtinë: Prograf, 2013), 39-40.

²⁸² Jakup Krasniqi, *Guxo ta duash lirinë*, (Prishtinë: Buzuku, 2011), 28.

²⁸³ Bardh Hamzaj & Faik Hoti, *Jasharët, Histori e rrefyer nga Rifat, Besarta, Bashkim, Murat, dhe Lulzim Jashari*, (Prishtinë: Zëri, 2003), 55.

²⁸⁴ Milaim Zeka, Intervistë *Pa Rrotulla me Rifat Jasharin*, 18 korrik, 2013.

²⁸⁵ The village of Prekaz is one of the largest villages in the Drenica region. The village is divided into two parts: Prekaz i Epërm and Prekaz i Ulët. [AN].

²⁸⁶ *Bujku*, 3 janar, 1992, 5.

²⁸⁷ *Zëri*, 25 janar, 1992, 28.

²⁸⁸ Emin Halimi & Ajnishahe Shala, *Jasharët histori e një qëndrese*, (Skenderaj: Rilindja, 2000), 17-18.

²⁸⁹ *Zëri*, 25 janar, 1992, 28; Zeka, Intervistë *Pa Rrotulla me Rifat Jasharin*.

²⁹⁰ Bedri Tahiri, *Drenica një shekull trimërie*, (Prishtinë: Zëri i Kosovës, 2001), 79; *Bujku*, 3 janar, 1992, 5.

the agreement of the Albanian delegation of the LDK and the Council for the Protection of Human Rights that came from Prishtinë.

The Serbian police withdrew to Skenderaj at 5:00 p.m., and some of the gathered people dispersed to their homes, while the rest went to the mountains, including Adem Jashari and his brothers.²⁹¹ According to contemporary accounts, Adem and the others escaped at the last moment by fleeing to the mountain, which served as their refuge from that day until their death. It was a turning point from which Adem and his like-minded followers decided to abandon nonviolent resistance.²⁹² This was an idea that never disappeared in Drenica as a resistance option. Although the armed resistance did not develop at the desired speed, work on its organization did not stop.²⁹³ Due to the very difficult circumstances, armed actions were initially individual. Most often, immediate family members were not aware of whether any of their household members were carrying out any military action.²⁹⁴ According to the testimonies of some participants, active resistance began with a very small group of no more than 15 people per unit.²⁹⁵ It was the beginning of the activities of the Kosova Liberation Army.

The example of Femhi Lladrovci best illustrates the circumstances of the KLA (Alb. UÇK, Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës, Kosova Liberation Army) in its early days. Lladrovci had already been involved in political actions since the 1981 demonstrations, and due to persecution by the Serbian regime, he emigrated to Germany. In the period from 1992 to 1997, he developed his activities entirely in a conspiratorial manner: "...I didn't even dare tell my wife what I was doing. Moreover, I hesitated to talk about it with my brother. But I trusted the people who worked with me, because they swore an oath in front of the national flag...".²⁹⁶

The Albanians finally decided to separate from Serbia.²⁹⁷ However, achieving the goal of liberation and independence required dedication and sacrifice. Despite all these challenges, the ideologues of the armed resistance intensified their attacks in various centers throughout Kosova.

²⁹¹ Çitaku, *Prekazi*, 47.

²⁹² *Koha Ditore*, 13 prill, 1998, 2.

²⁹³ *Libri i Lirisë*, (Prishtinë: Zëri, 2003), 174; Krasniqi, *Guxo ta duash lirinë*, 14.

²⁹⁴ Perit. Jr. *Ushtria Çlirimtare*, 49; Çitaku, *Prekazi*, 56-57.

²⁹⁵ Ksenofon Krisafi, *Lufta e Kosovës në Labirintet Diplomatie*, (Tiranë: UMSH Press & Onufri, 2018), 114.

²⁹⁶ Nathalie Duclos, "Joining the Kosovo Liberation Army: A continuist, process-based analysis", *Violence: An international journal* 2020, Vol. 1(1) 21-39.

²⁹⁷ Hashim Thaçi, "Kosova para dhe pas luftës", *Kosova Sot*, 31 dhjetor - 1, 2 e 3 janar, 2000, 11.

Such was the attack in Drenas, in Drenica, when on May 23, 1993, two Serbian policemen were killed and five others were wounded. In the month of July of the same year, several explosive attacks took place near the police detention center in Vitomiricë, Pejë. One policeman was injured in Podujevë, and three more in Prizren.²⁹⁸ Such actions continued and were mutually coordinated. Xhavit Haliti, one of the ideologues of the armed resistance, recalls how after many discussions in the leadership structures of the People's Movement of Kosova²⁹⁹ (LPK) it was a matter of time to assume leadership positions and build a clear internal infrastructure. At the end of 1994, the armed structure finally began to be called: Kosova Liberation Army - KLA for short.³⁰⁰ Since its beginnings, the KLA has focused its armed actions almost exclusively on uniformed policemen of Serbia as targets³⁰¹ After the KLA publicly claimed responsibility for these actions, detailed synchronization of the attacks in 1995 was observed. In one night, 12 armed actions were carried out in several centers of Kosova. All of them had to be carried out at a certain time after 8:00 PM and within five minutes, otherwise the action had to be abandoned.³⁰² KLA attacks intensified especially after the signing of the Dayton Agreement. The Albanians of Kosova, M. Glenny writes, envied Croatia and Bosnia in the north. "They pointed out that the Serbs, with the help of the international community, had been completely defeated in Croatia and partially in Bosnia."³⁰³

Like any liberation movement in its early days, the KLA had a dual goal: on the one hand, to show the opponent (the Serbs) that they were not in their own country, and to show the population that resistance was possible and that the brutality of Serbian oppression did not go unpunished. For

²⁹⁸ *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës Dokumente dhe artikuj*, redaktuar nga Gafurr Elshani, (Aarau, Zëri i Kosovës, 1998), 16-21.

²⁹⁹ At the end of the 1970s, there were some political organizations that carried out their activities illegally. Most of these groups found their common way on February 17, 1982, a month after the murder of the brothers Gërvalla and Kadri Zeka (Untergrovenbach, Germany). This new political group was named after the People's Movement for the Republic of Kosovo (LPRK), which after 1990 will be known as the People's Movement of Kosovo (LPK). This political formation, due to the continuous duration of the Serbian regime, will continue its activity to a large extent in the diaspora in Switzerland. At the beginning of the 90s, the LPK became the initiator of the beginning of preparations for the liberation of Kosovo with an armed war that culminated in the public appearance of the Kosovo Liberation Army. James Pettifer, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës - Nga një luftë e fshehtë në një kryengritje të Ballkanit 1948-2001*, (Tiranë: Onufri, 2013), 73.

³⁰⁰ *Libri i Lirisë*, 174; Adriatik Kelmendi, *Rrëfime të përpjekjes*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2015), 61.

³⁰¹ Almost every Albanian knew someone who had been mistreated or killed by the police, in that context, the murder of a police officer was a kind of revenge for the violence caused. Pettifer, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, 112.

³⁰² Çitaku, *Prekazi*, 58-59.

³⁰³ Glenny, *Histori e Ballkanit*, 653.

example, on April 21, 1996, when a Serbian citizen fired a burst of gunfire at the exemplary student Armend Daci, the next day the KLA attacked several police stations across Kosova in retaliation, warning of similar actions later in the month.³⁰⁴ In this context, the main task of the KLA leadership was to convince the Kosova Albanians that the KLA has the key potential and mechanisms to lead the uprising.³⁰⁵ This was also supported by the fact that Albanians had nowhere to go, while Serbs had to come from Belgrade to fight in Kosova.³⁰⁶

Full consolidation of the KLA remained a challenge, in the face of constant threats from the Serbian regime. A major blow to the KLA occurred in late January 1997, when the Serbian regime located and arrested a group of about ten KLA soldiers, led by Nait Hasani.³⁰⁷, as one of the main organizers of the armed conflict. Around the same time, Zahir Pajaziti, Hakif Zejnullahu and Edmond Hoxha were killed³⁰⁸, after a hand-to-hand battle, in a clash with Serbian forces in Pestovë, Vushtrri. Serbian officials then declared with great enthusiasm that they had destroyed the KLA.³⁰⁹ All participants in the conflict agree that it was a heavy blow to the KLA. Ramush Haradinaj, one of the main wartime commanders, recalls that: “after the killing of Zahir, Edmond and Hakif, after the arrest of many men who were the bearers of the war, it was a big blow that was given to the KLA in Kosova. This greatly disturbed us..., so we, with a number of people who were directly involved in the organization of the armed movement, decided to enter Kosova.”³¹⁰

³⁰⁴ Pettifer, *Ekspres i Kosovës*, 147.

³⁰⁵ Perrit. Jr. *Ushtria Çlirimtare*, 49; Jacques Baudouin, *Lindja e një demokracie - Hashim Thaçi dhe rruga drejt Kosovës së pavarur (1987-2008)*. (Prishtinë: Buzuku, 2018), 84.

³⁰⁶ Jonathan S. Landay, “Armë për UÇK-në”, *Koha Ditore*, 17 prill, 1998, 6.

³⁰⁷ Nait Hasani is one of the key figures of the KLA. Born in 1965, in Randobravë, Prizren he joined the popular resistance against the Serbian occupiers as a young man, and was imprisoned several times. In the years 1992-1994, Nait Hasani was directly involved in the creation of the first cells of the Kosova Liberation Army. In 1997, he will hold the role of KLA coordinator for Kosovo, until the Serbian police arrested him. Hasani will be released from prison on March 26, 2002. *Libri i Lirisë*, 139.

³⁰⁸ Zahir Pajaziti was one of the main figures of the KLA, at the same time a member of its Main Staff. Hakif Zejnullahu was also a very important figure in the KLA, Pajaziti was his uncle. On the other hand, Edmond Hoxha was a 22-year-old student who was part of a trio that organized KLA cells. Their selfless fight was exceptional until the moment of their fall when Serbian forces killed them on January 31, 1997 in Pestovë, Vushtrri. Bedri Islami, *Enigma e një vrasje të trefishtë*, (Prishtinë: Focus, 2007), 14-25.

³⁰⁹ Driton Sejdiu, *Kush ishte Zahir Pajaziti?* (Prishtinë: Timegate, 2001), 168-169, *Libri i Lirisë*, 139.

³¹⁰ Ramush and Luan Haradinaj, Fehmi, Xhevë and Ramiz Lladrovci, Selim Krasniqi, Abedin Rexha, Ilaz Kodra, Rafet and Gani Rama. This group of soldiers, who were trying to enter Kosovo on May 5 and 6, 1997, were ambushed by Serbian forces, as a result of the fighting, Luan Haradinaj died heroically, while Rafet Rama was wounded. Bardh Hamzaj, *Rrëfim për Luftën dhe lirinë* (Dialog me komandantin Ramush Haradinaj), (Prishtinë: Zëri, 1999), 30-35

Faced with such daily challenges, KLA leaders developed combat activities in two directions: in political activities (organization, finances and logistics), for which the "planners in exile" were responsible, and in attack-withdrawal actions, which were carried out by the "defenders in the homeland".³¹¹

3.3 The first public appearance of the KLA

On November 25 and 26, 1997, Serbian police forces carried out operations to eliminate KLA cells in some villages in Skenderaj. KLA soldiers were led by Abedin Rexha – Sandokan.³¹² The fighting took place in the villages of Vojnik and Rrezallë e Re. This news spread very quickly to the surrounding villages and many individuals volunteered to join Abedin's troops. As Sylejman Selimi recalls, "we were all convinced that the Serbian forces would not easily retreat. After much deliberation about the form and location of resistance, it was finally decided that we would do so in Rrezallë."³¹³ In addition to soldiers from the surrounding villages, commander Adem Jashari and his comrades also participated in this battle. How fierce was the fighting³¹⁴ between KLA soldiers and Serbian police, could be judged by the remains of shell casings, grenades that witnesses saw by the dozens, vehicles, overturned armored cars and a helicopter that had made a forced landing. Serbian forces, revolted by the defeat, fired uncontrollably at houses and animals in their retreat, not sparing even the school building where bullets penetrated and injured two teachers, Halit Geci and Shaban Rreci.³¹⁵ Halit died from his injuries. Regardless of Belgrade's attempts to minimize the incident, there is no doubt that the Serbs lost the battle³¹⁶ which can be considered the first victory of the KLA.³¹⁷

The further activities of the KLA were discussed on the day of Geci's funeral in the village of Llaushë in the house of Sabit Geci on November 28, 1997. Adem, Jetullah Geci, Rexhep Selimi and others decided to publicly appear and speak on behalf of the Kosova Liberation Army.³¹⁸ The

³¹¹ Perrit. Jr. *Ushtria Çlirimtare*, 28.

³¹² *Libri i Lirisë*, 264-265.

³¹³ Çitaku, *Prekazi*, 78; *Libri i Lirisë*, 181.

³¹⁴ Jakup Krasniqi, *Kthesa e Madhe - Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, (Prishtinë: Buzuku, 2006), 41; *Koha Ditore*, 27 nëntor, 1997, 2.

³¹⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 4 dhjetor, 1997, 7.

³¹⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 4 dhjetor, 1997, 7.

³¹⁷ Intervistë me Sylejman Selimin, *Gazeta Shqiptare*, 14 korrik, 1998.

³¹⁸ *Libri i Lirisë*, 182.

funeral was attended by almost 20,000 citizens from the entire area of Drenica who came to pay their last respects to their respected teacher. To everyone's surprise, three uniformed men appear publicly for the first time in front of those present and declare that they are members of the Kosova Liberation Army - KLA.³¹⁹ Three young men (Mujë Krasniqi, Rexhep Selimi, Daut Haradinaj) were dressed in military uniforms with an eagle on the sleeves with the inscription Kosova Liberation Army. The masked R. Selimi opened the letter in which he first expressed his condolences for the deceased Gecaj and continued: "...the Serbian government killed children in the lap of youth, teachers in schools, peasants in the fields. What else did it not kill? One day, from the bosom of this people, the Kosova Liberation Army was born as the only serious force for the realization of the ideals and aspirations of our people..., the best sons and daughters of this people were lined up in the ranks of this army. The KLA members who came out of the shadows for the first time, who participated in the funeral of the Albanian teacher, swore to avenge the death of teacher Gecaj and all Albanians".³²⁰ This proved to the citizens of Kosova and international diplomacy that the KLA is now a reality within the members of the Albanian people of Kosova, and not a product of the "Serbian secret services", as could be heard from various circles.³²¹ This message to the people of Drenica was greeted with a standing ovation: UÇK – UÇK (KLA-KLA). The public appearance of the KLA aroused the curiosity of the Western media. Dozens of journalists headed towards Drenica, to meet the Kosova soldiers. International reporters reminded that, if until now the existence of the KLA was doubted, from now on everyone believes in the existence of this organization, which "international politics must take into account".³²² Although their faces were still covered with black masks, the Albanian national flag, a black double-headed eagle, stood out on their chests.

Donald Forbes recalled the statements of the KLA: "Kosova cannot be liberated by phone calls from the office, but only by a serious armed battle." The remark of the Albanian armed groups was that as long as Serbia "communicates with the Albanian people with the language of force, the KLA will continue to intensify its response to that force".³²³ British journalist Max Stahl made a

³¹⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 1 dhjetor, 1997, 2.

³²⁰ *Bujku*, 1 dhjetor, 1997, 5; Misha Glenny, "Bosnia II?", *The New York Times*, December 9, 1997.

³²¹ Krisafi, *Lufta e Kosovës*, 115.

³²² *Koha Ditore*, 20 janar, 1998, 2.

³²³ Donald Forbes, "Kosova është kërcënim i ri për stabilitetin e Ballkanit", *Koha Ditore*, 13 dhjetor, 1997, 7.

report during his visit to Drenica a few days after the mentioned events. He remembers meeting one of the soldiers who refused to identify himself, who then stated: "Let's say I am a member of the Kosova Liberation Army..." Later in the conversation, the soldier highlighted the goals of the KLA: an independent state of Kosova and national freedom. Speaking about the war, he pointed out: "We are determined for guerilla warfare; therefore, our entire strategy is based on such a concept. We have Serbian police and army targets as well as civilian targets. As an argument, he reminded that: "In our country, all Serbs will enjoy all the rights that we Albanians also enjoy".³²⁴

Although without the direct appearance of the KLA leader, this military organization, which already controlled entire regions in Kosova, was gaining more and more sympathy every day from young people and citizens tired of the patience of the previous peaceful policy.³²⁵ They were the protagonists of the resistance against the Serbian authorities and a clear message to the international community that the demands of the Albanians cannot be removed from the agenda for solving the Yugoslav crisis.³²⁶ The KLA managed to internationalize the Kosova crisis in a very short time. They warned of further aggravation of the already complicated situation and the loss of patience of the citizens of Kosova. Until then, the international community only noticed, located and diagnosed the problem of Kosova, but did not undertake any political "therapy" to resolve the conflict, so the risk remained latent.³²⁷ Therefore, the fear of violent escalation grew day by day.³²⁸

4. NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE (NATO)

4.1. The origin of the establishment of the Organization

On June 26, 1945, in San Francisco, USA, representatives of 50 countries signed the Charter of the United Nations with the aim of preventing wars and maintaining international peace by diplomatic means, and if necessary, by intervening in peacekeeping operations or through military forces, which would act only on the basis of the decision of the Security Council. People

³²⁴ Max Stahl, "Vendi ku nata ndërron pushtetin", *Koha Ditore*, 8 dhjetor, 1997, 4.

³²⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 5 janar, 1998, 5.

³²⁶ Predrag Simić, "Për serbët dhe për shqiptarët "rruga për në Evropë" çon nëpër Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 22 shkurt, 1998, 6.

³²⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 26 janar, 1998, 6.

³²⁸ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në Luftë*, 98; Judah, *Kosova*, 174.

around the world dared to hope that after the end of one of the most destructive wars in history, an era of peace would finally dawn. But as soon as Adolf Hitler's empire was destroyed, Western countries – some of which had with great difficulty freed themselves from German occupation – faced another threat, this time from Communist Russia.³²⁹ Thus, immediately after the end of World War II, faced with a great need for economic reconstruction, the countries of Western Europe and their allies in North America began to view with regret and suspicion the expansionist policy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) towards the countries of Eastern and Central Europe.³³⁰ Moreover, Western governments became concerned when they saw that Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, not only was not reducing military forces as required by the United Nations Charter, but on the contrary, was increasing and sophisticating his military armaments.³³¹ The situation escalated further when it became known that the intentions of the Russian communists were not limited to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Stalin intended to expand his sphere of influence to countries that had a strategic position, with particular emphasis on Greece and Turkey.³³² Both countries, Greece and Turkey, were threatened by Soviet communism in different ways. Greece was in the midst of a civil war between the government and communists supported by Yugoslavia and, indirectly, the Soviet Union. Turkey was also under pressure from the Soviet Union at the time to relinquish partial control of the Dardanelles. Both countries had been receiving aid from Britain for almost two years. The situation became more complicated when, in February 1947, Britain announced that it would stop funding the two countries as of March 31, 1947.³³³

Seeing clear Russian expansionist intentions in Greece and Turkey, US President Harry Truman, in a speech on March 12, 1947, asked the US Congress to approve a fund of \$400 million in economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey. He also requested approval to send US “civilian

³²⁹ Lord Ismay, *NATO The first five years 1949 -1954*, (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1956), 3.

³³⁰ Russian plans were already evident in January 1945 when the Soviet army penetrated deep into the territories of Poland. The situation further deteriorated after the conquest of Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and part of Germany where the Soviet Red Army occupied strategic positions. In the occupied countries, the Soviet Union supported regimes that were loyal to Moscow and advocated communist ideology. [AN].

³³¹ To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite their forces for the maintenance of international peace and security, and to ensure, by adopting principles and establishing methods, that armed force shall not be used except in the common interest, and that international mechanisms shall be used for the promotion of the economic and social progress of all peoples. UN - Charter of the United Nations (full text).

³³² *NATO Handbook*, (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1992), 14.

³³³ *The New York Times*, March 12, 2012.

and military” personnel to these two countries. Greece and Turkey, the president said, were the key to the region, they were the strategic points of the Dardanelles that formed a buffer zone between Russia and the Mediterranean as well as vital oil reserves in the Middle East. With this new policy, which entered the historical narrative as the “Truman Doctrine”, the US identified itself as a line of aid to all countries in the world where the democratic system was threatened. According to President Truman: “We must be ready to help free peoples to preserve their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that want to impose totalitarian regimes on them.” Although he did not mention the word "communist" in his speech, he warned that similar attempts could happen in other countries, which would "undermine the foundations of international peace, and consequently the security of the United States of America."³³⁴

What was considered special aid for Greece and Turkey was transformed into a plan for the recovery of Western Europe in early June 1947. On June 5, 1947, the US Secretary of State [George C. Marshall](#) during his Harvard University commencement address, called for a comprehensive program to rebuild Europe. Fueled by fears of communist expansion and the rapid decline of European economies, the U.S. Congress passed the Economic Cooperation Act in March 1948, authorizing funds that would eventually amount to more than \$12 billion for the reconstruction of Western Europe. This aid included machinery for factories and farms, improvements to transportation systems, and money for the production and purchase of weapons. [Marshall Plan](#) proved successful not only in facilitating European economic integration, but also in promoting the idea of common interests and cooperation between the US and Western Europe.³³⁵

Eastern Relations (Russia and its subordinate allies)³³⁶ and the West (the USA and Western European countries) known in history as the "Cold War"³³⁷ became even more acute in the following months and years. In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, with

³³⁴ 'Truman Doctrine', *The New York Times*, March 16, 1947.

³³⁵ Clyde H. Farnsworth, "June 5, 1947: Start of the Marshall Plan Effort to Build a New Europe Amid Ashes of War", *The New York Times*, June 6, 1972.

³³⁶ Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania [AN].

³³⁷ It was a period of tension and rivalry from 1945 to 1990 between the United States and the Soviet Union. This period has been called the Cold War, although the parties never engaged in direct warfare, but rather was an ideological, political, and military conflict between the Western world, which promoted democracy, and the Eastern world, which promoted communism. [AN].

covert support from the Soviet Union, overthrew the democratically elected government of Czechoslovakia. Faced with repeated Soviet challenges, five Western European states - Belgium, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg - took the first historic step on 17 March 1948 by signing the Treaty of Brussels. The signatory states committed themselves to creating a common defense system, as well as to strengthening economic and cultural ties. The supreme body of the Brussels Treaty Organization³³⁸ would be an Advisory Council, composed of five foreign ministers. As part of this Council there would be a Western Defense Committee composed of defense ministers. Article IV of the Treaty stated that if any of the parties were subject to an "armed attack in Europe", the other members were obliged to provide defense and military assistance.³³⁹ In parallel with these developments, the administration of US President Truman urged traditionally isolationist Republican congressmen to consider a military alliance with Europe. On the day the Treaty was signed, March 17, 1948, the President declared to the US Congress: "I am convinced that the determination of the free nations of Europe to defend themselves will be matched by an equal determination on our part to assist them."³⁴⁰ On May 11, 1948, Republican Senator Arthur Vandenburg proposed a resolution requesting President Truman to establish a security agreement with Western Europe that would adhere to the United Nations Charter but would exist outside the Security Council, where the Soviet Union had a veto. The resolution was approved by the Senate by a vote of 82 to 13 on June 11, 1948.³⁴¹

It was clear that all these unifying efforts aimed at promoting democracy and Euro-Atlantic security were hampering Soviet "European" leadership. On June 24, 1948, in reaction to the democratic consolidation of West Germany, the Soviets blockaded West Berlin, which was controlled by the Allies (USA, England, and France). Although the US and England responded to the Soviet blockade by transporting food and fuel to Berlin from Allied air bases in West Germany. However, the act of blocking³⁴² it has become a serious threat to the freedom and stability of all of Europe.³⁴³

³³⁸ The treaty provided for military cooperation and collective defense, which in 1954 would become the Western European Union.

³³⁹ Ismay, *NATO The first five years*, 8.

³⁴⁰ Ibid. 9.

³⁴¹ United States Department of State, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*, 1949, Milestones: 1945–1952.

³⁴² The crisis ended on May 12, 1949, when Soviet forces lifted the land blockade of West Berlin.

³⁴³ NATO - *A short history of NATO*, June 3, 2022.

American, Western European, and Canadian leaders held numerous discussions from June 1948 to determine the exact terms of the North Atlantic Treaty. The U.S. Congress favored an international military alliance but remained concerned about the text of the treaty. Western European nations wanted guarantees that the United States would automatically intervene in the event of a Soviet attack.³⁴⁴ Despite these concerns, the talks concluded on September 9, 1948, with a report to governments stating that the Treaty should:

- Promote peace and security;
- Express the determination of the parties to resist aggression;
- Determine the area to be worked on;
- Be based on self-help and mutual assistance;
- To be more than a military: i.e. to promote the sustainability and well-being of the peoples of the North Atlantic;
- Provide (military) machinery for the implementation of the above actions.³⁴⁵

All these discussions - the Euro-Atlantic negotiations - were coordinated when on April 4, 1949, in Washington in the presence of American President Harry Truman, the foreign ministers of England, Ernest Bevin, France, Robert Schuman, Belgium, Paul-Henri Spaak, Denmark, Gustav Rasmussen, Netherlands, Dirk U. Stikker, Iceland, Bjarni Benediktsson, Italy, Count Carlo Sforza, Norway, Halvard M. Lange, Portugal, José Caeiro da Matta, Luxembourg, Joseph Bech, Canada, Lester B. Pearson and USA Dean Acheson signed the Treaty establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).³⁴⁶ President Truman, in his speech to the foreign ministers of the countries that signed the North Atlantic Treaty, emphasized, among other things:

"The purpose of this meeting is to take the first step towards the implementation of an international agreement for the preservation of peace and prosperity of this community of peoples. What we are about to do here is a decision of neighboring states. This treaty is a simple document. The peoples

³⁴⁴ United States Department of State, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO).

³⁴⁵ Ismay, *NATO The first five years*, 10.

³⁴⁶ W.H. Lawrence, "President Hopeful on NATO, Says Similar Pact Would Have Prevented World Wars", *The New York Times*, April 5, 1949.

who sign it agree to respect the peaceful principles of the United Nations, to maintain friendly relations and economic cooperation with each other, to consult each other whenever the territory or independence of any of them is threatened, and to come to the aid of those who may be attacked. It is a simple document, but if it had existed in 1914 and 1939, supported by the peoples represented here today, I believe it would have prevented the acts of aggression which led to two world wars."³⁴⁷

In the preamble to the treaty, the signatory states agreed that NATO must preserve the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. The treaty was based on Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations³⁴⁸ which reaffirms the inherent right of independent states to individual or collective defense. Collective defense is at the heart of the Treaty and is enshrined in Article 5, according to which the parties agree that an armed attack against one NATO member in Europe or North America will be considered an attack against them all. By signing the North Atlantic Treaty - NATO's founding charter, each member state commits itself to this principle towards the others, sharing the risks and responsibilities of collective defense. The treaty is short, containing only 14 articles, but they clearly define the function of the Alliance. The first NATO headquarters was established in London in April 1949.³⁴⁹

On August 24, 1949, the Alliance of Western Europe, North America, and Canada, known for short as NATO, became effective with the unanimous ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty. US President Harry Truman, during a meeting in Washington with the ambassadors of the signatory states, stated that "the American people value peace and freedom above all else". "Our ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty with the overwhelming support of the Senate and the people demonstrates our determination to preserve peace and freedom." The president also announced "that no nation should be afraid of a group of twelve nations committed to peace."³⁵⁰

NATO has stated its goals from the beginning, which is to establish a just and stable peaceful order in Europe. This goal remains unchanged today. Through the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO also

³⁴⁷ Address given by Harry S. Truman (Washington, 4 April 1949).

³⁴⁸ Nothing in this Charter shall affect the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense in the event of an armed attack against a member of the United Nations, until such time as the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. UN - United Nations Charter (full text), Article 51.

³⁴⁹ Ismay, *NATO The first five years*, 17.

³⁵⁰ Anthony Leveire, "West's Alliance Put in Force; Truman Declares Peace Aim", *The New York Times*, August 25, 1949.

formed a transatlantic bond that directly links the security of North America to the security of Europe.³⁵¹

Although the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty united the Euro-Atlantic allies, it did not create a military structure that could effectively coordinate their actions. On June 25, 1950, an event took place that had a profound impact on the evolution of NATO. North Korean communist divisions crossed the 38th parallel, launched a surprise attack on the poorly armed South Korean forces, and advanced rapidly toward Seoul.³⁵² The event worsened already tense relations between the US, NATO and the Soviet Union. On 16 and 18 September 1950 in New York, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), represented by NATO foreign ministers, discussed the need to "create, as soon as possible, an integrated military force suitable for the defense of freedom in Europe". The NAC, in coordination with the Military Committee (MC), also established the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) on 2 April 1951, with US General Dwight D. Eisenhower as its commander³⁵³ as the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe – SACEUR. The position of SACEUR is one of the highest military positions in NATO, and he is responsible for the leadership of NATO forces in Europe. Because of the leading financial and military role of the United States, this position is reserved for an American commander. As commander, Eisenhower would "have the authority to train specific national units under his command and to organize them into an effective integrated force." He would be supported by "an international staff assisted by troop-contributing member nations." On 13 March 1952, NATO took another step in consolidation, creating a permanent civilian secretariat by moving its headquarters from London to Paris.³⁵⁴ The Alliance elected NATO's first Secretary General, Lord Ismay, a British general who had a good reputation as Chief of Staff of the British Army during World War II. Ismay held the post until

³⁵¹ NATO *Handbook*, 11.

³⁵² Ismay, *NATO The first five years*, 31.

³⁵³ On June 6, 1944, he led Allied forces to victory in Western Europe with Operation Overlord in Normandy during World War II against the Germans, a battle that resulted in an Allied victory. [AN].

³⁵⁴ In 1966, France decided to withdraw from NATO's integrated military command structure. NATO's new headquarters was located in Brussels, Belgium, where it was built in a record six months and inaugurated on October 16, 1967. In 1999, NATO heads of state and government realized that, with the expansion and transformation of NATO, the facilities no longer met the Alliance's requirements. They agreed on the construction of a new headquarters, located opposite the existing headquarters, on Boulevard Leopold III in Brussels. The construction of the building was completed in 2017, and the relocation took place in 2018 [AN].

1957, when he was succeeded in the post by the Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak, an outstanding advocate of a united Europe.³⁵⁵

4.2. NATO enlargement

The signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949 not only reduced the risk of Soviet external aggression, but within a few years it managed to offer an opportunity to unite the great European states that had been at war with each other for years. The basis for this rapprochement was Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which left open the possibility of enlargement, of adding new members, from various European countries. “The Parties may, by unanimous consent, invite any other European State which is in a position to promote the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty.” Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing a declaration of accession with the Government of the United States of America.”³⁵⁶ The purpose of each round of enlargement was to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security and increase the strength, cohesion and vitality of NATO, and was not directed against the security interests of any third country. Each round of enlargement brought new security and stability to Europe.³⁵⁷ In May 1950, members of the North Atlantic Council began the first political debate on enlargement. One of the tasks was the coordination of views on political problems of common interest to the Alliance. In this context, the member states agreed on the membership of Greece and Turkey. Another conclusion that emerged from this meeting was how West Germany could best contribute to the defense of the West while leaving the door open for its membership in NATO.³⁵⁸ The first enlargement of the NATO alliance took place on 18 February 1952, when the 12 members agreed to admit Greece and Turkey. The second enlargement followed on 6 May 1955, when the Federal Republic of Germany joined NATO.³⁵⁹ West Germany's entry into NATO led to the creation of another military alliance known as the Warsaw Pact, by the Soviet Union and its allies, on May 14, 1955.³⁶⁰ The original signatories to

³⁵⁵ Peter Duignan, *NATO: Its Past, Present and Future* (Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 12; *NATO - A short history*.

³⁵⁶ NATO The North Atlantic Treaty Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949.

³⁵⁷ NATO e transformuar, (Brussels, Public Diplomacy Division, 2004), 20.

³⁵⁸ *Aspects of NATO Political consultation* (Brussels: NATO Information Service 1969), 7.

³⁵⁹ The NATO enlargement phase continued on May 16, 1982, with Spain becoming the 16th country to join the Alliance. [AN].

³⁶⁰ The Soviet Union asserted complete authority over most of the Pact's decisions. By the 1980s, the Warsaw Pact Organization—its member states—were burdened with problems related to economic slowdown and major

this Treaty were the Soviet Union, Albania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the German Democratic Republic. In the following years, Europe found itself in a Cold War blockade, and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 became a major challenge for the Euro-Atlantic Alliance.³⁶¹

This Soviet attempt to destabilize peace in Europe was already well known to the North Atlantic Alliance. Ever since NATO was founded, the Soviet Union had been seen as the main threat to the freedom and independence of Western Europe. As a result, from 1949 until the late 1980s – a period known as the “Cold War” – NATO’s main task was to maintain sufficient military capabilities to protect its members from any form of aggression by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The stability that NATO guaranteed during this period helped Western Europe as a whole to rebuild its economic capacity after the great damage caused during World War II.³⁶²

NATO continued its mission of promoting peace and security in Europe. On its 40th anniversary, on 4 April 1989, the Alliance had 16 members. Without cooperation with non-member states, no military operations or exercises were conducted outside its borders.³⁶³ The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 marked a radical change in international relations, symbolizing the beginning of a new European era. The reunification of Germany on 12 September 1990 was another important step towards a secure and united Europe, in which NATO played an important role. In the following years, Euro-Atlantic security, although not without its many confrontations, became increasingly complex and unpredictable. This became clear in the early 1990s with the conflicts in the Balkans, where NATO forces were called upon to participate in peace support and crisis management.³⁶⁴

At the London Summit on 5 and 6 July 1990, NATO issued a declaration of peace and open cooperation with the Soviet Union and the former Warsaw Pact members. The declaration was a manifestation of the "hand of friendship" in which NATO leaders pledged their commitment to

difficulties. By the late 1980s, political changes in most member states had rendered the Pact virtually ineffective. Thus, in March and July 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was officially dissolved. [AN].

³⁶¹ United States Department of State, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

³⁶² NATO e transformuar, 3.

³⁶³ The beginnings of NATO’s military structure: birth of the Alliance to the fall of the Berlin Wall, (Public Diplomacy Division, 1110 Brussels, 2006).

³⁶⁴ NATO e transformuar, 12.

collective security and support for democracy and stability, new cooperative relations with all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on the eve of the end of the Cold War:

"Europe has entered a new, promising era. Central and Eastern Europe is liberating itself. The Soviet Union has begun the long journey towards a free society. The walls that once confined people and ideas are falling. Europeans are determining their own destiny. They are choosing freedom. They are choosing economic freedom. They are choosing peace. They are choosing a Europe whole and free. As a result, this Alliance must and will adapt."³⁶⁵

As an opportunity for cooperation with former Warsaw Pact members, NATO created the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in December 1991.³⁶⁶ A number of Eastern European and Baltic countries concluded that their interests could be better protected by joining NATO. The Alliance took a step forward in its enlargement. At the Brussels Summit on 10 January 1994, NATO formally established the Partnership for Peace (PfP), an initiative aimed at providing opportunities for close cooperation between NATO and other countries, particularly those of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the former Soviet Union, including Russia itself. In a statement issued after the meeting, the North Atlantic Council committed itself to:

"The Partnership for Peace, which will operate under the authority of the North Atlantic Council, will create a new security relationship between the North Atlantic Alliance and its Partners for Peace. The Council will invite Partner countries to participate in political and military bodies at NATO Headquarters in relation to Partnership activities. The Partnership will broaden and intensify political and military cooperation across Europe, enhance stability, reduce threats to peace and build strong relationships by promoting a spirit of practical cooperation and commitment to the democratic principles that underpin our Alliance."

Partnership with NATO offered each signatory state the opportunity to engage in joint activities, such as military training with NATO troops and support in the development of defense capabilities. NATO requires its member states to respect basic principles such as democracy, conflict resolution through negotiations, civilian control of the military, transparency of military budgets, and

³⁶⁵ NATO, North Atlantic Council London Declaration On A Transformed North Atlantic Alliance London 5-6 July 1990.

³⁶⁶ Duignan, NATO: *Its Past*, 59.

modernization and standardization of military forces. In return, the signatory states benefit from military training with NATO in the form of peacekeeping and rescue operations, and can benefit from the application of Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949), which allows requests for consultation with the 16 members of the Alliance if their security is threatened. This cooperation served as a roadmap for the preparation of countries for possible membership in NATO.³⁶⁷ During 1994-1995, most European non-member states of the Alliance³⁶⁸ including Russia³⁶⁹ individually signed³⁷⁰ framework document of the Partnership for Peace with NATO.³⁷¹

At the NATO Summit in Madrid on 7 and 8 June 1997, the Alliance's leaders, the Presidents/Prime Ministers, took several important decisions regarding the expansion of the Alliance and the development of security policies for the future. NATO leaders accepted the membership requirements as a necessity to build improved security throughout the Euro-Atlantic region without creating dividing lines. At the Madrid Summit, NATO decided to invite three Central and Eastern European countries – Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – to join the Alliance. This decision was an important step in consolidating security in Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The Madrid Summit reaffirmed NATO's commitment to ensuring security and stability in Europe and to improving relations with countries still outside the Alliance. The Allies committed themselves to maintaining the fundamental function of collective defense,

³⁶⁷ NATO, Partnership for Peace: Invitation Document issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Press Release M-1(1994) 002 Issued on January 11, 1994; European Parliament Briefing No 31 Security and Defence and enlargement of the European Union, October 30, 1998.

³⁶⁸ Albania (23 February 1994), Armenia, (05 October 1994), Austria, (10 February 1995), Azerbaijan, (04 May 1994), Belarus, (11 January 1995), Bulgaria, (14 February 1994), Czech Republic, (10 March 1994), Estonia, (02 March 1994), Finland, (05 September 1994), Georgia, (23 March 1994), Hungary, (08 February 1994), Kazakhstan, (27 May 1994), Kyrgyzstan, (01 June 1994), Latvia, (14 February 1994), Lithuania, (27 January 1994), Malta, (26 April 1995), Moldova, (16 March 1994), Poland, (02 February 1994), Romania, (26 January 1994), Russia, (22 June 1994), Slovakia, (09 February 1994), Slovenia, (30 March 1994), Republic of North Macedonia (15 November 1995), Turkmenistan, (10 May 1994), Ukraine, (08 February 1994), Uzbekistan, (13 July 1994).

³⁶⁹ Negotiations on Russia's membership in NATO were never formally conducted, and there was generally no direct Russian request for membership in the Alliance. In 1994, Russia became part of the Partnership for Peace. As NATO continued its expansion into Central and Eastern Europe, including the countries of the former communist bloc and the Baltic states, Russia saw this as a threat to its security. This led to a deep cooling of relations with NATO, and open opposition to the expansion of the Alliance into areas that were once under Soviet influence. [AN].

³⁷⁰ The PfP was also signed by other former Yugoslav republics: Croatia (25 May 2000), Serbia (14 December 2006), Montenegro (14 December 2006) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (14 December 2006).

³⁷¹ NATO, Signatures of Partnership for Peace Framework Document, Last updated: March 7, 2024.

“we have adapted our political and military structures to improve our ability to meet the new challenges of managing regional crises and conflicts”.³⁷²

For the former Warsaw Pact countries, NATO membership meant not only protection from Russia, but also help in promoting stability and prosperity, peace, democracy and economic development in their countries.³⁷³

4.3. The structure of NATO's political and military leadership

The NATO alliance is an interstate consensus organization. It has been accepted as such since its inception in 1949.³⁷⁴ NATO consists of two main parts, a political and a military component. It is assisted by a large number of commissions – agencies. NATO’s headquarters is in Brussels, a meeting place where representatives of all member states come together to make decisions based on common interests. Until the late 1980s, NATO bore little resemblance to what it had been since its founding in 1949. The most important reforms were made at the Lisbon Summit on 20 and 25 February 1952, with the establishment of a permanent North Atlantic Council, the creation of an integrated military command structure with a Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACUER) and the election of a Secretary General.³⁷⁵ The organizational structure remained relatively static throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Military Committee's main focus was on ways and means to deter any aggression by the Soviet Union against NATO member states.³⁷⁶

Decision-making by consensus means that there is no voting in NATO. Consultations take place until a decision is reached that is acceptable to all. In general, this negotiation process is rapid, as members regularly consult each other and therefore often know and understand each other's positions in advance.³⁷⁷ NATO Headquarters in Brussels employs around 3,150 full-time staff. Of

³⁷² NATO Press Release M-1 (97)81, Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Madrid 8th July 1997.

³⁷³ Duignan, NATO: Its Past, 76.

³⁷⁴ Since its founding in 1949, the Alliance has undergone three major committee restructurings. The first took place in 1990 after the end of the Cold War, and the second in 2002, following the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. The third and most recent committee review began in June 2010 as part of a broader reform effort that encompassed all of the Alliance's structures: the military command structure and its organizations and agencies. NATO, Committees, Last updated: October 15, 2024.

³⁷⁵ The beginnings of NATO's military structure.

³⁷⁶ NATO Publications: The beginnings of NATO's military structure, Updated: January 2006.

³⁷⁷ NATO Consensus decision-making at NATO, last updates June 30, 2023.

these, 1,400 are members of national delegations and military representatives of NATO member countries. There are also around 1,300 civilian members of international headquarters or agencies, 350 members of the International Military Staff (IMS) and 80 civilians.³⁷⁸

NATO does not have its own army. Instead, individual member states commit to the type and number of military forces that will be made available to the Alliance for military operations. These forces remain under the control of each country until they are called up and are then placed under the responsibility of NATO military commanders. The principle of consensus decision-making is applied throughout NATO – from the North Atlantic Council as the Alliance's main political decision-making body, to its committees and subordinate structures.³⁷⁹ The Chief Administrative Officer of the North Atlantic Council is the Secretary General. He is assisted by six departments: Political Affairs, Defense Planning and Policy, Defense Support, Infrastructure, Logistics and Council Operations, and Scientific Affairs.³⁸⁰

- North Atlantic Council

The most important decision-making body in NATO is the North Atlantic Council (NAC), in which each member country is represented by a permanent representative at ambassadorial level, supported by that country's delegation, consisting of diplomatic staff and security advisers. The Council meets at ambassadorial level at least once a week, on Wednesdays. All meetings are chaired by the NATO Secretary General or his deputy. The Council also holds meetings at higher levels, including meetings of foreign ministers, defense ministers and summits attended by the presidents and prime ministers of the member countries, to discuss important strategic issues that NATO is facing.³⁸¹ The North Atlantic Council also has a significant public profile. Depending on the situation, it occasionally issues statements and communiqués in which it publicly presents NATO's positions and decisions. The Council is the only body of the Alliance that delegates its powers in the manner defined by the North Atlantic Treaty, where it is given responsibility for establishing subsidiary bodies. In this way, the Council provides a unique forum for consultation among members on all matters affecting their security. All NATO member countries have equal

³⁷⁸ NATO OTAN, Handbook, (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 2001), 219

³⁷⁹ NATO e transformuar, 15.

³⁸⁰ Duignan, NATO: *Its Past*, 13.

³⁸¹ NATO në shekullin XXI, (Brussels, Public Diplomacy Division, 2004), 10-11.

decision-making rights. All decisions are an expression of the common will and are taken by consensus of all members.³⁸² The North Atlantic Council consults a number of specialized committees and agencies dealing with various issues such as the press, economics, etc.³⁸³ The Council is responsible for taking important decisions regarding the security and defense of member states and developing common strategies to address threats to global security. It coordinates NATO policies in areas such as collective defense, peacekeeping, arms control, and cybersecurity. The Council is also responsible for assessing risks that may threaten international security and stability. As such, it takes action to respond to all possible threats in a coordinated and effective manner.³⁸⁴

- NATO Secretary General

The Secretary General of NATO is the highest international civilian official of the Alliance, with the authority to coordinate NATO policy-making. He is the titular chairman of all senior NATO committees. He is elected by the North Atlantic Council, which he chairs and to which he is accountable. The Secretary General is responsible for promoting and guiding the consultation and decision-making process throughout the Alliance.³⁸⁵ He participates in diplomatic meetings and is responsible for communicating NATO's positions and policies to member countries, partners and international organizations. One of his main roles is to help find common ground on which the Allies, the political authorities of the Alliance, can agree. He can also be trusted by the Alliance's member countries to negotiate with third parties on behalf of the Council. The Secretary General oversees and ensures the coordination of NATO's activities, including military operations and peacekeeping missions. He is the Alliance's chief spokesperson. The Secretary General is assisted by a Deputy Secretary General, who deputizes for the Secretary General and carries out his duties in his absence.³⁸⁶

- Military structure of NATO

The Military Committee (MC) is the highest military authority in NATO, alongside the North Atlantic Council, both of which were formed just a few months after the Alliance was created. It

³⁸² NATO Handbook, 23.

³⁸³ Duignan, NATO: *Its Past*, 13.

³⁸⁴ NATO North Atlantic Council (NAC), Last updated: October 21, 2024.

³⁸⁵ NATO OTAN, Handbook, 219.

³⁸⁶ Ismay, *NATO The first five years*, 55-60; NATO Handbook, 84; NATO Secretary General, Last updated: October 1, 2024.

consists of the Chiefs of Defense of NATO member states.³⁸⁷ The Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC) is elected by the Chiefs of Defense and is appointed for a term of three years. He acts exclusively in an international capacity and derives his authority from the Military Committee, to which he is accountable for the performance of his duties. He normally chairs all meetings of the Military Committee. In his absence, the Deputy Chairman of the Military Committee (DCMC) takes the chair. The Military Committee consists of senior military officers (usually three-star generals or admirals) from NATO member countries, who serve as their country's Military Representatives (MILREP) to NATO, representing their Chief of Defense (CHOD). The Military Committee meets every Thursday to monitor the decisions of the North Atlantic Council. The Committee (MC) is the main source of advice and reports for the North Atlantic Council and the NATO Secretary General. In times of crisis, tension or war, and in connection with military operations such as the war in Kosova, the Committee has advised the North Atlantic Council on the use of military force.³⁸⁸

In 1990, NATO reformed its military structure,³⁸⁹ which consisted of: 1) Supreme Allied Commander Europe - SACEUR, based in Mons, Belgium. SACEUR is the head of Allied Command Operations and, as such, is responsible to the Military Committee for the conduct of all NATO operations. 2) Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic - SACLANT, based in Norfolk, Virginia, USA. 3) Supreme Allied Commander - CINCHAN, based in Northwood, United Kingdom and 4) Canada-USA Regional Planning Group - CUSRPG, based in Arlington, USA.³⁹⁰

As the head of NATO's main military command, SACEUR's mission is to contribute to the maintenance of peace, security and territorial integrity of the Alliance's member states.³⁹¹ If

³⁸⁷ Know your NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Shield of Freedom, 1949-1959, (Public Diplomacy Division, 1959), 10.

³⁸⁸ NATO OTAN, *Handbook*, 240.

³⁸⁹ At the NATO 50th Anniversary Summit from 23 to 25 April 1999, Allies proposed a change to NATO's military structure. The new command came into effect in June 2003. The change in command structure was the result of a continuous process of adaptation to new threats and strategic needs. Specifically, the four major commands were consolidated into two major commands: Allied Command Operations (ACO) is responsible for the planning and conduct of all Alliance operations. It consists of a small number of established headquarters, each with a specific supporting role to the operational command. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe – or SACEUR – assumes overall command of operations at the strategic level and exercises his responsibilities from his headquarters in Mons, Belgium: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, commonly known as SHAPE. NATO Allied Command Operations (ACO) Last updated: May 27 2024.

³⁹⁰ NATO Handbook, 98-99.

³⁹¹ During the Kosova War, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe - SACEUR was Wesley Clark.

aggression occurs or is deemed imminent, it is responsible for using all military measures to protect the territorial integrity of the Alliance. SACEUR, through its activities and its public information staff, maintains regular contacts with the press and media.³⁹² As Supreme Commander, he makes recommendations to NATO's political and military authorities on all military matters that may affect his ability to carry out his responsibilities. For day-to-day operations, he is responsible to the Military Committee (MC), which consists of the chiefs of defense of NATO member countries.³⁹³ Within Allied Command Europe, there are two regional commands responsible to Supreme Allied Command Europe: 1) Allied Forces North Europe (AFNORTH): Brunssum, Netherlands and 2) Allied Forces South Europe (AFSOUTH): Naples, Italy, assisted by 65 other headquarters located in Italy, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Great Britain, USA, etc.³⁹⁴

4. 4. NATO in the Balkans

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of NATO's main roles was to build peace in the Balkans. Wars in the former Yugoslavia,³⁹⁵ including the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the intervention in Kosova, were examples of NATO's commitment to preventing ethnic cleansing and efforts to stabilize the region.

The history of the wars in the so-called second Yugoslavia began on 25 June 1991, when two former Yugoslav republics, Slovenia and Croatia, declared their independence. After the declaration of independence, Serbia, led by Slobodan Milošević, and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), under the control of Belgrade, began a war against Slovenia on 27 June 1992, which lasted 10 days. The war ended with the Brijuni Agreement on 7 July 1991, signed by representatives of the Council of Europe and the leaders of the Yugoslav republics. Slovenia gained its right to independence on 8 October 1991, while on 11 January 1992 it was recognized by the European Union, and then by the USA and other countries.³⁹⁶ While the agreement was being signed on the Brijuni Islands in the Adriatic, tensions in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were growing by

³⁹² NATO, Handbook, 259.

³⁹³ Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) Last updated: July 4, 2022.

³⁹⁴ NATO, Handbook, 259.

³⁹⁵ This part of the document reflects only NATO's involvement in the former Yugoslavia, without going into details about the successive wars that took place. [AN].

³⁹⁶ Enver Hasani, *Vetëvendosja, integriteti territorial dhe stabiliteti ndërkombëtar: Rasti i Jugosllavisë*, (Prishtinë: Buzuku, 2010), 193.

the day. Croatia was officially recognized by the European Union on January 15, 1992. Its recognition was contested by ethnic Serbs living in Croatia. Supported by Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and the JNA, ethnic Serbs living in Croatia were encouraged to launch and organize a military campaign against the newly proclaimed Croatian state. Milošević believed that the Serbs in Croatia, with his help and the JNA's help, would defeat the Croatian army and limit the state's legitimacy. Time showed that they failed.³⁹⁷

At the beginning of these conflicts, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, due to the commitment of their political leadership, sought to remain neutral, but with the declaration of independence of Slovenia and Croatia, it became clear to Macedonian and Bosnian leaders that Slobodan Milošević and Serbian nationalism would dominate what remained of Yugoslavia.³⁹⁸ Macedonia thus declared its independence on 8 September 1991 after a referendum that received broad support from the Macedonian people, with around 75% of the 1.3 million eligible voters voting in favor of an independent state. Albanians, who made up more than 20% of Macedonia's population, boycotted the referendum, dissatisfied with the constitutional position, which ignored their demands for equality, although they had been in favor of Macedonia's independence from Yugoslavia.³⁹⁹ Unlike Macedonia, which gained statehood without war, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was much more complex. This central Yugoslav republic had a joint government that reflected the mixed ethnic composition of the population: about 43% Bosnian Muslims, 33% Bosnian Serbs, 17% Bosnian Croats, and about 7% other nationalities.⁴⁰⁰ As tensions between the three nationalities grew in late 1991, the President of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović, sought international recognition in December 1991. This action prompted the Bosnian Serbs, with the support of Slobodan Milošević and the JNA, to start creating incidents. They abandoned the constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina and began drawing up plans for the creation of separate state structures.⁴⁰¹ Growing dissatisfaction took its material form on

³⁹⁷ Server, *From War to Peace in the Balkans*, 35.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁹⁹ John Tagliabue, "MACEDONIANS VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCE FROM YUGOSLAVIA", *The New York Times*, September 10, 1991.

⁴⁰⁰ United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

⁴⁰¹ Hasani, *Vetëvendosja, integriteti territorial*, 198-199.

January 9, 1992, when the leaders of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina declared their autonomy on part of the territory of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁰²

On 21 February 1992, the United Nations Security Council, invoking its primary right and responsibility for international peace and security as set out in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, Article 52 on regional agreements, adopted Resolution 743, which authorized the establishment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). It called on UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to take the necessary measures to ensure its deployment as soon as possible. This peacekeeping mission, led by the United Nations, was intended to provide protection for civilians and support the implementation of the ceasefire and safe zones, as well as to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁰³

Bosnia and Herzegovina held a referendum on its independence between 29 February and 1 March 1992, but it was boycotted by the majority of Serbs in the Republic. The final result showed a turnout of 64.3% of registered voters, of whom 99.4% voted in favour of republican independence. According to observers from the European Parliament, the referendum was deemed legal, despite "technical shortcomings" and a boycott by Serbs in the Republic.⁴⁰⁴ The creation of an independent Bosnian state with a Bosniak majority was met with resistance from the Bosnian Serbs, who launched a military campaign to secure the desired territory and "cleanse" Bosnia of its Muslim and Croat civilian population. On 27 March 1992, the Serbs "founded" the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, later called Republika Srpska (RS). In May 1992, the Bosnian Serb army began a siege of the city of Sarajevo that lasted more than three years and became a symbol of the Bosnian War.⁴⁰⁵ Bosnian Serb military forces attacked Bosniak and Croat civilians in areas under their control, in activities that can be characterized as ethnic cleansing. According to the American newspaper *The New York Times*, by the beginning of June 1992, as a result of bombing areas with Bosniak civilian population, Serbian military forces supported by Belgrade and the JNA forcibly expelled over 700,000 Bosniaks from their homes.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Chuck Sudetic, "Serbs Proclaim Autonomy In Another Yugoslav Region", *The New York Times*, January 10, 1992.

⁴⁰³ Resolution 743 (1992) of 21 February 1992.

⁴⁰⁴ Chuck Sudetic, "Turnout in Bosnia Signals Independence", *The New York Times*, March 2, 1992.

⁴⁰⁵ Ahrens, *Diplomacia mbi tëhën e thikës*, 205.

⁴⁰⁶ Michael T. Kaufman, "THE WORLD; 'Ethnic Cleansing.' Europe's Old Horror, With New Victims", *The New York Times*, August 2, 1992; *The New York Times*, "What Has the World Done for Bosnia?; A Diary of Disgrace", December 20, 1992.

Since the war had the potential to spread throughout Yugoslavia, UNPROFOR's operational mandate from February 1992 to February 1993 was extended to the five republics of the former Yugoslavia: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and also had an organization in Slovenia. Due to the greater fighting, the central focus was Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNPROFOR personnel were deployed to several areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Sarajevo and other cities that were most severely affected by the war. Several "safe zones" were established, including cities such as Srebrenica, Žepa, Goražde, and Tuzla, areas where the civilian population could find protection by UN peacekeepers. The number of UNPROFOR peacekeepers varied, but overall, at the peak of the mission (March 1995), UNPROFOR forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina numbered 38,599 soldiers from over 30 different countries.⁴⁰⁷

The political basis for the Alliance's role in the former Yugoslavia was established at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) at the session of Foreign Ministers in Oslo on 4 and 5 June 1992. During this meeting, the Foreign Ministers expressed their readiness to assist, on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with their active procedures for peacekeeping operations within the framework of interrelated institutions: NATO, OSCE, the European Community and the Council of Europe, in order to make the best use of the resources of all these institutions for support for the process of democracy and reform, as well as for conflict prevention. The ministers also promised that the Alliance will remain a stabilizing force in Europe and an important actor in facing new threats, as it happened with the wars in the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁰⁸ At that meeting, the North Atlantic Council, through two press statements from 4-5 June 1992, warned the Serbian/Yugoslav leadership that it would not allow the Balkans to be destabilized by successive wars:

"We are deeply concerned about the violence and destruction that continues in various areas of the Euro-Atlantic region. This is in stark contrast to the peace and stability across the Euro-Atlantic area to which we are committed. We will do our best to prevent runaway nationalism.⁴⁰⁹ We deplore the continued use of force and the loss of life, suffering and widespread destruction in the

⁴⁰⁷ Former Yugoslavia – UNPROFOR: Prepared by the Department of Public Information, United Nations. This text was last updated effective 31 August 1996.

⁴⁰⁸ NATO OTAN, Handbook, 107.

⁴⁰⁹ NATO Final Communiqué Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Oslo 4 June 1992. Updated: October 27, 2000.

territory of the former Yugoslavia, of which the tragedy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is yet another example. While all parties to the conflict have contributed in their own way to the current situation, the primary responsibility lies with the authorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including the Yugoslav People's Army."⁴¹⁰

On 10 and 11 December 1992, NATO foreign ministers, meeting in Brussels, went a step further in their commitment and determination to stop the fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "...We expressed our deep concern about the risks to European security and stability arising from the escalation of regional conflicts involving ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes. The Alliance remains committed to playing its full role in seeking a peaceful solution to these conflicts, thereby ending the loss of life, suffering and destruction. The most acute crisis is the war in the former Yugoslavia. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Community to find a negotiated solution to this tragic conflict..."⁴¹¹

In early April 1993, NATO approved a request from the UN Security Council for its aircraft to participate in the implementation of the so-called "deny flight" zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina. On 12 April 1993, NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner informed UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that the implementation of the no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina had begun at 12:00. NATO's action was taken in accordance with Resolution 861.⁴¹² Security Council, and was decided by the North Atlantic Council at its meeting on 8 April 1993. NATO Notice (93) 29 states: "SACUER General John M. Shalikashvili has instructed the relevant commanders of CINCSOUTH and 5th ATAF to take the necessary action. This NATO action in support of the UN follows NATO decisions taken at the North Atlantic Council (NAC) meetings held in Oslo in June 1992 and in Brussels in December 1992."⁴¹³

As fighting continued in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnian Serbs, with the support of Serbia, continued to bomb areas where Bosnian Muslim and Croat civilians were located. On 4 June 1993, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 836, which aimed to "protect safe areas." Serbian forces ignored the UN's request, instead continuing their bombing campaign, creating a

⁴¹⁰ NATO Statement Issued at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council Oslo 5 June 1992. Updated: October 27, 2000.

⁴¹¹ NATO, Final Communiqué Defence Planning Committee Brussels December 11, 1992. Updated: October 27, 2000.

⁴¹² The resolution was adopted by the UN Security Council on March 31, 1993. [AN].

⁴¹³ NATO Press Release (92) 29, April 12, 1993.

humanitarian catastrophe.⁴¹⁴ On August 2, 1993, the North Atlantic Council held its next meeting. In a press statement, NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner announced that "Allies consider the difficult humanitarian situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in Sarajevo, including repeated ceasefire violations, unacceptable." The press release states that the Alliance is ready to provide anti-aircraft defense in the event of an attack on UNPROFOR. NATO also warned of urgent preparations in case of a worsening of the situation in Sarajevo, including a large-scale intervention with humanitarian aid, as well as airstrikes against Bosnian Serbs. The Council (NAC) will reconvene after the NATO military authorities report and review the progress and situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially around Sarajevo and other safe areas.⁴¹⁵ On 9 August 1993, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) approved the "Operational Options for Air Strikes in Bosnia and Herzegovina" recommended by the NATO Military Committee. These options addressed the target identification process as well as NATO/UN command and control for air strikes.⁴¹⁶

As the Serb attacks continued, the situation in Sarajevo and other protected areas deteriorated further, and the North Atlantic Council, meeting on 9 February 1994, blamed the Bosnian Serbs as the primary perpetrators of the tragic civilian casualties. The North Atlantic Council (NAC), responding to a request from UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, on 6 February 1994 authorized the Supreme Allied Commander Southern Europe to launch air strikes, at the request of the UN, against artillery and mortar positions in or around Sarajevo which UNPROFOR determined were responsible for attacks on civilian targets. The Council (NAC) also decided on 10 February 1994, "that heavy weapons of any party located within the Sarajevo zone, unless under the control of UNPROFOR, shall be subject to NATO air strikes, which shall be "carried out in close coordination with the UN Secretary-General and in accordance with the decisions of the North Atlantic Council of 2 and 9 August 1993."⁴¹⁷ On February 28, 1994, NATO aircraft shot

⁴¹⁴ United Nations Security Council S/RES/836 June 4, 1993.

⁴¹⁵ NATO Press Statement by the Secretary General Following the Special Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Brussels August 2, 1993.

⁴¹⁶ NATO OTAN, Handbook, 109.

⁴¹⁷ NATO, Decisions taken at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Permanent Session Brussels, February 9, 1994.

down four Serbian fighter jets that entered the no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina, triggering the first military conflict in the 44-year history of the North Atlantic Alliance.⁴¹⁸

During 1994, Bosnian Serb military forces continuously attacked UN safe areas in Sarajevo, Gorazde, Srebrenica, Bihać, Tuzla and Žepa. Serbs in Croatia acted similarly, continuously violating the sovereignty of the independent Croatian state. In response to this threat, on 19 November 1994, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 958, reaffirming the UN's commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia. The resolution determined that the situation in the former Yugoslavia continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security. As a result, the Security Council authorized Member States and regional organizations, in close cooperation with UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and UNPROFOR forces, to take all necessary measures to use air power in the safe areas of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the Republic of Croatia.⁴¹⁹ On 21 November 1994, NATO aircraft attacked the Serbian-occupied Udbina airport in Croatia. The NATO attack was in response to Serbian forces using the airport to attack targets in the Bihać area of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴²⁰

At the beginning of 1995, the war in Bosnia became increasingly aggressive, with daily attacks by Bosnian Serb military forces on civilians, with the aim of ethnic cleansing and the destruction of natural resources and private property. The fighting was heavy and caused many casualties. In that period, international efforts to stop the violence and reach a peaceful solution were also intensified. The role of NATO in this whole process was very important. Their actions were consistently coordinated with the UN Security Council, but unfortunately, even after three years of efforts, they were unable to stop the fighting and find a peaceful agreement.⁴²¹

On 26 May 1995, NATO warplanes bombed an ammunition depot near the Serbian political headquarters in Pale. The NATO attack came in response to the deployment of heavy weapons by the Serbs around Sarajevo. The attack was carried out mainly by American aircraft and strongly supported by US President Bill Clinton, who warned the Serbs to stop bombing the Bosnian

⁴¹⁸ Michael R. Gordon, "CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS; NATO CRAFT DOWN 4 SERB WARPLANES ATTACKING BOSNIA", *The New York Times*, March 1, 1994.

⁴¹⁹ United Nations Security Council S/RES/958 November 19, 1994.

⁴²⁰ NATO OTAN, Handbook, 111.

⁴²¹ *The New York Times*, "Air Strike in Bosnia", May 26, 1995.

capital. Despite the US president's warning on the evening of 26 May 1995, the Bosnian Serbs responded by bombing five of the six Bosnian towns designated by the UN as "safe zones". The Serbian attack was most intense in Tuzla.⁴²² In this offensive, Bosnian Serb military forces took around 370 UN peacekeepers hostage, who were then used as human shields on potential targets in an attempt to prevent further NATO air strikes. The North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers met in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, on 30 May 1995, where it condemned the escalation of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the hostile actions of Bosnian Serbs towards UN personnel. As a result of international pressure, particularly threats from NATO, all UN peacekeepers were released on 18 June 1995.⁴²³

In July 1995, the situation became even more tense as Bosnian Serb forces ignored a UN warning issued on 10 July 1995 to withdraw Serbian forces from Srebrenica. On 11 July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces, commanded by Ratko Mladić, launched a major offensive to capture Srebrenica, where they clashed with Dutch peacekeepers guarding the entrance to Srebrenica. The Dutch called in NATO fighter jets to protect the UN peacekeepers. NATO attacked targets designated by the UN, hitting two tanks, but despite this the Srebrenica "safe area" fell to Bosnian Serb forces. The invasion was carried out because UNPROFOR, which was tasked with defending the town, was not prepared and could not protect the population from attacks by Serbian forces. They were limited in their capabilities and mandate, and could not intervene by force to stop the Serbian offensive. This invasion marked a turning point in the three-year war and the United Nations' attempt to control the area and protect over 40,000 Bosnian Muslim civilians.⁴²⁴ On July 11, 1995, commander Ratko Mladić told Muslim civilians not to be afraid: "Everyone who wants to go will be transported, big and small, young and old. Don't be afraid... No one will do anything to you." At the same time, his forces began a massacre. The massacre lasted 10 days. More than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were systematically killed. The Srebrenica massacre was the worst act of mass killing in Europe since the end of World War II.⁴²⁵

⁴²² Roger Cohen, NATO Jets Bomb Arms Depot At Bosnian Serb Headquarters, *The New York Times*, May 26, 1995.

⁴²³ NATO OTAN, Handbook, 111.

⁴²⁴ Chris Hedges, "SERB FORCES FIGHT DUTCH U.N. TROOPS IN EASTERN BOSNIA" *The New York Times*, July 11, 1995; Chris Hedges, "CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS: THE OVERVIEW; Bosnian Serbs Overrun Town Protected by U.N.", *The New York Times*, July 12, 1995.

⁴²⁵ BBC, "Bosnia's Srebrenica massacre 25 years on - in pictures" July 11, 2020.

Following the Srebrenica massacre, on 25 July 1995, the North Atlantic Council held a meeting, at which it approved military planning to prevent a new attack on the Goražde safe zone and to use NATO air strikes if this safe area was threatened or attacked by Bosnian Serbs. On 1 August 1995, the North Atlantic Council made a similar decision to protect the cities of Sarajevo, Bihać and Tuzla.⁴²⁶

On August 28, 1995, Bosnian Serb military forces completely ignored NATO warnings by bombing the market (Markale City Market) in Sarajevo. The attack ended in another horrific massacre, in which 37 Bosnian Muslim civilians were killed and 80 were wounded.⁴²⁷

In response, on 30 August 1995, NATO Secretary General Willy Claes announced that the North Atlantic Alliance had launched Operation Deliberate Force. At around 02:00 local time, NATO aircraft began bombing Bosnian Serb forces. The decision followed a series of brutal attacks by Bosnian Serbs on the Bosnian Muslim civilian population in areas declared safe by the United Nations and NATO. The airstrike operation was jointly decided upon by the Supreme Allied Commander Southern Europe, Admiral Leighton W. Smith Jr., and the Commander of the UN Peacekeeping Force, Lieutenant General Bernard Janvier. The bombing campaign was based on UN Security Council Resolution 836 and in accordance with the decisions of the North Atlantic Council of 25 July and 1 August 1995, which were approved by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.⁴²⁸

Operation Deliberate Force lasted three weeks (with a break from 1 to 5 September 1995) and ended on 20 September 1995, when NATO bombing and a joint military operation by Croats and Bosniaks forced the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from the occupation of the city of Sarajevo. After three weeks of negotiations mediated by US Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the three presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović, Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, and Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, agreed on 21 November 1995 to the Dayton Accords, agreeing to end three years of fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The agreement was officially signed on 14 December 1995 in Paris, France.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ NATO OTAN, Handbook, 112.

⁴²⁷ *The New York Times*, "Horror Again Fills Sarajevo's Market", August 29, 1995.

⁴²⁸ NATO, PRESS RELEASE (95)73, August 30, 1995.

⁴²⁹ Martti Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, (Helsinki: Fili, 2000), 17.

NATO's intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the largest air operations the Alliance had ever undertaken and marked a significant change in NATO's policy of military intervention in the region. The air campaign demonstrated that NATO was prepared to intervene forcefully to preserve peace and prevent ethnic cleansing and war crimes in the Balkans. To maintain a secure environment and facilitate the reconstruction of the country, on 15 December 1995, NATO, based on Resolution 1031⁴³⁰ of the UN Security Council sent a 60,000-strong international peacekeeping force under NATO command to implement the agreement, known as IFOR. IFOR's objectives were essentially met by the time elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 1996. However, as the situation was still unstable and much remained to be achieved on the civilian level, NATO agreed to deploy a new Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina from December 1996.⁴³¹

Following the Dayton Accords, NATO played a major role in promoting peace, state-building, and ethnic reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This NATO-enforced peace period kept the region peaceful until the outbreak of the Kosova War.

When the Kosova War began on 28 February 1998, NATO expressed concern about the risks it posed to the entire region. On 5 March 1998, the North Atlantic Council warned Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević that NATO had a legitimate interest in developments in Kosova, including their impact on the stability of the entire region, the risks of which the Alliance was concerned about.⁴³² From 5 to 23 March 1999, despite the efforts and warnings of the international community to find a diplomatic solution, the Yugoslav leadership only intensified the violence, killings and displacement of the Albanian civilian population, creating a humanitarian crisis in Kosova. During this period, NATO made it clear to the Yugoslav leadership that it was prepared to use its air power to stop the violence and ethnic cleansing of Kosova Albanians if diplomacy failed. The Rambouillet Conference from 6 to 23 February 1999 was an opportunity to reach a peace agreement to find a solution for Kosova, but the refusal of the Serbian/Yugoslav delegation made it impossible to reach a peace agreement, which forced the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to begin bombing Yugoslavia on 24 March 1999.

⁴³⁰ United Nations, Security Council, S/RES/1031, 15 December 1995.

⁴³¹ NATO, Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-2004), Last updated: March 21, 2024.

⁴³² Press Release (98)51 April, 30, 1998.

5. THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR IN KOSOVA

5.1 The first days of the war

For more than a decade, international organizations have been warning in their reports about the growing crisis in Kosova. The human rights of Albanians were violated daily by the Serbian regime, especially during the years of wars in Croatia and Bosnia.⁴³³ The atmosphere in Kosova seemed to be worse than it was in Bosnia before the armed fighting began. Everything pointed to a new culmination of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia - in Kosova.⁴³⁴ However, it was not possible to predict exactly when Kosova would "explode".⁴³⁵ War cries or calls for war, ever since the rallies of the anti-bureaucratic revolution when Serbs chanted in unison "We want weapons", "We want to fight in Kosova", have finally moved in the direction of open conflict.⁴³⁶ Constant warnings in terms of: it started in Kosova, it will end in Kosova - they were getting closer to realization.⁴³⁷ However, the concern of international experts was defined in the fact that the war in Kosova could endanger international relations much more than the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it will have consequences in Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.⁴³⁸

As early as 1998, there were indications that the low-intensity violence that had gripped Kosova the previous year would escalate into high-intensity violence. Serbian authorities began sending police and military forces to Kosova on alert for a full-scale attack. This information was available to journalists, diplomats, and human rights organizations, both in Kosova and in Serbia.⁴³⁹ The US Central Intelligence Agency warned in mid-January that Serbian authorities were considering more radical systems for establishing coercive control over ethnic Albanians, including the use of excessive force.⁴⁴⁰ However, until the beginning of 1998, everything came down to a series of sporadic and seemingly unrelated conflicts and battles that do not have the character of war. However, since January 1998, this context is changing.

⁴³³ *Amnesty International Report*, (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1999), 34.

⁴³⁴ *Bujku*, 31 janar, 1993, 2.

⁴³⁵ Morton Abramowitz, "Ominous Rumblings from the Balkans", *The Washington Post*, February 16, 1998.

⁴³⁶ Astrit Salihu, "Këndellja e marionetave të Milosheviqit?", *Zëri*, 31 janar, 1998, 30.

⁴³⁷ Besim Spahić, "Arra më e fortë për Serbinë" *Zëri*, shator 1995, 38-40.

⁴³⁸ Micheal A Kaufman, "A Different Kind of War in Kosovo: Serbian Repression vs. Quiet Resistance", *The New York Times*, June 23, 1992.

⁴³⁹ Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 172.

⁴⁴⁰ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 27.

On January 22, 1998, in the morning, special forces of the police and Serbian army attacked the family of Shaban Jashari, who had long been synonymous with resistance.⁴⁴¹ Mother Zahide remembers waking up early in the morning, not knowing they were surrounded. "We didn't see anything until they started sorting themselves into houses. They started shooting from some rifles that made big holes in the ground and walls."⁴⁴² Rrahman Rama remembers that the members of the family resisted. One of the attacked sides was defended by 48-year-old Hamza Jashari (Adem's brother), while Shaban (the old man) defended the other side with three young men, Fitim and Besim, who were 17 years old each, and Kushtrim, Adem's son, who was only 14 years old.⁴⁴³ Despite the heavy attacks, no one in the Jashari family was surprised by the shells or the roar of mortars. Not even when Selveta and Ilirijana were wounded.⁴⁴⁴

Hamëz Jashari, the second son of the family, during an interview with the *Kombi* newspaper on February 2, 1998⁴⁴⁵ describes the circumstances of the Serbian attack and the family's decision to stay and guard the threshold of their house regardless of the consequences. He stated that they had been expecting this intervention since December 1991, because that was when the first attack on this family took place. "After all these threats, many people from the political leadership suggested that we leave because that way we would avoid danger, but I thought that if I left, then I would not feel alive.... We constantly worked with the children so that they would not be afraid, while we prepared the adults, both young men and women, how to defend themselves so that they would not fall into the hands of the enemy..."⁴⁴⁶

That night, Adem Jashari was not at home. As Adem later stated: "We started the car in a hurry, but when we arrived it was all over. Finally, after about 30 minutes of resistance given to the Serbian forces from both the house and the tower, when the Serbian forces saw that they were in danger, they were forced to retreat. They went in the direction of the Hunting Ammunition Factory from where they had come."⁴⁴⁷ Serbian special units, as in the case of Geci, leaving from the neighborhood of Jashari, started shooting randomly, and as a result of this rampage, Hysen

⁴⁴¹ *Bujku*, 23 janar, 1998, 4.

⁴⁴² *Koha Ditore*, 23 janar, 1998, 3.

⁴⁴³ *Kombi*, 25 janar, 1998, 6.

⁴⁴⁴ *Zëri*, 31 janar, 1998, 14.

⁴⁴⁵ The interview was published on March 31, 1998.

⁴⁴⁶ *Kombi*, 31 mars, 1998, 10-11.

⁴⁴⁷ Tahiri, *Drenica një shekull trimërie*, 81; Çitaku, *Prekazi*, 88.

Manxholli, who was on his way to work, was killed.⁴⁴⁸ However, what happened after January 22, 1998, was quite different from the attack on the Jasharis in 1991. Immediately after the withdrawal, the Serbs began new plans, for an armed return to Drenica, and especially to the Jashari family.⁴⁴⁹ At the end of January 1998, exercises of military forces accompanied by Serbian paramilitary units in various places in Kosova clearly demonstrated the strategy of an even stronger attack on the Kosova Albanians.⁴⁵⁰ The concerns of the Albanian people were also confirmed by international sources. In the first week of February 1998, war criminals Željko Ražnatović, better known to the public as Arkan and Captain Dragan, appeared in Kosova. German media confirmed that their arrival in Kosova was aimed at preparing the same acts of terror and murder against Kosova Albanians as those they had organized and carried out in Croatian and Bosnian territory.⁴⁵¹ It was a multifunctional structure that was a tool of the Belgrade government, which served to incite conflict, justify violence and create space for military and police interventions, from 1981 onwards in Kosova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia.⁴⁵² A plan was drawn up for a serious demonstration of power, which included an armed incursion into every corner of Drenica, by units of the Serbian police force led by the “Grmija” brigade, with the help of the armored military police unit of the Pristina Corps, known as the “Black Berets”. According to the Belgrade daily *Naša Borba* and the words of their journalist Vladimir Jovanović, this action involved a detailed military-police investigation, a search for weapons, numerous arrests and excessive use of violence.⁴⁵³ Judging by these premises, the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare was right when he wrote: “The grave crimes of humanity are often driven by criminal propaganda and doctrine. Where politicians, diplomats, historians, writers came to their aid like a crowd of helpers. First to harass them, and then to try to justify it. The drama of Kosova today is a typical illustration of this phenomenon. It is a tragedy that was conceived and warned about long ago by furious chauvinism and supported by this auxiliary force. Without this help, it would not have happened.”⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁸ *Bujku*, 24 janar, 1998, 1-6.

⁴⁴⁹ Baton Haxhiu, *Lufta ndryshe*, (Prishtinë: Kumti, 2008), 54; Krasniqi, *Kthesa e Madhe*, 52.

⁴⁵⁰ *Bujku*, 30 janar, 1998, 11.

⁴⁵¹ *Bujku*, 7 shkurt, 1998, 16.

⁴⁵² Rrustem Rugova, “Paramilitarët në funksion të shtetit serb”, *Bujku*, 14 mars 1998, 8.

⁴⁵³ Vladimir Jovanović, “A mundet sulmi i ushtrisë të shkaktoj kryengritje gjithëpopullore?”, *Koha Ditore*, 2 shkurt 1998, 7.

⁴⁵⁴ Ismail Kadare, “Djepi i një kombi apo djepi i krimi?”, *Bujku*, 18 mars, 1998, 4.

5.2 Massacres in Drenica

Serbian punitive expeditions against Albanians, consisting of heavily armed police, military and paramilitary units, began so-called cleansing operations in the villages of Drenica in late February 1998. The Serbian media justified these raids as a hunt for “terrorist groups”. The aim of the expeditions was persecution, killing, and shelling of military and civilian targets, although the operation was primarily aimed at eliminating KLA military units.⁴⁵⁵ On February 28, 1998, Drenica was surrounded by armed police and military forces, reinforced by Serbian paramilitary units. The latter took over attacks on most of the villages of Drenica, especially the villages of Likoshan, Qirez, Baks, Prelloc and Polac. According to the locals, the most powerful attacks were carried out in the villages of Qirez and Likoshan, where Serbian forces, accompanied by heavy armored vehicles and armed fire from helicopters, began to invade the houses of civilians.⁴⁵⁶ The "clearing of the terrain" operations ended on March 1. The final toll of the campaign was the killing of women, children, and the elderly. In total, 25 citizens were killed and massacred.⁴⁵⁷

In the village of Qirez, Muhamet and Naser Gjeli, Rexhep A Rexhepi, the four brothers Sejdiu, Ilir Nebihu and his pregnant wife Rukija, Ibush Rama and Xhemshit Nebihu were killed. The family of Ahmet Ahmeti from Likoshan was also attacked. The police forced all the family members - men, women and children - to lie on the ground. Then the torture began, which lasted for hours. The crime continued with the separation of the men who were taken to the door of the yard to be beaten and massacred so much that it was difficult to identify the bodies.⁴⁵⁸

Nataša Kandić, director of the Belgrade Humanitarian Center for Law, referred to the crime in Drenica in an interview. "The action of the police was illegitimate and I was convinced of this on the spot during the visit on March 3 with my colleagues to these villages in Drenica." In addition to her allegations, the facts about the committed crime were observed on the bodies of the massacred and murdered.⁴⁵⁹ The second objective of the Serbian police forces reinforced by

⁴⁵⁵ Berat Luzha, “Masakrimi i popullsisë”, *Bujku*, 16 mars, 1998, 11.

⁴⁵⁶ *Bujku*, 1 mars, 1998, 1-2; *Koha Ditore*, 2 mars, 1998, 2.

⁴⁵⁷ *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999, Mongrafi I* – (Prishtinë: KMDLNJ, 2010), 116-117.

⁴⁵⁸ KMDLNJ *Buletini viti VIII nr. 6 janar - mars*, (Prishtinë: KMDLNJ, 1998), 129-130; *Zëri*, 7 mars, 1998, 8; Zenun Çelaj, “Vrasësit rikthehen në vendin e krimit”, *Bujku*, 21 mars, 1998, 2.

⁴⁵⁹ *Zëri*, 21 mars, 1998, 42.

paramilitary formations was again the attack on the Jashari family. For the Jasharis, this was the third conflict with Serbian forces.⁴⁶⁰ Rifat, the eldest son of the family, remembers a phone call with Hamza the day before the attack. He asked him, "How are you?" He replied, "We're waiting for the moment!"⁴⁶¹ KMDLNJ sources reported that hundreds of police-military vehicles, armored vehicles, trucks, buses with Niš license plates and helicopters were circulating around all the entrances to Skenderaj.⁴⁶² In the early hours of March 5, 1998, Serbian forces stationed at the ammunition factory in Skenderaj broke out of the factory perimeter and headed towards the houses of Jashari, while other Serbian forces coming from Drenas and Mitrovica tried to surround Prekaz and the neighborhood of Jashari. In addition to the first ring that encompassed the houses of Jashari, the police and the Serbian army set up a second ring that encompassed Polac and Skenderaj. About a dozen armored vehicles were stationed between the villages of Mikushnicë and Prekaz and Eperm.⁴⁶³ The town of Prekaz itself was surrounded by over 200 armored vehicles. An iron ring was created that prevented any outside help. Over 800 Serbian soldiers were engaged in this military operation.⁴⁶⁴ It was March 5th, when a female voice from the Jashari family called the Kosova Human Rights Council⁴⁶⁵ saying: "They are at the gate. They are about to get in. What will happen to us?" After that, only the roar of cannons, the firing of mortars and the movement of tanks could be heard.⁴⁶⁶ The attack on Prekaz reverberated around the world. International media reported that thousands of Serbian policemen surrounded Drenica, while 800 of them were sent to the village of Prekaz alone, including special forces, armed with large-caliber machine guns, helicopters, tanks, and rockets, and attacked the villages of Drenica - Prekaz, burning houses. Serbian forces did not differentiate between civilian and military targets during the operation

⁴⁶⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 23 janar, 8; *Zëri*, 14 mars, 1998, 10.

⁴⁶¹ Hamzaj & Hoti, *Jasharët, Histori e rrëfyer*, 75.

⁴⁶² KMDLNJ, *Buletini viti VIII nr. 6 janar – mars*, 130.

⁴⁶³ Rilindja, March 5, 2000, 18.

⁴⁶⁴ Mehmet Rukiqi, "Në Prekaz nisi flaka e madhërishme e lirisë që e ndriçoi Drenicën dhe mbarë Kosovën", *Rilindja*, 5 mars, 2000, 23.

⁴⁶⁵ KMDLNJ is an NGO (non-governmental organization) founded on December 14, 1989 in Prishtina by a group of intellectuals, human rights activists and former Albanian political prisoners in the prisons of Yugoslavia. KMDLNJ played a key role in documenting cases of human rights violations in Kosovo during the Milošević regime. The council had a network of activists throughout Kosovo, who compiled reports and photographically documented human rights violations in various parts of Kosovo. Academician Pajazit Nushi was the president of this organization in 1998. (author's note.)

⁴⁶⁶ Zenun Çelaj, "Vrasësit rikthehen në vendin e krimit", *Bujku*, 21 mars, 1998, 2.

aimed at eliminating KLA military units.⁴⁶⁷ Haqif Mulliqi, an Albanian journalist, shows how he observed most of the crimes in Prekaz from a distance of 250-300 meters as the crow flies. Horrified by the scenes, he wrote: "Whoever was not in Prekaz will find it difficult to understand the horror that took place there, because this was one of the dirtiest wars that the army and the police can wage against the elderly, women and children. ..., whoever has not seen the horror of the Jashari settlement in Prekazi i Ulët will never understand what real Serbian horror is."⁴⁶⁸ For three consecutive days, during which the shelling lasted, Serbian forces used all types of weapons, killing and massacring a total of 55 Albanians, about twenty of whom were members of the immediate family of Shaban and Adem Jashari. Of these, twelve children, two girls, two women, an old man and an old woman were massacred. All were massacred in the same way - children, adults and the elderly.⁴⁶⁹ Italian journalist Renato Caprile wrote in his report that this was certainly not a police operation and that the most appropriate word for what happened in Prekaz is - massacre.⁴⁷⁰

Witnesses to the massacre testified to the horrors they had experienced. Besarta Jashari, the only survivor of the Jashari family, recounted the horrors of her experience. She was eleven years old at the time. She survived by hiding under the table where her mother was kneading bread. She spent the entire night and the next day alone with her dead family. She only realized what had happened when she was pulled from the rubble. American journalist Marie Colvin, who interviewed Besarta just days after the crime, described the Serbian attack as a premeditated and cold-blooded massacre.⁴⁷¹ A young man N. N from Prekaz also told a story about the brutality of the actions of the Serbian forces. "We were woken up by the firing of Serbian artillery, which began around 6:30. The houses were on fire. The children started screaming. Bricks started falling on our heads. With my own eyes, I saw my comrades in flames, and Hamit Jashari above. He burned under me..." "I did not find my mother or three brothers who were killed by the Serbian

⁴⁶⁷ Chris Hedges, "Serbs Bombed Ethnic Albanians; Many are Feared Dead", *The New York Times*, March 7, 1998; Jeffrey Smith, "At Least 46 Albanians Killed in Kosovo Fighting", *The Washington Post*, March 10, 1998.

⁴⁶⁸ Haqif Mulliqi, "Gjashtë rrathët e tmerrshëm të ferrit serb", *Kombi*, 13 mars 1998, 8.

⁴⁶⁹ KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti IX Nr. 10 janar – mars*, (Prishtinë, 1999), 165-177.

⁴⁷⁰ Renato Caprile, "Fotografit e masakrave serbe ndezin zemrat e Prishtinës", *Koha Ditore*, 12 mars, 1998, 10.

⁴⁷¹ Marie Colvin, "Rrëfimi i Besartës për ditën e krimit në Prekaz", *Koha Ditore*, 16 mars, 1998, 2.

forces before my eyes. The Serbian forces took the dead away in an attempt to cover up the crime."⁴⁷²

Binak Ulaj, an activist with the Pristina-based Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, arrived in Skenderaj on March 10, 1998. "When my colleagues and I arrived in Skenderaj, I had heard and read about the crimes in Bosnia and Croatia many times, but I couldn't believe my eyes. I saw children, young people, women and old people burned, charred, massacred and killed. In all that carnage, Serbian propaganda announced that it had eliminated a breeding ground for terrorists. We knew who the terrorists were, we saw it. Foreign TV crews and foreign journalists saw it too."⁴⁷³ Photos of the murdered and massacred and interviews with survivors echoed around the world. The massacres took place in the presence of powerful international media, such as the *BBC*, *CNN*, *DW*, and *REUTERS*, whose journalist teams, despite the danger, managed to reach the scene and provide an objective account of the events.⁴⁷⁴

The massacres in Drenica in March 1998 received the final attention of the Western media.⁴⁷⁵ Namely, the crimes in Kosova until then were known only to Albanians. This fact was highlighted for "Voice of America" by the famous Albanian writer Ismail Kadare".⁴⁷⁶

The Serbian police and paramilitary operations in February and March 1998 in Kosova, by their method and deployment of forces, show that this was a planned military preparation, the aim of which was: to demonstrate strength in the center of Kosova, to destroy the KLA forces as a center of resistance, to control communication points connecting large cities, to eliminate the operational-organizational activities of the KLA, to ethnically empty/"cleanse" the area, and to prove that when it comes to "Serbian land" about which there is no compromise, everything is permissible.⁴⁷⁷

If the goal of the Serbian authorities was to suppress the rising Albanian uprising, the massacre in Drenica had the opposite effect. The attacks, which spared no one, encouraged the Albanian population to join the ranks of the KLA. Many Albanians who were engaged in Rugova's so-called

⁴⁷² *Bujku*, 16 mars, 1998, 5.

⁴⁷³ KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti IX Nr. 10 janar – mars*, 41-42.

⁴⁷⁴ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo Report*, (Pristina - Sarajevo: ICG Report, March 20, 1998), 1.

⁴⁷⁵ Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action*, 75.

⁴⁷⁶ *Bujku*, 5 mars, 1998, 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Atif Dudaković, "A ka nisur Lufta në Kosovë?", *Zëri*, 21 mars 1998, 30.

non-violent politics or in a peaceful student movement, now choose to join the KLA, seeing armed rebellion as the only means of protection.⁴⁷⁸ Adem Jashari became a myth of Kosova's freedom and an example of sacrifice. Fighting with his family members in open combat against Serbian paramilitaries and police, he was fully aware that everyone would suffer.⁴⁷⁹

After the Drenica massacre, young men and women from all over Kosova, Europe, and the United States tried to contact the KLA at all costs, trying to join their ranks to protect their families.⁴⁸⁰ This is how one 18-year-old describes joining the KLA: "The reason I joined the KLA was the terror that befell my people at the hands of the Serbs. Especially after the massacre in Prekaz, where my people, women, children and the elderly were massacred in the most brutal way. I simply felt that I had to do something for my people."⁴⁸¹ "I came back as soon as I saw the pictures of the massacre, the destroyed houses, the bodies of women and children... I left everything in Germany when I realized what the Serbs were doing to my people. That is our obligation. It was my duty. We will fight until the last one of us dies. I don't want to talk too much. We are simply fighters," said another young man.⁴⁸² "The question is not when we will die, but when we will gain freedom."⁴⁸³

The cruel crimes in Drenica and the murder of KLA leader Adem Jashari created the conditions for strong Albanian unification.⁴⁸⁴

In conclusion, the crimes occurred despite repeated warnings from the international community that it would not allow a repeat of the war scenes from Bosnia and Herzegovina and that it would have zero tolerance for attempts to organize war operations in Kosova. On the contrary, the aforementioned Serbian police-paramilitary actions confirmed the continuation of the established policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing, tried in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.⁴⁸⁵ The events in Drenica proved that the assessment of those who believed Milošević in Dayton and tried

⁴⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Nën pushtetin e Urdhrave - Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë*, (New York, Washington, London, Brussels, Korbi, 2002), 41.

⁴⁷⁹ Lama, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, 185.

⁴⁸⁰ Perrit, Jr, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, 61.

⁴⁸¹ PBS - *Frontline*: Interview with Three KLA soldiers, 1999.

⁴⁸² Chris Hedges, "Ranks of Albanian Rebels Increase in Kosovo", *The New York Times*, April 6, 1998.

⁴⁸³ Tom Walker, "Reportazh i revistës The Times në rajonin e Deçanit", *Koha Ditore*, 6 qershor, 1998, 8.

⁴⁸⁴ *Libri i lirisë*, 273.

⁴⁸⁵ *Kombi*, 31 mars, 1998, 16.

to portray him as a guarantor of peace in the Balkans was wrong. The events in Drenica also threatened hopes for peace in the Balkans.⁴⁸⁶ The American ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, stated that Milošević did not take pampering well. "We have been talking to him for three years without any results. He is not sincere in his negotiations. He just listens to demands and then does what he wants."⁴⁸⁷

5.3 Kosova protests - *Drenica, we are with you*

Kosova was gripped by a huge wave of demonstrations. Prishtina, but also all of Kosova, witnessed a popular uprising, in front of tanks and armored vehicles of the police and Serbian army.⁴⁸⁸ On the day of the burial of the victims from Likoshan and Qirezi, the *BBC* reported that the bodies of the victims were quietly transported to a tomb high on a hill overlooking the houses that were attacked on 28 February. All participants in the funeral procession were draped in the Albanian flag with a red background and a black double-headed eagle.⁴⁸⁹ Kosova was united by the slogan "Drenica, we are with you", while the KLA became a unifier of the Albanian diaspora in every corner of the world.⁴⁹⁰ Adem Jashari's name became a symbol of the fight for freedom.⁴⁹¹

As a sign of support for Drenica, on March 2, 1998, in the capital of Kosova, all the squares of Prishtina were filled with demonstrators. More than 300,000 Albanians peacefully protested in Drenica against the war, massacres and terror of the military-police and criminal regime in Belgrade.⁴⁹² The demonstrators walked peacefully, with two fingers raised and chanting slogans: "We want freedom!" and "Drenica, Drenica!", and they held various banners that read: "Stop violence!", "Stop terror in Kosova!", "Stop apartheid!". In order to give the protest voice an international resonance, the demonstrators also wrote banners in English: "Drenica we are with you!", "Stop the violence!", "Europe, where are you! "Stop the terror!", etc.⁴⁹³ Although the protest was peaceful, a group of 200 police officers brutally attacked the protesters who were sitting on

⁴⁸⁶ Martin Gollmer, "Milosheviqi ishte i involvuar si urdhërdhënës në rastet e dhunës në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 20 prill, 1998, 7.

⁴⁸⁷ Steven Erlanger, "First Bosnia, Now Kosovo", *The New York Times*, June 10, 1998.

⁴⁸⁸ Jusuf Bajraktari, "Drenica është metafora e bashkimit të shqiptarëve", *Bujku*, 16 mars, 1998, 11.

⁴⁸⁹ *BBC*, March 3, 1998.

⁴⁹⁰ *Bota e re*, 19 prill, 1998, 10.

⁴⁹¹ *Koha Ditore*, 13 prill, 1998, 2.

⁴⁹² *Bujku*, 3 mars, 1998, 1-3.

⁴⁹³ *Koha Ditore*, 3 mars, 2-3.

the street without any warning. The police started repressing the protesters with water cannons, rubber batons and tear gas, causing physical injuries to some of them. Among the injured were: activist Adem Demaçi, historian Zekria Cana, doctor Ali Zatriqi, university professors Fatmir Sejdiu, Mehmet Gjata, Regjep Demiri *Rilindja- Bujku* journalist, Veton Surroi editor-in-chief, Agron Bajrami journalist and Fatos Berisha photojournalist Koha Ditore, Sherif Konjufca journalist of Albanian Radio Television, Ibrahim Osmani, *Voice of America* correspondent, etc.⁴⁹⁴ Police violence against peaceful protesters was also commented on by foreign journalist Chris Hedges, who in his report for *The New York Times* wrote: "Serbian police used batons, water cannons and tear gas to disperse Albanian protesters who were marching against the murders in Drenica."⁴⁹⁵ Despite the violence and terror, the idea of continuing the protest did not die down. A group of women organized a candlelight vigil on March 5, 1998. They wanted to show solidarity with the mothers of Drenica who had lost their loved ones.⁴⁹⁶ Likewise, under the motto: "To stand at our doorsteps" a group of 20,000 women with white papers in their hands marched in the direction of the Arbëria settlement near the American Information Center on International Women's Day⁴⁹⁷, "We don't want hatred", "Enough ethnocide", "We are not asking for anything other than freedom!" There were also many cries: "Europe, where are you?", "World, where are you?".⁴⁹⁸ The next day, the protests took on a nationwide character, and Kosova was engulfed in a wave of protests. On March 9, a large protest was organized. Thousands of citizens from all over the country headed to Prishtina in solidarity with the events in Drenica. Chants were constantly heard: "Drenica, Drenica!", "Kosova, Kosova!", "Drenica, where are you, all of Kosova is here!", "We are not terrorists!", "A promise, I made a promise, I will give my life for Kosova!".⁴⁹⁹ This was a new plebiscite of the Kosova Albanians and proof that they decided to continue the path for independence, freedom and equality with all the peoples of the Balkans.⁵⁰⁰ On March 16, 1998, about 20,000 Albanian women from the American Information Center set out on foot with a loaf of bread in each hand. At the head were prominent public figures Sevdije Ahmeti, Vjosa Dobruna,

⁴⁹⁴ KMDLNJ, *Buletini viti VIII nr. 6 janar - mars*, (Prishtinë: KMDLNJ, 1998), 31-32.

⁴⁹⁵ Chris Hedges, "Serbia's Police Crush Protest By Kosovo's Ethnic Albanians", *The New York Times*, March 3, 1998.

⁴⁹⁶ *Zëri* 14 mars, 1998, 20.

⁴⁹⁷ Officially recognized by the United Nations in 1977, International Women's Day. Since then, in many countries around the world, including Kosovo, March 8th has been celebrated as Women's Day. (author's note.)

⁴⁹⁸ *Koha Ditore*, 9 mars, 1998, 4.

⁴⁹⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 10 mars, 1998, 2.

⁵⁰⁰ *Bujku*, 10 mars, 1998, 1-6.

Flora Brovina, Edi Shukriu, Edita Tahiri, Melihate Tërmkolli, etc.⁵⁰¹ The protesters went to the Drenica region, an area under strict police and Serbian military surveillance, where thousands of Albanian residents were left without any help. "They are without bread, without water..., we are taking this bread to Drenica, maybe we can help them a little," said an old woman who was barely able to walk in the procession. Despite the difficulties, their journey to Drenica went very quickly. In the meantime, a police cordon of Serbian forces was formed and placed at the entrance to Fushë Kosova, where the women were stopped and warned that the protest was illegal. They were ordered to return in an organized manner from the direction they had come from within 15 minutes. The protesters demanded that a cordon be opened for children and women who had no bread. Explaining their demands, they emphasized: "We are free to walk the streets, this is not a demonstration, this is a peaceful march." Accompanied by numerous journalists, the women also sent a message to the international community: "If we cannot open this road, then there must be international mechanisms that will do it, for the benefit of the people who are dying in Drenica."⁵⁰² Further activities were prevented by the Serbian police, and bread for Drenica was left at the headquarters of several international humanitarian organizations operating in Kosova with a request to complete this mission.⁵⁰³ With this message, the Albanians sought to inform the world about the crimes committed against the civilian population. Through successive peaceful protests, they sent a message of persistence and desire for freedom and independence, and the historical right to self-determination.⁵⁰⁴ An important common theme of the protests was the dominant slogan "Drenica, we are with you".⁵⁰⁵

5.4 War and international attention

The pacifism of the Kosova Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova's ten-year persistent efforts for internationalization, apart from understanding and verbal support, have not achieved any of the fundamental demands of this movement.⁵⁰⁶ After five years of fierce conflict in the former

⁵⁰¹ These are people from public life: political activists or activists for the protection of human rights.

⁵⁰² *Koha Ditore*, 17 mars, 1998, 2.

⁵⁰³ *Bota e re*, 5 prill, 1998, 37.

⁵⁰⁴ Bajraktari, *Drenica është metafora e bashkimit*, 11.

⁵⁰⁵ *Bota e re*, 5 prill, 1998, 36; *Bota e re*, 8 maj, 1998, 3.

⁵⁰⁶ Jens Reuter, "Politika e bashkësisë ndërkombëtare në Kosovë në vitet e nëntëdhjeta": *Studime Historike*, nr. 3-4, (Tiranë, 2007), 115.

Yugoslavia, the West had had enough of the tragedy of the Balkans.⁵⁰⁷ Since that period, a difference has been observed between Americans and some Europeans regarding the solution to the Kosova issue. Madeleine Albright⁵⁰⁸ knew from her time as the American ambassador to the United Nations what her European colleagues thought about military intervention in defense of the Kosovars.⁵⁰⁹ Despite these differences, international responsibility for resolving the Kosova crisis fell to: the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Russia. Representatives of these countries would form the so-called Contact Group for the Resolution of the Kosova Crisis. During the 1990s, Milošević kept the political issue of Kosova out of diplomacy and international mediation, insisting that the Kosova problem was an internal matter that should be dealt with only by the Yugoslav authorities. The first time the conflict in Kosova was discussed at the international level was in September 1997.⁵¹⁰ Since tensions began in late January 1997 after the killing of three KLA soldiers, with the arrest of a large group of KLA organizers, warnings of violence in Kosova began to increase day by day. Contact Group⁵¹¹ combined three elements of belief: they saw Russia as a country that could "deal with Milošević" considering its relations with Serbia, the European Union should have used an affirmative combination of Serbia's economic and financial integration in the negotiations, while the USA, as the leading power, should have advocated tougher actions, including the use of military force.⁵¹² In this context, the inclusion of this mechanism (military force) in decision-making in the case of Kosova begins.

⁵⁰⁷ Glenny, *Histori e Ballkanit*, 654.

⁵⁰⁸ Madeleine Albright (born May 15, 1937 – died March 23, 2022) was an American civil servant of Czech descent who served as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations (1993–97). Albright was the first woman to serve as U.S. Secretary of State (1997–2001). As Secretary of State, she remained an advocate of military intervention and a strong advocate for both democracy and human rights. Notably, in 1999, she pushed for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to bomb Yugoslavia to stop the ethnic cleansing of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo by Yugoslav and Serbian forces. The Kosovo conflict, which some have called Madeleine's War, ended on June 12, 1999, after 11 weeks of airstrikes, when Yugoslavia agreed to NATO's terms.

⁵⁰⁹ Hill, *Pararojë*, 156.

⁵¹⁰ Nevenka Tromp, *Gjykimi i papërfunduar i Slobodan Millosheviqit*, (Prishtinë: Pema, 2021), 355.

⁵¹¹ It was an informal international organization created in the early 1990s by a decision of the United Nations Security Council at the beginning of the wars in Yugoslavia. The participating countries were: the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia. After the war in Kosovo began, this group was reactivated, with the idea of European countries aiming to mitigate Russian opposition to the Kosovo crisis. This organization held meetings mainly through representatives of foreign ministers, whose duty was to use all mechanisms to prevent war in Kosovo. In general, decisions were made by consensus, with the exception of Russia.

⁵¹² Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 150.

In the second half of 1997, the situation in Kosova manifested a pre-war state. A contact group met in New York on September 24, 1997, concerned about further escalation. In a joint statement, the group invited the authorities in Belgrade and the leadership of the Kosova Albanians to sit down in a peaceful dialogue. The group expressed concern over the use of violence and called on both sides to exercise maximum restraint. Regarding the dispute over the status of Kosova, the position of the Contact Group countries was clear: they do not support independence and they do not support maintaining the status quo. In order to reduce the tension, the first step was to establish a dialogue.⁵¹³ Diplomatic pressure towards the conflicting parties was also confirmed through a joint letter from the foreign ministers of Germany and France, Klaus Kinkel and Hubert Védrine. The letter largely confirmed the views of the Contact Group of September 24: "We appealed to your government and the Albanian leaders of Kosova for a peaceful dialogue. Since then, the situation in Kosova has worsened..., therefore the Contact Group wants to help the Federal Government of Yugoslavia and the Albanian representatives in Kosova to find a solution to the problem".⁵¹⁴ Another diplomatic attempt to resolve the Kosova issue by German Foreign Minister Kinkel occurred at a meeting of the Bosnian Peace Implementation Council in Bonn in December 1997. Kinkel's demand was that Belgrade urgently begin a dialogue with the Kosovars and guarantee them human and minority rights. Although Kosova was only briefly mentioned in the final document, the Yugoslav delegation left the conference and refused to adopt its conclusions in a sign of dissatisfaction. The head of the Yugoslav delegation, Dragomir Vučićević, stated: "We warned them that raising the so-called issue of Kosova and Metohija at the conference is considered interference in the internal affairs of Serbia and the FRY."⁵¹⁵ The Contact Group reaffirmed the demands of the international community in January 1998 during a meeting in Washington on the issue of resolving the Kosova problem. On that occasion, it declared that it "condemns both violence during peaceful political demonstrations and terrorist actions aimed at achieving political goals, in particular that both sides were obliged to find a peaceful solution to the existing difficulties". The Group also informed Yugoslavia that it urgently committed itself to addressing the serious human rights violations in Kosova as a key issue for improving Belgrade's

⁵¹³ Statement of the Contact Group - New York September 24, 1997.

⁵¹⁴ Sylë Ukshini, *Kosova sfidë e politikës së përbashkët të jashtme të sigurisë të BE-së: Nga shpërbërja e Jugosllavisë deri te pavarësia e Kosovës*, (Prishtinë: Brezi 81, 2013), 241.

⁵¹⁵ ICG, *Kosovo Report*, March 20, 1998, 35.

position in relations with the international community.⁵¹⁶ While international experts warned that the situation in Kosova was escalating day by day, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the Serbian leadership refused any kind of mediation.⁵¹⁷ On the other hand, Albanians considered Kosova to be an international problem.⁵¹⁸ The international community, on the other hand, could not find answers to the questions: is Milošević only trying to suppress the rebellion or to create a Kosova without Albanians.⁵¹⁹ Based on these contradictory claims, Jonathan Clarke wrote that all elements of tragedy are possible.⁵²⁰ The proof of this was the massacre of the civilian population in the villages of Drenica, the crimes in Qirez and Likoshan, and the stagnation of the agreement on education. All this forced British Foreign Minister Robin Cook to address the international community's remarks directly to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević.⁵²¹

While Cook was on his way, on 5 March 1998, Serbian police and military forces launched an attack and massacre in Prekaz. Despite trying to convince Milošević to negotiate with the Albanians at the end of the meeting, Cook stated: "I would like to say that I leave here with more hope than when I arrived", instead he was left with a feeling of "serious concern".⁵²²

In an effort to prevent violence against Kosova Albanians, the governments of Western countries used the methods of "financial hooks" and diplomatic threats, but at the same time they accepted that their influence on President S. Milošević was limited.⁵²³ The opinion that was largely represented within the EU was limited to an immediate halt to the violence in Kosova, but without giving a clear position on the next steps.⁵²⁴

NATO responded in the same way. "The North Atlantic Council called on the authorities in Belgrade and the leaders of the Kosova Albanian community to enter into a serious dialogue without preconditions in order to develop an acceptable political solution for Kosova within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia based on the principles outlined by the international community

⁵¹⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 10 janar, 1998, 2.

⁵¹⁷ Peter Münch, "Bomba që quhet Kosovë mbetet e rrezikshme", *Koha Ditore*, 14 janar, 1998, 6.

⁵¹⁸ Besnik Mustafaj, "Kosova në syrin e cikloni", *Zëri*, 14 mars, 1998, 41.

⁵¹⁹ Austin, *Bërja dhe Ribërja e Ballkanit*, 159.

⁵²⁰ Jonathan Clarke, "Tentimet e Kosovës trazuese për të iniciuar një luftë tjetër", *Koha Ditore*, 10 janar, 1998, 7.

⁵²¹ *Bujku*, 7 mars, 1998, 8.

⁵²² Pettifer, *Ekspres i Kosovës*, 222.

⁵²³ *Koha Ditore*, 4 mars, 1998, 7.

⁵²⁴ Ukshini, *Kosova sfidë e politikës së përbashkët të jashtme të sigurisë të BE-së*, 246.

and most recently by the Contact Group on 8 January and 25 February 1998.” A press release on 5 March 1998 stated that: “NATO and the international community have a legitimate interest in developments in Kosova. Finally, the Council warns the Serbian leadership that Kosova cannot be merely an internal problem of the FRY; recent events have made it an international problem, including because of their impact on the stability of the entire region, which is a matter of concern to the Alliance.”⁵²⁵ The Serbian authorities in Belgrade believed that the threat of sanctions or foreign intervention to help the Kosova Albanians was purely verbal. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević counted on the support of China and Russia to block any such attempt by the US and its Western allies through the UN Council.⁵²⁶ These calculations were also confirmed by diplomatic sources within the Contact Group, who proved that taking measures with special emphasis on the issue of increasing sanctions against Serbia is the main challenge, because every decision requires the approval of the United Nations through a special resolution, which China and Russia would not accept.⁵²⁷ The Drenica massacre in March 1998 dispelled any illusion that armed conflict could be avoided. Madeleine Albright, who had been calling for concrete measures against the Serbian regime since the first conflicts in Kosova, wrote in her memoirs: “The killings in Prekaz gave me a kind of bad feeling, but they increased my determination. I believed that Milošević had to be stopped immediately. I declared publicly: ‘We have no intention of sitting idly by and waiting for the Serbian authorities in Kosova to do what they could not do in Bosnia.’”⁵²⁸ She reminded that in 1991, when the war in the former Yugoslavia began, the international community did not react with adequate strength and determination. “As a result, every single act of aggression that we did not counter in time, led to great violence that could not be countered without risk. Only when the culprits were brought to justice with isolation and pressure measures, the war stopped”.⁵²⁹

“History is watching us,” Albright told the Contact Group foreign ministers in London on March 9, 1998.⁵³⁰ She knew Milošević well, from her time as the US ambassador to the UN.⁵³¹ Unfortunately, despite her strong advocacy for concrete measures from the international

⁵²⁵ NATO Press Release (98), 29, 5 March, 1998, *Koha Ditore*, 5 mars, 1998, 3.

⁵²⁶ Gordana Filipović, “Sanksionet kundër “Jugosllavisë” do të shpiejnë drejt kaosit”, *Koha Ditore*, 7 mars, 1998, 7.

⁵²⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 7 mars, 1998, 7.

⁵²⁸ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 444.

⁵²⁹ *Bujku*, 11 mars, 1998, 2.

⁵³⁰ *Bujku*, 11 mars, 1998, 2.

⁵³¹ Jane Kirkpatrick, *Making War to Keep Peace*, (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2007), 246.

community, there was no unified position. The international community criticized excessive state violence, but, apart from verbal punishments, no concrete steps were taken to prevent further massacres.⁵³²

In a statement to the Yugoslav leadership, the Contact Group presented 10 points that must be fulfilled within ten days. The most important were: 1. Initiating consultations in the Supreme Council, for a complete embargo on weapons of the FRY, 2. Refusing to deliver equipment that could be used for internal repression or terrorist actions, 3. Not issuing visas to high-ranking Yugoslav political figures, 4. Proclamation of a moratorium on the ban on trade and investment, 5. Withdrawal of Serbian special police forces that endanger the civilian population, 6. Enabling international humanitarian organizations to operate unhindered in Kosova. This was also the basic proposal of the new mission of Felipe González (former Prime Minister of Spain), as the personal representative of the next OSCE Chairman-in-Office for the FRY, which would include consideration of the Kosova problem in its mandate. Russia accepted the first two points, while promising to implement the others if Belgrade did not fulfill the tasks received in London within two weeks. The next meeting of the Contact Group was announced for 25 March 1998.⁵³³

While the international community expected cooperation from the Serbian leader, information coming from Kosova indicated the beginning of a humanitarian catastrophe as around 100,000 Albanians, women and children were shivering abandoned in the hills, without food or shelter, surrounded by Serbian checkpoints. During his reporting, Kurt Schork expressed his dissatisfaction that urgent humanitarian aid was sent to all areas affected by the war, from Afghanistan to Rwanda or Cambodia, but it did not reach this corner of Europe, which is only a two-hour flight from Rome or Vienna.⁵³⁴ The group proved to be ineffective, writes the editorial of the American newspaper *The New York Times*, as an argument reminding that its powers are limited, and some members, especially Russia, oppose strong pressure on Serbia. The group seeks to freeze Serbian assets abroad and ban new foreign investments in Serbia. Sanctions, however, are impossible to implement between countries outside the Contact Group, and difficult even within it, given Russia's point of view.⁵³⁵ Kosova was going through a similar situation that Bosnia

⁵³² Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 42.

⁵³³ Statement of the Contact Group, - London, March 9, 1998.

⁵³⁴ Kurt Schork, "Ky është fati ynë - jetojmë të ndjekur si kafshë gjahu", *Koha Ditore*, 16 mars, 1998, 2.

⁵³⁵ *The New York Times*, 10 May, 1998.

was going through in the early 90s of the 20th century. In this context, only the quick and effective intervention of the international community could prevent bloodshed.⁵³⁶

As the deadline for fulfilling the international community's demands, formulated in the 10-point concept, approached, on 19 March 1998, two ministers from the most powerful European states, Germany's Klaus Kinkel and France's Hybert Védérine, travelled to Belgrade. After a two-hour meeting with the Yugoslav president at a press conference, the heads of diplomacy stated that they had made "significant progress" with the Yugoslav authorities on the Kosova issue, but openly admitted that no major progress had been made. The two European diplomats confirmed the non-implementation of the Contact Group's demand for the withdrawal of police forces from Kosova. They were given a "promise" to raise the talks with the Kosova Albanians to a high level by appointing their own special envoy for the talks.⁵³⁷

6. INTENSIFYING INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH PEACE THROUGH DIPLOMATIC MEANS

6.1 Dialogue "under the gun barrel"

The international community since the early 90s of the 20th century in Kosova, did not use any of its competences in the prevention of violence, which rapidly escalated until the end of 1997. Her actions resembled the actions of a fireman putting out a fire after it broke out. Even when interest in the Kosova issue increased, the international community was satisfied with the request to give up violence and show readiness for dialogue.⁵³⁸ The discourse changed only when the European Union and the United States began to seriously accept the possibility of the war spreading to the surrounding areas. There was also an assessment that future events could destabilize the fragile peace in Bosnia and flood Turkey with refugees. On the other hand, Turkey and Greece, through the conflicts in Kosova and their unresolved nature, could find ways to increase their influence in the Balkans.⁵³⁹ The USA had an engaged ambassador for the Balkans, Robert Gelbard. His diplomatic task related to the implementation of the Dayton Agreement in

⁵³⁶ Bogdan Denitch, "Askush nuk është më në anën e Beogradit madje as rusët, grekët dhe maqedonët", *Koha Ditore*, 10 mars, 1998, 6.

⁵³⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 20 mars, 1998, 2.

⁵³⁸ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 90.

⁵³⁹ *The New York Times*, 10 May, 1998.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the absence of a special envoy for Kosova, he was tasked with that issue as well.⁵⁴⁰ On the other hand, the European Union appointed Wolfgang Ischinger, Deputy Foreign Minister of the German Federal Foreign Office, to this position. The approach/task of these diplomats was based on the familiar Western stance: against the status quo and not supporting the aspirations of the Kosova Albanians for independence.⁵⁴¹ Both confirmed in interviews that their main task was to bring the conflicting parties to the negotiating table. Ischinger, recalls that the international community has expressed its views and positions. "We said both in the European Union and in the Contact Group that what we want is a negotiation process for a stable status that we called the status of autonomy". This position is also confirmed by Gelbard according to whom: "... Kosova should have a status of increased autonomy and should have a high degree of self-determination that should be clearly defined, and not be a farcical autonomy".⁵⁴² So, since March 9, 1998, the appeal of the international community, the Contact Group, the UN, NATO and all other organizations involved has been for the parties of conflict to sit down at the table without hesitation in order to resolve the issues through dialogue.

Human rights activist Aaron Rhodes wrote that the dialogue process requires two equal parties presenting ideas and seeking solutions. These preconditions did not exist in Kosova. For years, Albanians lived "ghettoized," politically distanced, without basic civil rights, and in an atmosphere of terror. The dialogue format could only succeed if both sides were equal, that is, if the Serbian police and a whole range of paramilitary formations completely withdrew from Kosova.⁵⁴³ Despite the fact that the Kosova issue finally received international attention, the political leadership in Prishtina and Albanians in general were not satisfied with these diplomatic decisions, which were mostly verbal.

There was a lack of political legitimacy for negotiations. The last elections were held in May 1992. According to the Constitution, regular elections were to be held in May 1996, but the Kosova leadership repeatedly postponed them, citing the difficult political situation.⁵⁴⁴ Finally, as President of Kosova, Ibrahim Rugova announced on 23 December 1997 that new parliamentary

⁵⁴⁰ Zëri, 7 mars, 1998, 16.

⁵⁴¹ Blerim Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës 1998 - 1999*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2001), 29.

⁵⁴² Zëri, 7 mars, 1998, 18-20.

⁵⁴³ Aaron Rhodes, "Mediated Political Negotiation Is What Kosovo Needs", *The New York Times*, March 18, 1998

⁵⁴⁴ *Koha Ditore* 26 prill, 1997, 3.

and presidential elections would be held on 22 March 1998. However, many events took place in Kosova between December 1997 and March 1998. After the events in Drenica, a significant number of political parties began to contest the holding of these elections.⁵⁴⁵

The day before the elections were held, many well-known Kosova public figures of the time spoke out against the elections, including Adem Demaçi, Hydajet Hyseni, Mehmet Hajrizi, Bajram Kosumi, all political prisoners, as well as various journalists and intellectuals, including Rexhep Qosja.⁵⁴⁶ Opponents of holding elections claimed that the occupation regime in Belgrade is carrying out terror and apartheid against the people of Kosova, and that the LDK political leadership is deceiving the people with the possible construction of an independent state by holding elections during the war.⁵⁴⁷ On the other hand, the LDK and parties close to it considered the elections a platform for strengthening the foundations of Kosova's civil rights. Kosova went to the elections without the necessary social consensus.

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held throughout Kosova on 22 March 1998, with the exception of some areas that remained "under siege", i.e. inaccessible for the organization and conduct of elections. According to the Central Election Commission, out of 1,011,129 eligible voters, 85.4% participated in the elections. The LDK was the absolute winner of the elections, while Ibrahim Rugova was re-elected as President of Kosova with 99% of the vote.⁵⁴⁸

The elections were held at a time when the international pressure on the Albanians to form a negotiating team was very high. A few days before the election, in a meeting with the American mediator R. Gelbard, President Rugova confirmed to the American diplomat that the Albanian side will soon come up with a proposal for the names of the diplomatic team that will talk to the Serbian delegation. At the first conference after the elections, President Rugova announced the appointment of a group of 15 members, which included members of political parties, representatives of civil society, the media and students.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁵ ICG, *Kosovo Report*, March 20, 1998, 19.

⁵⁴⁶ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 38.

⁵⁴⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 24 mars, 1998, 4.

⁵⁴⁸ *Bujku*, 23 mars, 1998, 1-9.

⁵⁴⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 25 mars, 1998, 2.

Meanwhile, on March 23, 1998, the Protocol on the Implementation of the Agreement on Education was signed.⁵⁵⁰ The agreement was political propaganda by which the Serbian regime intended to create the impression that the Serbs were open to talks. On the day the Protocol was signed, hundreds of politically motivated students gathered for a protest. Radivoje Papović, "parallel rector"⁵⁵¹ of the University of Prishtina, in a speech to Serbian students, criticized the political leadership for signing the agreement: "We are not giving the university, the agreement is an act of high treason... today's signing of the document for the normalization of education is the disintegration of the Serbian state."⁵⁵² The agreement was concluded by priest Vincenzo Paglia, a representative of St. Egidio. While he was reading the agreement, provocations began among the crowd. At the very end, just before Paglia finished his speech, a Serbian librarian entered the room and "ordered" the priest to leave the library.⁵⁵³ This act clearly showed that the Serbian leadership has no plans to fulfill the agreement on education, which envisaged the return of all Albanian students to their educational institutions, which they had been denied for more than seven years.

On the eve of the Contact Group meeting, where it was to decide on sanctions against Yugoslavia due to its unwillingness to dialogue over Kosova, Milošević took two unexpected actions: he formed a coalition government with the radicals of Vojislav Šešelj and embarked on high-intensity military actions in Kosova, completely ignoring diplomatic options.⁵⁵⁴ The specific military-police action took place a day before the deadline of the international community's request, when the Serbian regime began sending heavy and light weapons accompanied by helicopters to the area of the villages of Dečan, Gllogjan, Baballoç, Sukë, Gramaçelë, Shaptej and Firajë. The attacks began at 10:30 on March 24, 1998, which caused a new wave of refugees.⁵⁵⁵ Serbian military and police forces surrounded the villages with a large number of Serbian military and police troops, who,

⁵⁵⁰ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 96; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 42.

⁵⁵¹ On October 1, 1991, as a result of the violent measures of the Republic of Serbia, more than 30,000 Albanian students were left out of the public universities of Kosovo, which were appropriated by the Serbian regime. Albanian students, although they were the absolute majority, were forced to continue their education at home – in private schools. The facilities of the public universities were forcibly given over to Serbian students. In the period from 1991 to 1999, the Serbian regime created a parallel university system, removing all Albanian professors, replacing them with Serbian professors, most of whom were brought from Serbia. During those years, the Serbian regime appointed Radivoje Papović as the rector of the University of Prishtina. [AN].

⁵⁵² *Koha Ditore*, 24 mars, 1998, 6.

⁵⁵³ Tracy Wilkinson, "Arrihet pushimzjarri arsimor në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 29 mars, 1998, 7.

⁵⁵⁴ *Koha Ditore*, 4 prill, 1998, 7.

⁵⁵⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 25, mars, 1998, 3.

after the population fled, shelled them until they were completely destroyed.⁵⁵⁶ Data from the Human Rights Council showed a very disturbing balance sheet for the first three months of the war in the Drenica area: 104 people killed and massacred, 44 injured, 3,095 Albanians mistreated in various ways, 30 cases of attempted murder, 27 convicted of misdemeanors, 1,231 physically abused people, 136 cases of hostage-taking, 28 cases of missing persons, 249 abused women, 33 abused elderly people, 42 abused children, 121 abused political workers, 44 educational workers, 25 humanitarian and 7 religious workers, 24 journalists mistreated in various ways, etc.⁵⁵⁷ Faced with this information, the Contact Group met again to analyze the situation in Kosova in London on 9 March 1998. Since the differences of opinion within the group were so great, taking appropriate measures against Serbia seemed impossible. In a statement after the meeting, it was stated: “We all agreed that the measures announced on 9 March remain in place, including the request for an arms embargo that has just been discussed in the UN. We urge both sides to act quickly, to reach a process of negotiation and agreement, with the participation of representatives and external representatives in this process... We do not accept any excuses for postponing such a process... If Belgrade does not meet London’s demands and if the dialogue process does not begin within the next four weeks, we will act towards determining further measures as announced in London.”⁵⁵⁸ On March 27, Slobodan Milošević refused to meet with the US Contact Group envoy, R. Gelbard, who was tasked with informing the Serbian leader about the decisions of the Bonn Contact Group.⁵⁵⁹ As the situation worsened, the United Nations Security Council approved resolution 1160 on March 31, 1998. The resolution called on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to immediately take steps to achieve a political solution to the Kosova issue through dialogue and the implementation of actions indicated in the Contact Group statements of March 9 and 25, 1998. The leadership of the Kosova Albanians was asked to condemn all terrorist actions, recommending that they achieve their goals only in a peaceful way. The resolution confirmed the request of the Contact Group to start the dialogue process. Also, an arms embargo is imposed on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Kosova.⁵⁶⁰ Russia agreed to vote for the Resolution only after

⁵⁵⁶ Shinasi A. Rama, *Nation Failure, Ethnic Elites, and Balance of Power The International Administration of Kosova*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 151.

⁵⁵⁷ KMDLNI, *Buletini viti VIII nr. 6 janar – mars*, 133-134.

⁵⁵⁸ Statement of the Contact Group – Bonn, July 8, 1998.

⁵⁵⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 29, 1998, 3.

⁵⁶⁰ UN - Resolution S/RES/1160, March 31, 1998.

its proponents removed a paragraph stating that the situation in Kosova was a threat to international peace and security.⁵⁶¹ The decision of the Contact Group on a one-month deadline for the fulfillment of the conditions by Slobodan Milošević showed the unclear path of this mechanism for solving the Kosova issue.⁵⁶² Different positions among the members of the Contact Group paralyzed concrete activities.⁵⁶³ After the Bonn meeting and the revelation of insurmountable divisions among the Contact Group members, the Group no longer agreed on further action. Yevgeny Primakov wrote about the Bonn meeting: "It was a stormy meeting. Madeleine Albright firmly insisted on strengthening measures against Belgrade. It was difficult to convince her of the wrong position. At one point I told her: 'Sign whatever you want, but Russia will declare that it is against it and that we will leave the Contact Group.'"⁵⁶⁴ This difference in views was also noted during a press conference at which US Secretary of State M. Albright stated that the measures taken today were the minimum of American demands.⁵⁶⁵ In fact, as she later wrote during the Bonn meeting, "we had not agreed on anything. So that fact convinced me that this group was not the right organization to oppose Milošević. Russia would undoubtedly be difficult, while France and Germany were almost never prepared to confront Moscow. The Italians did a lot of business with the Serbs and did not like sanctions. In such conditions, it was quite easy for Milošević to demobilize these countries with convincing gestures and empty words."⁵⁶⁶ According to German researcher Jens Reuter, the basic premises of the Contact Group, Brussels and Washington, including Moscow, were wrong. Both Washington and Brussels wanted stability in the region at all costs. But the means by which this stability was intended to be achieved were completely wrong. All the proposals put forward were attempts to cure the symptoms of the disease, but not the cause. So, they wanted to achieve stability through the status quo, so that the Albanians could be offered something that would be similar to the solutions of 1974.⁵⁶⁷ In doing so, they used the threat of economic sanctions as an instrument, with the aim of establishing a dialogue whose result was always fruitless.

⁵⁶¹ John M. Goshko, "Arms Embargo on Yugoslavia", *The Washington Post*, April 1, 1998.

⁵⁶² Peter B. Martin, "Kosovo's Future: Letters to the Editor", *The New York Times*, April 7, 1998.

⁵⁶³ *Koha Ditore*, 4 prill, 1998, 7.

⁵⁶⁴ Yevgeny Primakov, *Russian Crossroads Toward the new Millennium*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004), 181.

⁵⁶⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 26 mars 1998, 2.

⁵⁶⁶ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 446.

⁵⁶⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 20-21 prill, 1998, 8.

Slobodan Milošević called on the Serbian Government to hold a referendum on April 23, 1998, in which the citizens will be asked the question: "Do you accept external representatives in the negotiations on the solution of the problem in Kosova". Nenad Čanak, deputy of the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, strongly opposed the holding of such a referendum at the session in the Serbian Parliament: "Until now, you have not asked the people anything, and now you want to ask them. Why didn't you ask when you should have... you are asking the people now when we are preparing for another war that you will lose".⁵⁶⁸ By calling a referendum, Milošević did not want to initiate an open debate with the people; on the contrary, his goal was to obtain popular ratification as a protective measure against international pressure.⁵⁶⁹ The referendum was held on April 23. 95% of Serbian voters rejected foreign mediation for Kosova, although there were reports of electoral fraud.⁵⁷⁰ The referendum was held only two days before the deadline set by the Contact Group for the fulfillment of the request. The Serbian regime has shown that it has no plans to meet the demands of the international community. Moreover, another military operation in Kosova began in those days. After the murders and massacres in the areas around Drenica and Glogjan, the paramilitary forces of the Serbian army and police began military operations in the border area with Albania.⁵⁷¹ Large Serbian military forces were deployed in the cities of Prizren, Suharekë, Gjakovë, Deçan. Sources from the Yugoslav Army emphasized the incident on the Kosova-Albania border, which allegedly occurred after a group of "terrorists" attempted to cross into Yugoslav territory.⁵⁷² The incident resulted in the killing of 19 Albanians. According to witness accounts, the Albanians were first captured in the municipalities of Deçan and Gjakovë, and then taken to the vicinity of the village of Batushë, where they were mistreated and executed.⁵⁷³ According to Halil Bajraktari, who participated in the burial of the killed: "On April 21, the Serbian police attacked this area while people were running for their lives. These people were surprised and the next time we saw them was on Saturday, April 25, when the Serbs left their bodies at the end of the road."⁵⁷⁴ In the early morning hours of April 27, military forces, accompanied by helicopters, began an attack on the villages of Hulaj and Voksh, then continued

⁵⁶⁸ *Koha Ditore*, 3 prill, 1998, 2; *Koha Ditore*, 8 prill, 1998, 7.

⁵⁶⁹ Jan-Werner Müller, *Ç'është populizmi*, (Prishtinë: Pema, 2019), 45.

⁵⁷⁰ Philip Shenon, "U.S. Eyes Curbs on Belgrade As Albanian Deaths Mount", *The New York Times*, April 25, 1998.

⁵⁷¹ KMDLNJ, *Buletini Viti VII nr. 7 prill - qershor*, (Prishtinë: KMDLNJ, 1998), 93.

⁵⁷² *Koha Ditore*, 21 prill, 1998, 3.

⁵⁷³ KMDLNJ, *Buletini Viti VII nr. 7 prill - qershor*, 93.

⁵⁷⁴ Kurt Schork, "Viktimat e Hereqit janë ekzekutuar nga ushtria serbe", *Koha Ditore*, 28 prill, 1998, 7.

towards the Albanian border, killing at least 3 Albanians and injuring dozens more.⁵⁷⁵ A new meeting of the Contact Group was held in Rome on 29 April 1998. At this meeting, the conflicting parties were called upon to urgently take appropriate measures to stabilize the situation. It was concluded that the essential demands set out in the Contact Group statements of 9 and 25 March had not yet been met. "We have therefore decided to take measures to implement the freezing of assets abroad held by the governments of the FRY and Serbia. If Belgrade takes steps to start negotiations, we will immediately reverse this decision. In the event that the dialogue is blocked due to Belgrade's non-compliance, we will take measures to stop new investments in Serbia by 9 May". This is a position with which the Russian Federation did not agree and did not join these measures.⁵⁷⁶ The United States had been lobbying for weeks for tough economic sanctions as the only way to punish Yugoslav President Milošević. Russia opposed this, insisting that only the United Nations could impose sanctions. France was also reluctant to impose further sanctions on Belgrade. Italy, which had already invested heavily to help privatize Yugoslavia's telecommunications system, did not want its investments frozen.⁵⁷⁷

This intractable situation encouraged American diplomacy to take concrete steps in the conflict that threatened regional stability. The architect of the Dayton Agreement, Richard Holbrooke, returned to the mission as a special envoy of US President Bill Clinton. American ambassador in Skopje Christopher Hill and Robert Gelbard formed a diplomatic team, at a time when the Albanians refused dialogue without international-American mediation. George Packer mentions the letter that Ibrahim Rugova wrote to US Secretary M. Albright in March 1998, in which, among other things, it was stated: "I am informing you that I am ready to meet with President Slobodan Milošević, without any preconditions, with the mediation of the USA." Please name Mr. Richard Holbrooke as mediator".⁵⁷⁸ On the other hand, the Serbs continued to insist that Kosova was their internal problem. Chris Hill, recalls how he met with President S. Milošević together with Holbrooke, where he introduced himself for the first time as the American representative for the Kosova crisis. The Serbian leader replied: "There is no crisis...there are only some Albanian separatists...who are being dealt with by our security services...You don't need an envoy. Kosova

⁵⁷⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 28 prill, 1998, 2.

⁵⁷⁶ Statement of the Contact Group - Roma, April 29, 1998.

⁵⁷⁷ Alessandra Stanley, "U.S. and Allies Put Pressure On Yugoslavia to Negotiate", *The New York Times*, April 30, 1998.

⁵⁷⁸ George Packer, *Njeriu ynë Richard Holbrooke dhe fundi i shekullit amerikan* (Prishtinë: Koha, 2020), 326.

is part of Serbia. It is an internal problem. The Serbs will not accept a foreigner to deal with their internal problems".⁵⁷⁹ This political attitude clearly showed that the Serbian leadership never gave up on the aggressive Serbian policy in Kosova. However, now, under the pressure of American diplomats, the Serbian side agreed to start a dialogue with the leader of the Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova.⁵⁸⁰ On the other hand, Rugova, who had been pleading for international mediation as a precondition for negotiations for ten years, hesitated this time. He too was convinced by pressure from the American diplomat Holbrooke to begin negotiations with the Serbian leader without conditions. Holbrooke and Gelbard used the power and influence of the KLA to push Rugova into direct negotiations with Belgrade, and also used the meeting in Washington with President Clinton as bait for Rugova to agree to negotiations. The Albanian side was divided over the negotiating means to be used, since the political leadership under Ibrahim Rugova was in favor of so-called peaceful resistance, and the KLA saw the use of weapons as the only solution to achieve its goals.

Albanians were united in their desire for independence not only from Serbia, but also from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.⁵⁸¹ Therefore, diplomatic negotiations without conditions in Kosova were not welcomed by everyone. After several hours of discussion, the Kosovar negotiating team decided to respond to the invitation of American diplomats Holbrooke and Gelbard to a meeting with Slobodan Milošević on May 15, 1998. As a sign of dissatisfaction, two members of the negotiating team, Hydajet Hyseni and Bujar Dugolli, withdrew, explaining that they had been ignored. While Rexhep Qosja stated: "The fate of Kosova will be decided by the people of Kosova, in the name of Kosova, and not with the oppressor of Kosova, Slobodan Milošević."⁵⁸² Ignoring these objections, the negotiation process in Belgrade began on May 15, 1998, in the White House. In addition to President Rugova, the Albanian delegation included Fehmi Agani, Mahmut Bakalli, Pajazit Nushi and Veton Surroi, while the Yugoslav side was represented only by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević. The meeting lasted about an hour and a half. As expected, the differences were large. The main request of the Kosova delegation was an immediate stop to violence and all forms of terrorism in Kosova. In his brief speech without the presence of the media, Rugova told Milošević that the people of Kosova are determined to

⁵⁷⁹ Hill, *Pararojë*, 158.

⁵⁸⁰ Judah, *Kosova*, 193.

⁵⁸¹ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 103; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 22; Judah, *Kosova*, 193.

⁵⁸² *Koha Ditore*, 15 maj, 1998, 2-4.

achieve independence through political means. On the other hand, media propaganda in Belgrade quoted Milošević as saying "that only through political means, through principled dialogue, a peaceful and long-term solution to the law in Kosova can be achieved". The meeting marked a successful event for Milošević, as it was held in official Belgrade premises, without the presence of the international community, and sent a clear signal that Kosova was an internal matter of Serbia and that it was ready for dialogue.⁵⁸³ CNN, in a report from May 18, 1998, went so far as to praise Milošević for his role in promoting dialogue, stating: "The Contact Group is encouraged by the fact that President Milošević has taken personal responsibility for starting the dialogue."⁵⁸⁴

The attempt at political dialogue continued on May 22, 1998 in Prishtina, where Albanian-Serbian diplomatic groups met. The days that followed showed that dialogue under gunfire cannot bring anything good to Kosova.⁵⁸⁵ "It is very important that Milošević and Rugova are finally talking...we need these talks to make real progress." On the other hand, Gelbard stressed the fact that: "We know that there are big risks here, but in the absence of any effort to start talks, there are even bigger risks. Others have failed to start a dialogue, and we have succeeded."⁵⁸⁶ Meanwhile, war activities spread from central Kosova to the border zone, including the cities of Pejë, Gjakovë, Rahovec, Deçan, Klinë, etc.⁵⁸⁷ In its report for the month of May, the KMDLNJ pointed to the serious state of the fighting in which almost all of Kosova was affected, in which dozens were killed, dozens were wounded, and hundreds were exiled. In the period from May 10 to 14, 18 Albanians were killed, mostly from the area of Gjakovë, but also from other areas of Kosova. The attacks only intensified in the period from 25 to 31 May 1998 in Pejë, where more than 20 Albanians were killed. The same number were killed in Decan, Rahovec, Gjakovë and Klinë, Prizren and Drenica.⁵⁸⁸ Thus, despite diplomatic efforts, the end of May found Kosova largely at war, with dozens of burned-down settlements, numerous deportations and food shortages. At a press conference in Prishtina on 29 May 1998, Pajazit Nushi, head of the KMDLNJ, spoke with deep concern about the course of the war, whose victims were increasing every day. He then used an arithmetic example to show that in the period from January to May 1995, "there were three

⁵⁸³ Dario Malnar, *SHBA-ja dhe Kosova*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2013), 161.

⁵⁸⁴ Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 138.

⁵⁸⁵ *Bujku*, 16 maj, 1998, 1-2; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 65-71.

⁵⁸⁶ Steven Erlanger, "Allies Upset as U.S. Eases Stance on Kosovo," *The New York Times*, May 28, 1998.

⁵⁸⁷ Bardh Hamzaj, "Lufta dhe negociatat", *Zëri i javor*, 30 maj 1998, 10.

⁵⁸⁸ *Buletini*, Viti VII nr. 7 prill-qershor, 148-183.

people killed every day, of whom every sixth was a child or minor, while every seventh was an elderly person".⁵⁸⁹ Albright acknowledged that attempting direct dialogue under these circumstances was a mistake. "As a result, we sought to make amends by inviting Rugova and his delegation to Washington to express our appreciation and promote unity."⁵⁹⁰ The meeting was held on May 29, 1998 in the White House with US President Bill Clinton. Rugova, on behalf of the delegation, repeated the demand that Kosova be an independent and sovereign state. While President Clinton promised the Albanian delegation: "I assure you that Bosnia will not be repeated in Kosova".⁵⁹¹ Statements of support for the delegation were also made by other American political representatives, but as Hill recalls, "the point here was not to meet with people, as I tried to explain to Holbrooke. The problem was that Rugova was losing influence over the KLA. His meeting with President Clinton and Milošević would not have changed the situation."⁵⁹² Rugova's time was slowly running out. Attention was focused on the KLA.⁵⁹³ The reality of the KLA was increasingly taken into account, its activities increasingly found support in the ranks of Kosova.⁵⁹⁴

6.2 KLA factorization

The KLA was formed as a necessity of the times, with the aim of defending the disenfranchised people who were attacked by Serbia with military and police forces and the entire military arsenal inherited from the former Yugoslavia.⁵⁹⁵ It took a long time for the Albanians to realize that the initiatives and assessments of the international community regarding Kosova were quite indifferent to the Albanian people in Kosova. "Today this people strives for final liberation from the fascists and Serbian Chetniks. The period 1981-1990 is known to both European and American opinion. However, the tragedy of thousands of Kosova sons and daughters, their imprisonment and torture by the Yugoslav regime, passed in silence... We did not take up arms out of desire. Without such an organization, no one will listen to us - neither Europe nor America." One of the KLA leaders, Lladrovci, also made it known in this interview that every KLA soldier

⁵⁸⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 30 maj, 1998, 5.

⁵⁹⁰ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 448.

⁵⁹¹ *Bujku*, 30 maj, 1998, 1-2.

⁵⁹² Hill, *Pararojë*, 160.

⁵⁹³ Fred C. Abrahams, *Shqipëria e Re - Nga diktatura në demokraci në Evropë*, (Tiranë: Dudaj, 2015), 328.

⁵⁹⁴ John F. Harris, "Kosovo Leaders press for U.S Intervention", *The Washington Post*, May 30, 1998.

⁵⁹⁵ Hajdin Abazi, "Si lindi UÇK-ja?" *Kosova Sot*, 1-3 janar 2000, 21.

who took up a rifle was ready to die.⁵⁹⁶ Young Albanian soldiers were convinced that a military solution was becoming increasingly inevitable. "Politicians have had many years to deal with this situation, and they have done nothing. Why expect a miracle?"⁵⁹⁷ "For seven years in a row we have been asking the Serbs to talk to us. The result was Prekaz. We will never beg for anything again."⁵⁹⁸ "Since our first appearance in the eyes of our citizens, we have been legal and liberating," Hashim Thaçi said in an interview.⁵⁹⁹ However, until the Prekaz massacre, it was unlikely that the KLA would become a decisive factor in the further conflict.⁶⁰⁰ Until then, the KLA had participated in only a few armed conflicts with the Serbian armed forces, the aim of which was to harass and destabilize the enemy. After Prekaz, the KLA engages in a general armed conflict.⁶⁰¹ From then on, it was no longer a small group of soldiers, but an army that managed to consolidate day by day.⁶⁰² The Washington Post reported with concern that the period of a new Balkan war was approaching. As arguments, it presented the preparations of KLA soldiers, armed and ready for war.⁶⁰³ The KLA increased in numbers, expanding in the areas around Drenica and Malishevë, and in the border areas with Albania, especially near Deçan. Some senior local leaders of the LDK joined the KLA, such as Jakup Krasniqi, who was elected to the leadership of the LDK in February 1998, and in June of the same year became the first spokesperson of the KLA. Political prisoners who dominated KMDLNJ branches in the municipalities were also inclined to join the KLA. The new slogan was: "We are all KLA".⁶⁰⁴

Since the events of March 1998, the fighting has intensified and escalated. Entire cities and villages were razed to the ground, and hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes, inside and outside Kosova. The fierce resistance of the poorly armed Albanian peasants to the well-equipped Serbian army, paramilitary forces and Serbian police has puzzled military analysts. Although armed with very light weapons, at the beginning of the summer of 1998, the KLA controlled a large part of

⁵⁹⁶ Intervistë e një pjesëtari të lartë të Ushtrisë Çlirimtare të Kosovës, transmetuar në kanalin televiziv BBC World, *Koha Ditore*, 8 maj 1998, 8.

⁵⁹⁷ Kurt Schork, "Luftojmë. Përse të presim ndonjë mrekulli?", *Koha Ditore*, 30 prill 1998, 5.

⁵⁹⁸ Michel Moutot, "Reportazh i agjencisë AFP mbi pjesëtarët e Ushtrisë Çlirimtare të Kosovës", *Koha Ditore*, 30 mars, 1998, 7.

⁵⁹⁹ PBS – *Frontline*, Interview with Hashim Thaçi, 1999.

⁶⁰⁰ Haxhiu, *Lufta*, 81.

⁶⁰¹ Baudouin, *Lindja e një demokracie*, 99.

⁶⁰² Perrit, Jr, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, 96.

⁶⁰³ *Koha Ditore*, 26 mars, 1998, 7.

⁶⁰⁴ Clark, *Civil Resistance*, 176.

the rural areas, according to some estimates as much as 40% of the territory of Kosova.⁶⁰⁵ In just a few months, the KLA had managed to carry out more than a decade of nonviolent protests. By March 1998, the situation in Kosova could no longer be seen as a matter of human rights and freedoms. A civil war was raging in Kosova, which threatened to spread to other countries in the region.⁶⁰⁶ Until then, little was known about the KLA command structure. The most you could find were some interviews in the so-called Western media with KLA commanders who hid their identities. Information about the organization and leadership was secret.⁶⁰⁷ Until then, no name or person had been identified as the leader of the KLA. This was a very frustrating element for Western diplomats whose dilemma was whether the guerrilla forces should participate as a reliable partner in the peace talks.⁶⁰⁸

The war near the border with Albania was intensifying. NATO considered options for possible military intervention. International diplomatic representatives began intensifying efforts to find key military-political solutions.⁶⁰⁹ From this point of view, it was pointless for Rugova to enter into negotiations with the Serbs without a mandate from the KLA, which controlled almost half of Kosova's territory. American diplomatic representatives were the first to understand that without the involvement of the KLA as a represented party, no proposal by the Kosova Albanians would find full support.⁶¹⁰ The initiative for a direct meeting of American representatives with the command structures of the KLA began in April 1998. The meeting was held with one of the main representatives of the KLA, Xhavit Haliti, and later other meetings of Bardhyl Mahmuti and Ramadan Avdiu with diplomatic representatives were held in Geneva. At those meetings, American diplomatic representatives requested information on: operational capabilities, number of fighters, strategic intentions, plans for other fronts in Macedonia, Montenegro and southern Serbia. Representatives of the KLA answered all these questions and American demands in detail. The key messages were that the KLA will not oppose American interests in any way, that it will not engage militarily outside of Kosova, that it will not cooperate in any way with Islamist armed

⁶⁰⁵ On this view read: Chris Hedges, "New Serb Assault On Albania Rebels", *The New York Times*, June 2 1998; Biberaj, *Çështja Kombëtare Shqiptare*, 151.

⁶⁰⁶ Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War Kosovo and Beyond*, (New York: Picador, 2000), 57-58.

⁶⁰⁷ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 50.

⁶⁰⁸ Kurt Schork, "Në Perëndim të Kosovës, Ghandi ia lëshoi rrugën Che Guevaras", *Koha Ditore*, 10 korrik, 1998, 5.

⁶⁰⁹ Justin Brow, Janathan Landay, "UÇK-ja kërkon lider politik", *Koha Ditore*, 22 korrik, 1998, 6.

⁶¹⁰ Andi Bejta, "Pse Holbrooke takoi UÇK-në?", *Koha Ditore*, 15 korrik, 1998, 8; Malnar, *SAD*, 165.

groups, and that it will block all financial resources from illegal sources.⁶¹¹ The intelligence meetings preceded diplomatic meetings held by the US envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbard. Their purpose was to get to know the KLA's goals, platform and political thinking more closely. The meeting was held away from the media spotlight, in Geneva, Switzerland, and lasted four hours. At the end of the meeting, Gelbard told the KLA representatives: "It was a pleasure for us to have had the opportunity to talk to you for so long and in such detail. We can tell you that we are very pleased to finally meet someone from Kosova who knows what he wants, who knows how to ask for it, knows how to defend his demand, and at the same time knows how to achieve it."⁶¹² Efforts by American diplomats to find someone to guarantee a truce meant that Holbrooke and his team went in search of a negotiating partner inside Kosova - the Albanian guerrillas.⁶¹³ On June 24, 1998, Richard Holbrooke, accompanied by Ambassador Hill, met with two KLA representatives, Gani Shehu and Hajdin Abazi (alias Lum Haxhiu), in Junik near Deçan. The conversation took place in a traditional *odë*⁶¹⁴ of Junik. Hill wrote of the event: "Some villagers invited us to their property for tea. A few minutes later we were joined by a KLA soldier who looked like Che Guevara in military camouflage, sitting next to Holbrook."⁶¹⁵ Veton Surroi and Blerim Shala, who were participants in this meeting in the role of editor-in-chief of two Kosova newspapers, *Koha Ditore* and *Zëri*, remember the conversation that took place. Holbrook was interested in everything, from the reasons that led the inhabitants of Junik to arm themselves and fight, political affinities to how the KLA would react to a possible ceasefire.⁶¹⁶ Surroi pointed out for the residents of Kosova: "... none of them were interested in the war, but it was actually an imposition by Serbia..."⁶¹⁷ "We hope that this visit will encourage NATO and the US to stop Serbian aggression," Lum Haxhiu said after meeting with Holbrooke, but he stressed: "We did not

⁶¹¹ Haxhiu, *Lufta ndryshe*, 91; Abrahams, *Shqipëria e re*, 326; Hill, *Pararojë*, 164; Baudouin, *Lindja e një demokracie*, 120.

⁶¹² Krisafi, *Lufta e Kosovës*, 117-8.

⁶¹³ Stacy Sullivan, *Mos kij frikë se i ke djemtë në Amerikë – Si e futi pullazxhiu Amerikën në luftën e Kosovës*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2004), 242.

⁶¹⁴ Odë – a male guest room among Albanians, where men would gather and discuss important local issues and issues of national importance. [AN].

⁶¹⁵ Hill, *Pararojë*, 164.

⁶¹⁶ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 93-4.

⁶¹⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 25 qershor, 1998, 2.

like what Holbrooke said about his attempt to bring peace to Kosova. We want freedom, not just peace. Freedom is what we are fighting for."⁶¹⁸

The meeting in Junik received a lot of media coverage. The images and reports published about this meeting were interpreted as the US legitimizing the KLA.⁶¹⁹ Sabri Kiçmari, the KLA's diplomatic representative, wrote: "We interpreted this as recognition of the legality and legitimacy of the KLA by the US administration and the international community in general. As a result, the ranks of the KLA have grown significantly. The language of foreign journalists has changed. The possibility of communication with international community actors has increased."⁶²⁰ The meeting of American diplomats with KLA representatives infuriated Milošević. Anticipating the outcome of this meeting, Hill went to Belgrade the next day to meet with Milošević and clarify two points: the first was that they had no planned role in this meeting with the KLA and that the event had occurred "by chance." The second was to remind him that the mediator's task was to talk to all parties, including the Kosova soldiers.⁶²¹ The meeting with the KLA also raised concerns among European representatives, who preferred Ibrahim Rugova as the sole representative of the Albanians in the talks.⁶²² French and German diplomats were surprised by the separate meetings between two US special envoys, Richard Holbrooke and Robert Gelbard, and representatives of the KLA. While the explanation given by US officials was that the decision to hold the meeting reflected the rapidly changing military situation there.⁶²³ The British were also rigid in their approach. In a statement to the media at the end of his term as head of the European Union, Robin Cook, speaking about his meeting with Holbrooke, stated that the latter "met the KLA members by chance because he came across 'them'". However, he expressed the opinion that if a ceasefire in Kosova was to be achieved, then it was necessary to talk to all parties to the conflict, including the KLA.⁶²⁴ Gelbard himself responded to these criticisms during a conference on Bosnia held in

⁶¹⁸ Chris Hedges, "U.S. Envoy Meets Kosovo Rebels, Who Reject Truce Call", *The New York Times*, June 25, 1998.

⁶¹⁹ Malnar, *SHBA-ja*, 166; Baudouin, *Lindja e një demokracie*, 120.

⁶²⁰ Sabri Kiçmari, *Fitorja Diplomatike - Kujtime nga përfaqësimi diplomatik i Ushtrisë Çlirimtare të Kosovës*, (Prishtinë: Epoka e Re, 2017), 28.

⁶²¹ Chris Hedges, *U.S. Envoy Meets Kosovo Rebels*; Hill, *Pararojë*, 165.

⁶²² When Serbian forces launched an offensive against the KLA in late spring, the move was not opposed by various European circles, on the grounds that it would avoid a dominant role for the KLA in the upcoming negotiations. Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar*, 158.

⁶²³ Craig R. Whitney, "Rebel Success in Kosovo Worries Europe", *The New York Times*, June 30, 1998.

⁶²⁴ *Koha Ditore*, 30 qershor 1998, 6.

London, arguing that: "It would not be good to reach an agreement on the situation in Kosova, and then have those who control 30% of the territory disagree with that agreement."⁶²⁵

6.3 Risk of regional instability

The United States and European countries were concerned about Kosova and the consequences of the expansion of the conflict in this area as early as the early 1990s. Diplomacy failed to translate this concern into effective action to prevent the conflict from escalating into bloodshed.⁶²⁶ Since the abolition of Kosova's autonomy in 1989 and the initiation of a series of violent measures in July 1990, there has been a belief that Kosova is a reflection of regional instability.⁶²⁷ At the end of December 1992, the CIA warned in a confidential document that all regional politicians and other interested parties feared the consequences of a new crisis spreading to the southern Balkans, which would include several neighboring countries.⁶²⁸ As a result of this knowledge, President George HW Bush issued the so-called "Christmas Warning" in December 1992, as part of his administration's efforts to put pressure on Serbian authorities, who were already blamed for the Balkan wars.⁶²⁹ The warning was conveyed orally and in writing to President Slobodan Milošević and General Života Panić, the commander of the Yugoslav Army, by an official of the American Embassy in Belgrade. The document contained an explicit warning: "In the event of a conflict in Kosova caused by the action of Serbia, the US will be ready to use military force against the Serbs in Kosova and in Serbia."⁶³⁰ By drawing a line of patience in Kosova, US policy hoped to prevent a wider war that could involve Greece, Turkey and other countries in the region.⁶³¹ The same political concept was followed by President Bill Clinton, who, three weeks after coming to power in 1993, emphasized the importance of the "Christmas Warning" through Secretary of State Warren Christopher.⁶³²

⁶²⁵ Alan Wheatly, "Gelbardi: Intervenimi i NATO-s në Kosovë mbetet si opsion", *Koha Ditore*, 6 korrik, 1998, 3.

⁶²⁶ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 22.

⁶²⁷ Peter Münch, "Bomba që quhet Kosovë mbetet e rrezikshme", *Koha Ditore*, 14 janar, 1998, 6.

⁶²⁸ Declassified Documents National Intelligence Council: Document no. C06002393, Responses to Transition Team Question on the Balkans, NFIB 2.12/3, Washington DC. 20505, 28 December, 1992.

⁶²⁹ "Christmas Threat".

⁶³⁰ David Binber, "Bush Threatens 'Military Force' if Serbs Attack Ethnic Albanians" *The New York Times*, December 28, 1992.

⁶³¹ Malnar, *SHBA-ja*, 135.

⁶³² Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 443.

After the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the conflict in Bosnia, diplomatic attention to the issue of the former Yugoslavia stagnated considerably.⁶³³ However, the lessons learned after Dayton showed that the US administration realized that European security problems would not be adequately addressed without US involvement. Moreover, the Balkan conflicts could not be resolved by air power alone without US military units on the ground. It took more than 60,000 NATO troops to initially secure peace in Bosnia, of which 35,000 were in BiH two and a half years after the signing of the Dayton agreement.⁶³⁴ When the Kosova crisis broke out in early 1998, the main concern was the danger of the war spreading to the Balkans, the consequences of which could become a challenge for the entire troubled region.⁶³⁵ Kosova was engulfed in the flames of war, while all the countries bordering Kosova, which had a large Albanian population, were undergoing a difficult and slow post-communist transition. Starting with Albania, the homeland of all Albanians, which in the spring of 1997 was gripped by internal unrest and turmoil, triggered by the anemic response of the international community to the issue of Kosova. The unrest in Albania led to the potential use of weapons collected during the communist era. A significant part of these resources then passed into the hands of the KLA, in order to ensure a successful military resistance in Kosova.⁶³⁶ During this period, Albania was under great international pressure to restrict arms smuggling into Kosova and to close down KLA training and supply bases on its territory. Some EU and OSCE diplomats also demanded an international presence in Albania to control the border areas. Albania did not accept the request.⁶³⁷

And the situation in Montenegro began to be worrying after the victory of Milo Đukanović in the presidential elections on October 5 and 19, 1997 against former president Momir Bulatović, loyal to Milošević. Bulatović and his supporters tried to prevent the inauguration of Đukanović on January 15, 1998, whom Serbian propaganda accused of winning with the help of Albanians.⁶³⁸ Disputes between Serbia and Montenegro became clear when Montenegrin Interior Minister Vukašin Maraš refused to send reinforcements of military and police forces to Kosova. "We

⁶³³ Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 75.

⁶³⁴ Paul Taylor, "Çka u mësua nga Bosnja", *Koha Ditore*, 18 qershor, 1998, 6.

⁶³⁵ Misha Glenny, "Bosnia II", *The New York Times*, December 9, 1997.

⁶³⁶ Sullivan *Mos kij frikë se i ke djemtë në Amerikë*, 158; Austin, *Bërja dhe ribërja e Ballkanit*, 156.

⁶³⁷ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 147-148.

⁶³⁸ *Koha Ditore*, 20 janar, 1998, 7; Chris Hedges, "It's Serb vs. Serb in Montenegro Vote", *The New York Times*, May 28, 1998.

rejected Milošević, he doesn't understand that you can't win a war with war crimes. So their fight, apart from rivalry, also had to do with the orientation of the future of Montenegro", said the adviser to the Government of Montenegro. It was noticed that the politicians gathered around Đukanović, who were mostly young people eager for contact with the West, blamed Slobodan Milošević for the isolation of Yugoslavia. "Milošević is a creator of problems, not a solver".⁶³⁹

The situation in Macedonia seemed even more challenging. In July 1997, the Macedonian government forcibly closed the Albanian university in Tetovo, which provoked a reaction from the Albanians. Albanians in Macedonia in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century suffered the consequences of treatment by the communist authorities almost more than the Albanians in Kosova who suffered from the Serbian regime.⁶⁴⁰ As a result of major divisions in Macedonia, inter-ethnic relations in relation to Kosova have often been described as a "powder keg". The possibilities of conflict were real.⁶⁴¹ Historically and ethnologically, Albanians from Kosova and those from Macedonia did not consider themselves members of two peoples or two ethnic groups, despite the international division of borders. They considered themselves a single national and ethnic community. The entire Albanian political and cultural elite, in the absence of an Albanian-language university in Macedonia, was educated in Kosova.⁶⁴² Therefore, there was a rightful concern that at the moment of Kosova's entry into the war, Macedonia would also become a war zone. The greatest fear reigned along the Macedonian border with Kosova. More than 80% of the population of this area were Albanians. Another problem was that the Orthodox Macedonians openly showed sympathy for the violent Serbian strategy in Kosova and were against an independent Kosova.⁶⁴³

During a visit to Skopje by US Assistant Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, reporters were told: "Peace in Macedonia is seriously threatened by the situation in Kosova, as a result of Belgrade's continued policy."⁶⁴⁴ American General Wesley Clark from Skopje warned Washington about the possibility of tension in the entire area, after a meeting with Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov.

⁶³⁹ Jonathan Steele, "Montenegro defies Serbian pleas for help in Kosovo", *The Guardian*, August 12, 1998.

⁶⁴⁰ Glenny, *Histori e Ballkanit*, 656.

⁶⁴¹ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 146.

⁶⁴² Biberaj, *Çështja kombëtare*, 57.

⁶⁴³ Anthony Loyd, "Tactics by KLA may spark off war in regions", *Independent*, July 6, 1998.

⁶⁴⁴ *Koha Ditore*, 18 mars, 1998, 4.

The Macedonian communist leader expressed his concern about the new situation that is being created in Kosova, which could directly affect the stability of his country: "Serbian special police in Kosova have just killed about sixty members of the Albanian Jashari family. This is Milošević's way of solving the problem of internal security, but it will lead to war...Albanians are not like Bosniaks, they will not be afraid. They will return. And Milošević will use force. They will say they will negotiate, but they won't. All he really respects is military strength."⁶⁴⁵

From that point on, events began to spiral out of control with the rise of the KLA, which took control of strategic points in central and southern Kosova. "Our early mistakes now threaten what we wanted to avoid - a general conflict in Kosova that could spread to Macedonia and Albania, as well as other Balkan states," Western diplomats said, according to Reuters journalist Donald Forbes.⁶⁴⁶ The main concern was that if the war in Kosova spread to Macedonia, within a few days the entire area of western Macedonia, along with the capital Skopje, would be involved in war operations.⁶⁴⁷ This concern was openly expressed by Secretary of State Albright during a speech to the Newspaper Editors Association in Washington on April 2, 1998, when she stressed that the war in Kosova posed a danger to the region: "For the Balkans, this escalating violence is a road to hell...If tensions are not stopped, they will spiral out of control. The result will be a civil war with far-reaching consequences, which will jeopardize the process of stabilization in Bosnia and threaten to spread the conflict, like a contagious disease, to neighboring countries."⁶⁴⁸

Another war in the Balkans would undermine NATO's guarantee of security and stability in Europe. On the other hand, if Milošević were to take a strong military action in Kosova, it would encourage the Bosnian Serbs to further resist and boycott Dayton. "Whether we like it or not, we will have to consider our options," wrote W. Clark at the time.⁶⁴⁹ At the meeting of the Council of Defense Ministers of NATO, it was decided to hold air exercises in Albania and Macedonia. These

⁶⁴⁵ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 139-40.

⁶⁴⁶ Donald Forbes "A do ti ndihmoj Perëndimi Milosheviqit që ta shkatërroj UÇK-në në emër të ruajtjes së paqes në Ballkan", *Koha Ditore*, 24 prill, 1998, 6.

⁶⁴⁷ Misha Glenny, "Perëndimi nga droja po hamendet buzë gjakderdhjes që po zhvillohet", *Koha Ditore*, 16 qershor, 1998, 7.

⁶⁴⁸ Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright Address & Question and Answer Session before the American Association of Newspaper Editors, April 2, 1998.

⁶⁴⁹ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 140.

measures, as well as those at the meeting in Luxembourg,⁶⁵⁰ "We have reviewed the dire security situation, drawing also on the report of the assessment team currently in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," NATO said in a statement on the occasion. "In this context, we, as Ministers of Defense, have taken the following additional decisions: We have instructed NATO military authorities, subject to agreement by the governments of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to conduct appropriate air training in these two countries as soon as possible."

The aim of this exercise was to demonstrate the capability, power and speed of NATO's military action throughout the Balkans.⁶⁵¹ On the morning of June 15, 1998, 85 military aircraft from 13 NATO member states, including the United States, began "Operation Falcon." The exercise involved a demonstration of NATO military forces in the skies over Albania and Macedonia. NATO leaders undertook the operation in the hope that military flights over Albania and Macedonia would persuade Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević to end the violence in Kosova, a war that was threatening the entire region.⁶⁵² In his speech after these air exercises, on 15 June 1998, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana stressed: "In light of the deteriorating situation in the region... NATO is prepared to go further if necessary to stop the violence and protect the civilian population."⁶⁵³

7. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S THREATS ARE FADING

7.1 Diplomacy based on the threat of force

The escalation of the war, continuous violence against the Albanian civilian population, the bitter experience of the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the threat of

⁶⁵⁰ At the meeting held on May 28, 1998 in Luxembourg, the NATO defense ministers stated in a statement on Kosovo: "We are deeply concerned about the situation in Kosovo. We deplore the continued use of violence in suppressing political dissent or seeking political change. Violence and related instability risk jeopardizing the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and jeopardizing security and stability in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The statements clearly stated two main goals regarding the situation in Kosovo: to help achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis by contributing to the response of the international community; and promote stability and security in neighboring countries, with special emphasis on Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Press Release M-NAC-1(98) 061 Issued on 28 May. in 1998.

⁶⁵¹ NATO Press Release, M-NAC-D-1 (98), 77, 11 June 1998; NATO Press Release, M-NAC-D-1 (98), 80, 13 June 1998.

⁶⁵² *The Associated Press*, "NATO, Air Exercises over the Balkans Underway", June 15, 1998; Christine Spolar, "NATO Planes Deliver hope to Albanians", *The Washington Post*, June 16, 1999.

⁶⁵³ *Koha Ditore*, 16 qershor, 1998, 3.

destabilization of the entire region forced the international community to take serious steps to prevent war, including the threat of military force.⁶⁵⁴ More than ten days have passed since the Serbian military and police placed a complete blockade on the Dukagjin area on May 25. In order to closely monitor the course of events, on June 9, 1998, a delegation led by the head of the American diplomatic mission in Belgrade, Richard Miles, made a fact-finding visit to Kosova.⁶⁵⁵ In an interview with the newspaper *Zëri* on 13 June 1998, Ambassador Miles stated: "What we have seen today is evidence of a significant military action... the result of this military action is that tens and thousands of Albanian citizens have been expelled from their homes. The international community is losing patience and is ready to take serious measures, and very quickly."⁶⁵⁶ In addition to this focal point, statistical data from Kosova from May 29 to June 5, 1998 state that 52 Albanians were killed in the fighting in the municipality of Deçan alone. 200 of them are considered missing, 150 have been taken hostage, while around 30,000 have been displaced from their homes.⁶⁵⁷ The US turned no longer to the Contact Group but to NATO, intensifying efforts to persuade its Western allies to begin a new phase of diplomacy that would be backed by the threat of military force.⁶⁵⁸ "Milošević will pretend to negotiate, but he will not do so until he succumbs to pressure," Clark reported to the Pentagon. In order to strike a balance, he adopted a combination of diplomacy known as "carrot and stick."⁶⁵⁹ Thus, with each passing day, the conviction for a change in strategy grew, given the fact that diplomacy without the threat of force clearly seemed insufficient.

George Robertson, the British Minister of Defense, stated in a statement to the *BBC* on 5 June 1998 that the issue of Kosova would be at the top of the agenda of the meeting of Defense Ministers (NAC).⁶⁶⁰ "We are sending clear signals through political, military and economic pressure that Mr.

⁶⁵⁴ On this point of view, read: Contact Group Meetings, Security Council Resolution, as well as NATO maneuver preparations.

⁶⁵⁵ Bardh Hamzaj, "Fillimi i pastrimit etnik në Kosovë", *Zëri i javor*, 13 qershor, 1998, 9; *Zëri i javor*, 13 qershor, 1998, 10-11.

⁶⁵⁶ Intervistë me Richard Miles, shef i misionit diplomatik të SHBA-ve në Beograd, *Zëri*, 13 qershor, 1998, 10-11.

⁶⁵⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 6 qershor, 1998, 2.

⁶⁵⁸ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 447; Fitim Gllareva, *Diplomacia amerikane në konfliktin e Kosovës 1989-1999*, (Prishtinë: Elta BS & Artini, 2004), 169.

⁶⁵⁹ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 150.

⁶⁶⁰ Each member state is represented in the North Atlantic Council by an ambassador or permanent representative, supported by a national delegation of advisers and officials who represent their country in various NATO committees. The Council also meets occasionally at the level of heads of state and government, foreign ministers or defense ministers. Who is who of NATO member countries. Last updated: 9 October 2024.

Milošević should stop and think, look at other alternatives and look for peaceful and political solutions to the problems that exist in Kosova". Otherwise, "NATO forces are considering all options, including the most radical ones".⁶⁶¹ The International Herald Tribune wrote at the time that the announced meetings of the Contact Group and NATO defense ministers should provide a response to the Serbian aggression being carried out against the Albanian people. The war in Croatia ended with the military-police operation "Oluja", also carried out with the military-infrastructural assistance of the USA, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina it was stopped by joint activities of the USA and the NATO pact. Post-war analyses showed that delaying the use of force was perhaps the biggest mistake of the international community in resolving the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This example showed that effective and timely action by the international community would destroy war projects and stop ethnic cleansing in Kosova, and strengthen the prospects for a peaceful resolution of this conflict.⁶⁶² Since the differences between the Americans and other European countries were significant regarding the solution of the Kosova issue, progress was only achieved during a two-day meeting on 8 and 9 June 1998. At that time, the EU Council of Foreign Ministers in Luxembourg more directly condemned the violence of Serbian military forces in Kosova. In a statement after the meeting, it was said: "We are deeply concerned about the intensity of the fighting in Kosova. These attacks have resulted in a new wave of ethnic cleansing of the Albanian population", highlighting Yugoslav President S. Milošević as the main responsible. "The Council today, 9 June 1998, adopted a common position on the ban on new investments in Serbia".⁶⁶³ On the same day, US President Bill Clinton took similar action, ordering a freeze on financial flows and trade with Yugoslavia, including assets held in the US. Clinton also announced that he had approved the inclusion of NATO military planning, stating: "I don't think any option should be eliminated."⁶⁶⁴ At the meeting of the NATO Defense Ministers' Council on 11 June 1998, in conjunction with the decision on the air exercise in Albania and Macedonia, the following remarks were made: "We are deeply concerned about the situation in Kosova, which has seriously deteriorated in recent days. Reports indicate a new level of violence by Serbian forces. We condemn any use of violence for political purposes, whether by the authorities in Belgrade or

⁶⁶¹ Susan Cornwell, "Robertson: NATO-ja i shqyrton opsionet ushtarake për Kosovën", *Koha Ditore*, 6 qershor, 1998, 4.

⁶⁶² Help Kosovo: Letters to the Editor, *The New York Times*, 10 June, 1998.

⁶⁶³ Council meeting General Affairs, 2104th, Luxembourg, 8/9 June 1998.

⁶⁶⁴ Documents Executive Order 13088 of June 9, 1998; *Koha Ditore*, 11 qershor, 1998, 2.

by the Kosova Albanians. We are particularly concerned about the number of refugees and displaced persons." The statement further stated: "We have instructed NATO military authorities to consider further decisions by the Council as soon as possible, as appropriate, based on the full range of options on a legal basis, to stop the systematic campaign of pressure, the forcible expulsion of Albanians in Kosova."⁶⁶⁵

The Americans supported the position that the international community should be ready for all possibilities to stop Serbian aggression in Kosova. This point of view was expressed by US Secretary of Defense William Cohen⁶⁶⁶ during a visit to Rome on June 9, 1998. At the press conference, Cohen clearly said that there is: "a general consensus that there should be accelerated planning" (for military actions, [AN]) and that all NATO members see this as an action that must be taken urgently. Therefore: "It is important... to put an end to this scandal of bombing and shelling of innocent people... We will work to achieve this goal at all levels: diplomatic, economic and, we hope, not military. But we do not rule it out. In this regard, NATO should consider all military options. I wouldn't limit it to air, land or sea or any combination of the three together."⁶⁶⁷

The next day, June 12, 1998, in London, the Contact Group also clarified the demands of the international community.⁶⁶⁸ The statement said, among other things: "Security forces have once again intervened indiscriminately, causing numerous civilian casualties and forcing tens of thousands of residents to flee their homes. Therefore, the ministers decided to present a series of points to the authorities in Belgrade demanding an immediate halt to any further deterioration of the situation. These include concrete measures: the cessation of all security forces' actions against Albanian civilians, the withdrawal of Serbian military forces, unhindered access for international observers and humanitarian organizations, the right of Albanian refugees to return to their homes, as well as rapid progress in negotiations with the Albanian leadership of Kosova."⁶⁶⁹ Despite the fact that there was no full readiness for military intervention, the international community had at least begun discussions about these options. NATO's planning system had already begun to operate

⁶⁶⁵ NATO Press Release, M-NAC-D-1 (98), 77, 11 June 1998.

⁶⁶⁶ US Defense Secretary Cohen began his eight-day tour of Europe after meetings where NATO defense ministers warned Serbia that it must stop the massacres in Kosova or face NATO attacks. *Koha Ditore*, 11 qershor, 1998, 2.

⁶⁶⁷ "NATO weighing military options for Kosovo", *CNN*, June 11, 1998.

⁶⁶⁸ The Contact Group held dozens of meetings at two levels: representatives of foreign ministries and foreign ministers themselves. The meetings and consultations were held on a rotational basis. Most of them were held in London.

⁶⁶⁹ Statement of the Contact Group, London 12 June 1998.

in a military direction.⁶⁷⁰ On the other hand, Russia, aware that the US and EU countries are finally moving towards stricter sanctions and the possibility of military action by NATO, has announced a meeting between the Russian and Yugoslav presidents.⁶⁷¹ Russian Foreign Minister Primakov was aware that the time had come when NATO was finally considering bombing Yugoslavia, although numerous European states, including NATO members, were hesitant to take such action without the approval of the Security Council.⁶⁷² At the height of these rising tensions, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, seeking to prevent a NATO military incursion into Kosova, promised to make personal efforts in talks with the Serbian leadership to calm the violence there.⁶⁷³ A declassified confidential document describes a June 15, 1998, telephone conversation between US President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, in which Kosova was a central topic. Yeltsin informs President Clinton that he has invited Slobodan Milošević to Moscow and that he is planning a difficult conversation with him. “I will ask for an end to the disproportionate use of force, but the most important thing is to get his agreement to negotiate.” Clinton emphasized in his speech: “Milošević has great respect for you, so I encourage you to tell him that he must stop the indiscriminate violence and engage in real dialogue. If he hears that from you, I believe he is much more likely to do so. Let me also say that the Contact Group, which has been working well together, has basically said that he must stop actions against the civilian population, withdraw the security forces used for repression, allow international observers free access, facilitate the return of refugees to their places, homes, and allow access for humanitarian organizations and supplies, and I think these are reasonable demands and that we should avoid the mistakes we made in Bosnia by waiting too long.”⁶⁷⁴ the USA and its major European⁶⁷⁵ allies argued that Russian President Yeltsin could help international diplomacy if he took a firm stand with Milošević. So Yeltsin was expected to make it clear that whatever illusion Milošević may have, the Russian president should use his influence to warn him that he must immediately curb his activities in Kosova.⁶⁷⁶ The

⁶⁷⁰ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 147.

⁶⁷¹ Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar*, 156.

⁶⁷² Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, 182.

⁶⁷³ Alan Cowell, “Yeltsin Plans Personal Bid to Defuse Kosovo Crisis”, *The New York Times*, June 10, 1998; Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, 183.

⁶⁷⁴ Documents nr. 13. Memorandum of telephone Conversation: Telephone Conversation with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, *National Security Archive*, Washington June 15, 1998.

⁶⁷⁵ England, France, Germany and Italy [AN].

⁶⁷⁶ Reinforcing Diplomacy on Kosovo, *The New York Times*, June 14, 1998.

meeting was held on June 16, 1998.⁶⁷⁷ After several hours of talks in Moscow, the two presidents signed a joint statement promising that the Yugoslav side was ready to resolve problems through political means, on an equal footing, and that it was ready to immediately resume talks with the Albanians of Kosova.⁶⁷⁸ That the Serbs had no intention of respecting any agreement that includes political dialogue is proven by the fact that they refused the main demand of the Contact Group - the withdrawal of Serbian police and military forces from Kosova.⁶⁷⁹ Western diplomats, despite their reservations, welcomed the meeting as an opportunity. James Rubin, a State Department spokesman, said in a press statement: "We welcome President Yeltsin's personal engagement on this very important matter. But we still believe that we must plan for possible military action in light of the difficulties we see for successful diplomacy at this stage."⁶⁸⁰ In this context, "all options are on the table, including the use of force if Milošević does not stop the ethnic cleansing in Kosova," US Secretary of State Albright said before the Senate Subcommittee on Expatriation on June 16, 1998.⁶⁸¹ "We are tired of words if they are not translated into actions," said NATO Secretary Javier Solana. He pointed out that Milošević's promises could only be a stalling tactic to gain time. However, Milošević's deal with Yeltsin would be a public promise that he must keep if he wants to avoid bigger problems in the future.⁶⁸²

However, in the first days after the "agreement"⁶⁸³ The Serbian authorities' desire to conduct all their military operations in Kosova was being watched very carefully. The Serbian side's goal was to prevent the shelling in Kosova from appearing on the front pages of Western newspapers.⁶⁸⁴ The position on the military withdrawal from Kosova was expressed by Yugoslav Foreign Minister

⁶⁷⁷ Statement of the Contact Group, London 12 June 1998.

⁶⁷⁸ Shaqir Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova shënime të një diplomati*, (Tiranë: Eno Kuço, 2007), 156.

⁶⁷⁹ Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, 183.

⁶⁸⁰ Michael R. Gordon, "Conflict in the Balkans: In Russia; Yeltsin Invites Milosevic for a Slav-to-Slav Talk", *The New York Times*, June 12, 1998.

⁶⁸¹ *Koha Ditore*, 17 qershor, 1998, 3.

⁶⁸² *Koha Ditore*, 19 qershor, 1998, 3.

⁶⁸³ In a statement by the Russian and Yugoslav presidents, issued after a meeting in Moscow on June 16, 1998, Milošević promised that he would "not take any repressive action against the civilian population." The Yugoslav leader agreed to demands that Serbian forces ensure freedom of movement in the region and allow unhindered access for diplomats and international humanitarian groups such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross. That the Yugoslav side was ready to resolve the problems by political means, on an equal footing, and that it was ready to immediately resume talks with the Kosovo Albanians. David Hoffman, „Milosevic to meet Kosovo moderate Serbs visits Yeltsin, Yields on Talks" *Washington Post*, June 16, 1998; Shaqir Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova shënime të një diplomati*, (Tiranë: Eno Kuço, 2007), 156.

⁶⁸⁴ Judah, *Luftë dhe hakmarrje*, 208.

Živadin Jovanović on June 18, 1998, during a visit to Brussels with his Belgian counterpart Eric Deryce: "those troops are not on someone else's territory, they are needed there," added the Serbian diplomat.⁶⁸⁵ On the other hand, Serbian diplomacy was "preparing" a draft of the status of autonomy for Kosova. It trivialized the proposal to such an extent that political circles in Belgrade were saying: "national minorities in Kosova have more rights than international standards provide, but the "Albanians" do not want to use them."⁶⁸⁶ These activities *de facto* meant that Russia diplomatically avoided the possibility of using force against Belgrade. According to this point of view, when the situation in Kosova is "improving" through Serbian activities and work on Kosova's autonomy, dialogue should be given a chance.⁶⁸⁷ In order to mediate more strongly in these activities, Moscow sent Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolay Afanasevsky to Kosova on June 21, 1998. In a meeting with the Albanian delegation, the Russian representative made it clear that the "Yeltsin-Milošević agreement"⁶⁸⁸ is a way to find a solution for Kosova. Also, according to him, Milošević was ready to immediately begin negotiations on the status of Kosova. As expected, the Albanian delegation opposed almost all the positions of the representatives of the Russian Federation. The Albanian delegation was in favor of dialogue, but insisted on the immediate withdrawal of all Serbian police forces from Kosova, without which the process of refugee return and the continuation of the dialogue process cannot take place. These were also the demands of the Contact Group.⁶⁸⁹ During a meeting in Belgrade with S. Milošević, the Russian representative emphasized in a statement to the media that Russia stands by the position that "Belgrade is honestly fulfilling all obligations from the Moscow Declaration", moreover, Afanasevsky emphasized that "the Americans have also noticed this". He added that "it is necessary to stop threats of the use of force on the territory of the FRY, because the current situation does not provide any reason for

⁶⁸⁵ Brent Sadler & Reuters "Yugoslavia vows no troop pullout from Kosovo", *CNN*, June 18, 1998.

⁶⁸⁶ Miloš Minić, "Serbia mund të përjetoj katastrofë", *Zëri i javor*, 27 qershor, 1998, 30-31.

⁶⁸⁷ Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, 183.

⁶⁸⁸ On June 16, 1998, Slobodan Milošević and Boris Yeltsin signed the Joint Declaration on Kosovo in Moscow. It included 9 points, insisting on the preservation of territorial integrity and respect for the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and condemning all forms of terrorism and separatism. In the joint statement, Milošević committed, among other things, to solving the Kosovo problem by political means and continuing negotiations with the leader of the Kosovo Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova. It was emphasized that no repressive actions will be taken against the peaceful population, which, of course, does not include the forces of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Free circulation of foreign diplomats and representatives of international organizations is guaranteed. The most important position, which is directly related to the position that the Contact Group took in London, concerns the actions of special police forces. These forces will withdraw from the territory outside the place of operation in proportion to the reduction of terrorist military activity.

⁶⁸⁹ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 84-5; Malnar, *SHBA-ja*, 164-5; Koha Ditore, 23 qershor, 1998, 4.

it".⁶⁹⁰ With this stance, Moscow sought to revise the conclusions of the Contact Group and annul some of them.⁶⁹¹ Russia tried by all means to prevent a military attack on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, during his visit to Kosova on June 26, 1998, Holbrooke described the Prishtina-Pejë highway and the checkpoint in the village of Kijevë as the most dangerous place in Europe. "We are particularly focused on Kijevë, a place that the world has not heard of and we believe will never hear about, but which, if the situation culminates, will become the site of tragic battles".⁶⁹² On the same days, the New York Times and the Washington Post reported on fierce fighting, the destruction of villages and the departure of the population. Army and police forces, accompanied by Serbian paramilitaries, numbering around 50,000 people, continued to attack numerous villages in the Dukagjin region. In the general targeted burning and destruction of residential buildings, more than 85,000 inhabitants of these settlements were left homeless. Likewise, Serbian forces, despite the Moscow Agreement, prevented journalists from going to war zones. blocked journalists from war zones.⁶⁹³ Dozens of Albanian civilians were killed only in the first week of July 1998. KMDLNJ, through its representative offices throughout Kosova, reported on the daily murders, violence, arrests, tortures and robberies of the houses of the Albanian population.⁶⁹⁴ Despite all these events, the desire for military action against Yugoslavia began to fade. The international community seemed more interested in preventing the creation of a new state of Kosova than in addressing the causes of the conflict.⁶⁹⁵ Some diplomats no longer saw the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova as a prerequisite for the start of dialogue.⁶⁹⁶ The paradox was that all Western diplomats declared in their public statements that "another Bosnia will not be allowed".⁶⁹⁷ The tactics of threats and inaction have mostly damaged the reputation of the international community itself and called into question its ability to resolve conflicts.⁶⁹⁸ It was

⁶⁹⁰ Naša Borba, 27 jun, 1998.

⁶⁹¹ Fehmi Agani, *Pavarsia gjasa dhe shpresa*, (Pejë: Dukagjini, 1999), 346.

⁶⁹² *Koha Ditore*, 27 qershor, 1998, 3.

⁶⁹³ Chris Hedges, "Fierce Fighting as Serbs Try to Push Rebels from Kosovo Town", *The New York Times*, July 1, 1998; Jeffrey Smith, "Duhet tri ditë për të shkatërruar një fshat", *Koha Ditore*, 4 korrik, 1998, 8.

⁶⁹⁴ For more information on the number of people killed, injured, mistreated, read KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator* (Prishtinë, 1998), 106-116.

⁶⁹⁵ Biberaj, *Çështja kombëtare*, 82.

⁶⁹⁶ Paul Taylor, "Taktika e Holbrooke shton tensionet në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 1 korrik, 1998, 4.

⁶⁹⁷ Misha Glenny, "Perëndimi nga droja po hamendet buzë gjakderdhjes që po zhvillohet", *Koha Ditore*, 16 qershor 1998, 7.

⁶⁹⁸ Frederick Bonnart, "Të jeni të sigurt çdo intervenim i NATO-s në Kosovë është legal", *Koha Ditore*, 2 korrik, 1998, 7.

clear that disagreements between the Western powers prevented any immediate military intervention.⁶⁹⁹ As stated by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the approach of the international community at the time was to intervene, but in a very limited way, that is, there was a desire for peace, but not for a solution to the problem.⁷⁰⁰ Therefore, in order to overcome this situation, the USA and the Western allies proposed the return of the "shuttle diplomacy" flying diplomacy between the Yugoslav and Albanian leaders. Referring to the previous success of negotiations over Bosnia and Herzegovina, the key to the talks was "separate talks, not face-to-face talks". Milošević refused to withdraw Serbian forces from Kosova, on the other hand, Rugova refused a possible meeting without the departure of Serbian forces from Kosova. The new diplomatic approach indicated the fact that the option of military intervention was excluded for now. State Department spokesman James Rubin acknowledged that there were disagreements over the issue of military planning, citing objections from Russia, which has said it will not accept the use of force without the authorization of the UN Security Council.⁷⁰¹ On the other hand, the fact is that since the beginning of the war, concessions have been made to Milošević one after the other, and at the same time, not a single request of the international community, as a mediating party, has been fulfilled.⁷⁰² Milošević thus rejected the request of the mediation mission of Felipe González and ignored the request to investigate the crimes in Drenica⁷⁰³ and Decan. The only request he accepted was a meeting with Rugova. Now the international community was asked to restart the dialogue process, but without the previous main demand for the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova in the name of a "ceasefire".⁷⁰⁴ In this context, the European Union, faced with Serbia's rejection of González as a mediator, was forced to cede the initiative to launch a "new" process of Albanian-Serbian dialogue to American diplomats Holbrooke-Hill.⁷⁰⁵ "The United States is intensifying its efforts, but this issue will be decided on the ground in Kosova," Holbrooke said from Paris before

⁶⁹⁹ Andi Bejta, "Pse Holbrooke takoi UÇK-në?", *Koha Ditore*, 15 korrik, 1998, 8.

⁷⁰⁰ Tony Blair, *Një Rrugëtim*, (Tiranë: 55, 2011), 275.

⁷⁰¹ Patrick Worsnip, "Rugova ka refuzuar ta takoj Milosheviqin", *Koha Ditore*, 27 qershor, 1998, 4.

⁷⁰² Cyrill Stieger, "Perëndimi është bashkëfajtor për radikalizmin në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 24 qershor, 1998, 5.

⁷⁰³ Since the Contact Group meeting held in London on March 9, 1998, one of the ten points was: to immediately establish a UN ad-hoc commission to discover the truth about the Drenica massacres and to charge the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia with its investigations. This demand has been repeated at every Contact Group meeting, but Slobodan Milošević has never accepted it. For more, read: Statement of the Contact Group, - London, March 9, 1998.

⁷⁰⁴ Melazim Koci, "Kosova është e kërcënuar nga agresioni dhe jo nga mungesa e konsensusit ndërshqiptar", *Kombi*, 8 korrik, 1998, 11.

⁷⁰⁵ Ukshini, *Kosova sfidë e politikës së përbashkët*, 253.

leaving for the Balkans, for another round of talks with President Slobodan Milošević and the political leader of the Kosova Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova.⁷⁰⁶ The American diplomat initially held meetings with Yugoslav President Milošević in Belgrade on July 3, 1998, then went to Prishtina the next day to meet with Kosova's leader Ibrahim Rugova, as well as his political rivals Adem Demaçi and Rexhep Qosja.⁷⁰⁷ In a statement after the meeting, Holbrooke described the talks with the Albanian representatives as intense, in which there were many common positions, but differences were also noted. Speaking about the goals of the US administration, he announced that: "the issue of Kosova must be resolved peacefully".⁷⁰⁸ In support of Holbrook's mission, Russian diplomat Nikolay Afanasevsky returned to the Balkans. Through this diplomatic combination of Holbrooke and Afanasevsky, an attempt was made to create the impression that the cooperation between the USA and Russia, and the other members of the Contact Group, was unique. The architect of the Dayton Agreement announced this: "Afanasevsky and I came to Prishtina together, because it is part of the continuous and directly coordinated cooperation in the Contact Group. We were together in Bosnia, we are colleagues and friends, and our goals are the same: to find a peaceful solution for Kosova."⁷⁰⁹ Following this effort, as positive news, diplomats confirmed that an observation mission in Kosova, consisting of diplomats accredited in Belgrade, will begin operating from the next day, which will allow ambassadors to observe on a daily basis, for the purpose of multinational integration efforts.⁷¹⁰ The first symbolic "tour" of this mission began on July 6, 1998 under the leadership of the head of the American mission in Belgrade, Richards Miles, accompanied by diplomats of the Contact Group and other accredited individuals in Belgrade. The tour route was Prishtina – Mitrovica – Klinë e Epërme – Skenderaj – Polac – Prishtina in a convoy of 30 vehicles. The organizers gave two warnings to the participants: firstly, that they move at their own risk, and secondly, that the convoy will not wait for vehicles that are lagging behind.⁷¹¹ Miles and over 100 other diplomats and journalists had the opportunity to face the ruins of the houses of the massacred Jashari family. On the way to Prekaz, they did not see a single passer-by. In Prekaz, in the presence of international diplomats, three members of the UDB beat Reuters news agency

⁷⁰⁶ Craig R. Whitney, "Western Officials Say Accord On Kosovo Seems Uncertain", *The New York Times*, 4 July, 1998.

⁷⁰⁷ "U.S. Mediator Meets Serb and Ethnic Albanians", *The New York Times*, July, 5 1998.

⁷⁰⁸ *Koha Ditore*, 5 korrik, 1998, 3.

⁷⁰⁹ Rugova, Holbrooke and Afanasyevsky to the Press: Kosova Daily Report #1481, 98-07-05.

⁷¹⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 6 korrik, 1998, 3.

⁷¹¹ *Zëri*, 11 korrik, 1998, 20-1.

journalist Kurt Schork (killed on May 24, 2000 in Sierra Leone) and his fellow photographer, who was shot multiple times while trying to protect his colleague. To defuse the incident, even the head of diplomat Miles' security reacted.⁷¹² The mission of international observers was obstructed by Serbian authorities wherever possible, as evidenced by an official report from the US State Department dated July 14, 1998.⁷¹³ However, as limited as the observations were, they helped inform the countries from which the diplomats came. The countries that participated in the mission were able to create a clearer picture of events on the ground.⁷¹⁴

7.2 Milošević continues the massacres in the summer of 1998

On 10 July 1998, Serbian military and police forces launched an attack on the Kosova-Albanian border to cut off the supply of Albanian soldiers from Albania, causing hundreds of civilians to flee. The focal point of this attack was the village of Loxhë e Pejës (border of Kosova and Albania), otherwise known as the main supply headquarters of the KLA in this area.⁷¹⁵ According to local sources, the attack on Loxhë began in the early morning hours of July 11, 1998. The attack was based on heavy artillery, including the use of Katyusha rockets.⁷¹⁶ Strong attacks were also carried out in the municipalities of Skenderaj, Drenas, Mitrovicë, Klinë, Deçan, Gjakovë, Rahovec, Prizren and Suharekë. Dozens were killed and hundreds injured.⁷¹⁷ In the last days of July, the fighting intensified. The goal of the Serbian forces was western Kosova, an area that the KLA intended to bring under control. From July 17, the town of Rahovec was placed under a complete military encirclement by the Serbian forces. People were killed and massacred everywhere in the town. In Sheh Myhedin's Teka, women, children and elderly people who had taken refuge were massacred. In the center of the town, the bodies of massacred Albanians were hung on electricity poles. Fatima Bugari was slaughtered in her eighth month of pregnancy. In the place "Tumba", professors Haxhi Sharku and Ali Percaj were massacred. The result of this military action was 94 killed and massacred Albanians. The number of injured, arrested and missing was

⁷¹² *Koha Ditore*, 7 korrik, 1998, 2-3.

⁷¹³ Gllareva, *Diplomacia amerikane*, 131.

⁷¹⁴ Malnar, *SHBA-ja*, 167.

⁷¹⁵ Adam Brow, "Serbs Ignore call for truce attack town", *The Washington Post*, July 12, 1998.

⁷¹⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 12 korrik, 1998, 2.

⁷¹⁷ About the murders, the names of the victims, read: KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator* (Prishtinë, 1998), 131-144; *Koha Ditore*, 16 korrik, 1998, 2; *Kosova Daily Report* #1489, 98-07-13.

measured in the hundreds.⁷¹⁸ To cover up the crime, Serbian forces isolated the town. An International Red Cross team was not allowed into Rahovec to confirm reports of killings and torture of civilians.⁷¹⁹ An hour before the final entry of foreign journalists to the scene, a large number of tractors picked up the corpses and drove them in an unknown direction.⁷²⁰ American journalist Mike O'Connor reported about 12,000 Albanians expelled from their homes in those days⁷²¹. The expelled said that the Serbian forces wanted to expel the ethnic Albanians from the area in order to control it more easily. They told how they saw their Serb neighbors joining the army, and paramilitary forces attacking, looting and burning their homes.⁷²²

After Rahovec, an equally fierce attack followed in the direction of Llapushnik and Carralevë.⁷²³ In the morning hours of July 25, 1998, large military-police forces stationed in Ferronikël near Drenas, joined by forces stationed in Vrellë near the airport, headed towards the Llapushnik gorge, that is, the main road Prishtina-Pejë. On the same day, Kosova Information Center (QIK) sources confirmed that Serbian forces attacked the villages of Gryka e Carralevës: Belincë, Zborc, Carralevë and Reçak in the morning. These villages were territorially connected to the Llapushnik gorge, as well as to the villages of Malishevë municipality, bombing and burning civilian targets.⁷²⁴ From this offensive, Serbian police-military and paramilitary forces killed in just one week⁷²⁵, wounded, kidnapped, forced more than 70,000 men, women, children to leave their homes and wander in the mountains, without a roof over their heads, without food and the necessary means of living. The objective of this offensive was: 1). the displacement of a large number of Albanians

⁷¹⁸ About the murders, the names of the victims, the confessions of the survivors, read: KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator* (Prishtinë, 1998), 131-156; *Koha Ditore*, 23 korrik, 1998, 2; *Zëri i Javor*, 1 gusht 1998, 10-12; Qendra për Informim e Kosovës (QIK). Kosova Daily Report #1497, 98-07-21.

⁷¹⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 22 korrik, 1998, 2.

⁷²⁰ Jeffrey Smith, "Police Abuse is Reported in Kosovo", *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1998.

⁷²¹ While Albanian sources spoke of around 25,000 people, mostly women and children, who found refuge in the nearby town of Malishevë. The influx was so great that a large number were forced to spend the night in a school, only to be accommodated the next day with families from Malishevë. *Koha Ditore*, 20 korrik, 1998, 2.

⁷²² Mike O'Connor, "12,000 Flee Serb Attack On a Town In Kosovo", *The New York Times*, July 22, 1998.

⁷²³ Pettifer, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, 176.

⁷²⁴ *Koha Ditore*, 26 korrik, 1998, 3; Kosova Daily Report #1501, 98-07-25.

⁷²⁵ In the municipality of Rahovec alone, from July 19 to 21, 1998, the KMDLNJ identified 43 murdered Albanians of various ages, among whom was a pregnant woman. For the names of those killed, read *Koha Ditore*, 26 July 1998, 3.

and the impossibility of their return, i.e., ethnic cleansing,⁷²⁶ and 2) the interruption of the communication line supplying Dukagjin and Drenica, two KLA supply points (oases).⁷²⁷

Throughout the fighting, which began on July 10, 1998, Serbian police kept journalists and international observers away from the war-torn areas. Moreover, Milošević told European Union envoys meeting in Belgrade on July 30, 1998, that Serbia's offensive against ethnic Albanian separatists was over.⁷²⁸ When diplomats tried to explain the unacceptable situation in Kosova to him, the Serbian leader cut them off, arguing that they were talking nonsense. As Briton Emyr Jones Parry recalls, the observers told the Yugoslav president: "Mr. President, either your people have not told you about the things we have seen, or you have decided not to know about them." Leaving the meeting, the British diplomat warned the Serbian leader: "If you continue like this, the British government will take military action against you within six months."⁷²⁹

It seems that the Serbian attack on the villages of Gryka e Carralevës was, consciously or unconsciously, fueled by the international community's view that the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia must be preserved. As former senior US official Caspar W. Weinberger writes: "We made it clear to Serbia that we would not take effective measures to prevent further violence."⁷³⁰

The American newspaper *The New York Times* quoted an unnamed Western official, involved in the formulation of policy on the Kosova issue, who stated that the KLA has been given a burden that it cannot fulfill and that its influence should be curbed before negotiations take place.⁷³¹ The goal of this deliberation was the desire for the leaders of the KLA to agree to sign an agreement that would give Kosova a certain degree of autonomy, but not the independence, for which the KLA was formed, and which the majority of the population demanded.⁷³² It was easy to see the tendency of the Contact Group to find ways to curb the ambitions of the Kosova Liberation Army,

⁷²⁶ For information on the murders, the names of the victims, and the burned houses, read: KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator* (Prishtinë, 1998), 165-177.

⁷²⁷ Analizë e KACI-t, "Lufta e hapur e Milosheviqit në Kosovë – shuplakë e bashkësisë ndërkombëtare", *Koha Ditore*, 27 korrik, 1998, 9.

⁷²⁸ *The New York Times*, July 31, 1998.

⁷²⁹ Judah, *Kosova*, 211-2.

⁷³⁰ Caspar W. Weinberger, "Ndoshta për perëndimin të gjithë shqiptarët duhet t'i braktisin shtëpitë – që të mos bëhen provokativ", *Koha Ditore*, 30 korrik, 1998, 6.

⁷³¹ *The New York Times*, July 29, 1998.

⁷³² Jeffrey Smith, "Lufta dhe vdekja në Kosovë: Konfuzion rreth përgjigjejes ndaj saj", *Koha Ditore*, 6 gusht, 1998, 9.

which has been described as the fastest growing guerrilla army in the world.⁷³³ Indeed, Milošević managed to manipulate the West, writes Morton Abramowitz, “so skillfully that many believe we have joined him in trying to eliminate the KLA.”⁷³⁴

The Western approach was also wrong when, as a result of the last decision of the Contact Group held on July 8, 1998 in Bonn, Germany, initiatives to block the financing and arming of the KLA were intensified. In those days, the Swiss police froze the accounts of the fund "Vendlindja Thërret" ("Homeland is calling", [TN].) on the assumption that the fund's money was going to supply weapons to the KLA. A similar action, for the same reasons, was undertaken by the German government.⁷³⁵ This information was also confirmed by KLA spokesman Bardhyl Mahmuti. "We have been officially informed by the Swiss authorities that they have temporarily blocked the funds of the fund..." In an interview, Mahmuti expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the international community in connection with the war in Kosova.

In early June 1998, the Contact Group agreed with NATO's position that if Serbia did not cease its actions, it would undertake air strikes.⁷³⁶

7.3 Attempts to resume dialogue

While fierce fighting was ongoing in Drenica, Dukagjin and other towns in Kosova, the major powers suddenly changed their stance. At a meeting in Bonn on 8 July 1998, the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group⁷³⁷, including the ministers of Japan and Canada, announced that they would present a plan for a solution for Kosova to both sides. The Contact Group then specifically emphasized that armed groups of Kosova Albanians also have a responsibility to avoid violence and all armed activities. The six major powers: the USA, Russia, England, France, Germany and Italy, at the Bonn meeting also indicated that they would ask the UN Security

⁷³³ William Drozdiak, "Rise of Kosovo guerrillas puts NATO Powers in a Bind", *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1998.

⁷³⁴ Morton I. Abramowitz, "Milosheviq, ka bërë SHBA-në ta lusë atë të arrijë paqe dhe t'ua hedh një asht shqiptarëve", *Koha Ditore*, 3 shtator, 1998, 6.

⁷³⁵ Paul Taylor, "Ofensiva serbe – me dritën e gjelbër të bashkësisë ndërkombëtare", *Koha Ditore*, 28 korrik, 1998, 6.

⁷³⁶ "Intervistë me Bardhyl Mahmutin, zëdhënës i UÇK-së për perëndim", *Koha Ditore*, 28 korrik, 1998, 3.

⁷³⁷ The meeting was convened to assess the general situation in Kosova and the implementation of the commitments made by President Milošević in Moscow on June 16, 1998. Contact Group Statement on Kosovo Statement issued by the Contact Group, Bonn, Germany, July 8, 1998.

Council for a resolution in which both sides would be called upon to stop the fighting.⁷³⁸ The details of the future talks were kept secret. As one unnamed diplomat said at the time: "If we made the details public, the Serbs or ethnic Albanians would reject them before we even started." However, the parameters were clear. International representatives continued to rule out the full independence demanded by the Kosova Albanians. But they insisted that the Yugoslav president should grant Kosova broad autonomy.⁷³⁹ "We must act together urgently to end the spiral of violence in Kosova," said German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel after the Bonn meeting. But the Contact Group for the first time supported the position on the participation of the KLA in peace negotiations. As Gelbard would later state: "Whether we like it or not, the Kosova Liberation Army is now a factor on the ground and controls 30% or more of Kosova's territory," meaning "this must be taken into account directly or indirectly."⁷⁴⁰ But international officials insisted that any initiative to bring the KLA to the negotiating table would not set aside the status of elected leader Ibrahim Rugova as the "best placed" to speak for Kosova Albanians. All this diplomatic discourse was aimed at bringing the KLA under the umbrella of negotiations, so that Kosova would be represented with a full political group. The KLA continued to openly reject these efforts, arguing that it would not negotiate with anyone about Kosova's right to independence. As one KLA commander put it: "... we have demanded Kosova's independence and we insist on that right. We will earn it with blood, sweat or whatever it takes. We will win it with or without anyone's help. As a liberation army, we are initially based on our own forces and everything that comes from our friends is welcome."⁷⁴¹

Western powers, which support broad autonomy, viewed Albania's insistence on independence with pessimism. Germany and France, two members of the Contact Group for the former Yugoslavia, have proposed holding peace talks similar to those in Dayton, Ohio, which ended the war in Bosnia in 1995. But in Bosnia, peace negotiations took place only after the NATO airstrikes. In such a situation, the Kosova Albanians had very little chance of victory in the Dayton

⁷³⁸ Statement of the Contact Group, Bonn 8 July 1998.

⁷³⁹ Rupert Cornwell, "Big powers draw up Kosovo peace plan", *Independent*, July, 9 1998.

⁷⁴⁰ Craig R. Whitney, "Frustrated by Kosovo Stalemate, the West Criticizes All Sides", *The New York Times*, July 9, 1998; Andrew Gray, "Fuqitë e Mëdha bien dakord rreth planit për paqe në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 11 korrik, 1998, 7.

⁷⁴¹ "U.S. Envoy Urges Albanians to Back Moderate" *The New York Times*, July, 6 1998; *Koha Ditore*, 19 korrik, 1998, 4.

format.⁷⁴² "When you see these proposals - the flood of proposals on Kosova, one is truly astonished," wrote Fehmi Agani, a member of the Albanian negotiating delegation after the Bonn meetings. "Do they really think that Albanians have made all these sacrifices, denied and deny every act of accepting this state's claims that Kosova should be part of it, and in the end they are taking up arms to accept the semi-autonomous projects of Serbian hegemony?"⁷⁴³ Despite the dissatisfaction that Albanians had with the international community's proposals regarding the status of Kosova, taking into account the involvement of NATO and the US, it was more than clear that Kosova would not be the party that would cause the negotiations to fail.⁷⁴⁴ The basic demand of the international community, with particular influence from the USA, was the continuation of continuous dialogue between Kosova Albanians and official Belgrade.⁷⁴⁵ To this end, the US Ambassador in Skopje, Chris Hill, who had just been accredited by the Contact Group as the international community's mediator, intensified his efforts in the last days of July in the familiar model of "shuttle diplomacy" or "flying diplomacy". On 23 July 1998, Hill met with the Yugoslav president in Belgrade, returning the next day to Prishtina to meet with Ibrahim Rugova. As expected at these meetings, the topic of discussion was the future status of Kosova.⁷⁴⁶ Such meetings intensified in the following days, with the main American dilemma being how to find a way to include the KLA in these talks. Hill, accompanied by Philip T. Reeker and Tina Kaidanow, began trying to locate places in the mountains where the KLA base was located in late July.⁷⁴⁷ On July 28, 1998, Ambassador Hill, accompanied by Mehmet Hajrizi, Hydajet Hyseni, Veton Surroi and Blerim Shala, had a meeting in the village of Likovc attended by Rexhep Selimi, Sylejman Selimi and Bislim Zyrapi, members of the General Staff. Hill stated after the meeting: "We requested a meeting with KLA representatives to invite them and get their opinion on the initiative to form a joint body in which all Albanians would be represented." Part of these discussions was the possibility of forming a provisional government in which the involvement of the KLA would be necessary, and which could be led by Mehmet Hajrizi, a former political prisoner and open supporter of the liberation war. KLA representatives showed understanding for the initiative, but

⁷⁴² Justin Brown, "Kosovo War Still Outpaces Bid for Peace Talks", *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 31, 1998.

⁷⁴³ Agani, *Pavarsia*, 349.

⁷⁴⁴ Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar*, 161.

⁷⁴⁵ Malnar, *SHBA-ja*, 168.

⁷⁴⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 24 korrik, 1998, 4.

⁷⁴⁷ Hill, *Pararojë*, 167.

additional consultations with the General Staff were necessary for a more tentative answer.⁷⁴⁸ Both Ibrahim Rugova and the KLA fought for the independence of Kosova in different forms. But Rugova, a pacifist elected overwhelmingly by ethnic Albanians in the 1992 elections, was "more willing to agree to broad autonomy" - a position favored by the international community.⁷⁴⁹ However, while it was said that an official KLA response was awaited, Jakup Krasniqi, former KLA spokesman, stated: "In principle, we were in favor of negotiations, but we insisted on our preconditions: the removal of all roadblocks, the withdrawal of all Serbian military and police forces from Kosova; the release of political prisoners; the involvement of the US; and the talks to be held in a neutral location."⁷⁵⁰

As for their participation in the government and negotiations, US Ambassador Hill, under pressure from the US State Department, asked Rugova to form another group for negotiations. The *Reuters* news agency, referring to its diplomatic sources, wrote: "the seriousness of the crisis forced the international community and Rugova to form a negotiating team even without KLA representatives."⁷⁵¹ This initiative was supported by the representative of the EU and the Contact Group, the Austrian ambassador in Belgrade, Wolfgang Petritsch.⁷⁵² Faced with this pressure, on August 13, 1998, in front of international diplomats, Rugova presented a new group consisting of: Fehmi Agani, Fatmir Sejdiu, Edita Tahiri, Ilaz Kurteshi and Tadej Rodiqi. On the same day, the KLA informed the domestic and international public about its political steps with a press release, in which, among other things, it was stated: "New circumstances require the creation of institutions in which the broad political spectrum of Kosova will be included and decently represented." In order to stop manipulations related to the formation of the new Kosova negotiating group, the General Staff announced that Jakup Krasniqi, Xhavit Haliti, Bardhyl Mahmuti, Hashim Thaçi, Faton Mehmetaj and Sokol Bashota are political representatives of the Kosova Liberation Army. In this statement, General Staff, in order to accelerate the process of establishing the "institutions" of Kosova, gave full confidence to Adem Demaçi to take a role in this process as a political

⁷⁴⁸ Shalla, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 122; *Bujku*, 30 korrik 1998, 3; Fehmi Baftiu, *Kosova krizë ndërkombëtare – Ditari politik e diplomatik dhe analiza*, (Prishtinë: Çlirimi, 2004), 91; Nuhi Bytyqi, *Libri i Luftës*, (Prishtinë: Armagedoni, 2019), 305.

⁷⁴⁹ Justin Brown, "Kosovo Rebels May Revert to Tactic That Won Early Gains", *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 14, 1998.

⁷⁵⁰ Krasniqi, *Kthesa e Madhe*, 99-100.

⁷⁵¹ *Koha Ditore*, 13 gushtë, 1998, 4; Rugova names negotiating team, RFE/RL, Newline - August 14, 1998.

⁷⁵² Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 112.

representative of the KLA.⁷⁵³ There was a great deal of pressure on the Albanians to initiate a process that they were convinced would not succeed. As Alush Gashi, Rugova's associate, stated, diplomatic representatives are threatening us, saying: "If you don't do this, you will be alone, the West will leave... Ambassador Hill blames us for not being united. But we cannot unite for anything less than independence, without that the war will continue."⁷⁵⁴

It seemed that this compromise of the international community, in relation to Milošević, was doomed to fail, because any negotiating group that included the KLA at that time could have been rejected by Belgrade, which made it clear that it would not negotiate with "terrorists".⁷⁵⁵

Meanwhile, violence in Kosova continued. The number of people killed since July 20, 1998 (after the massacre in Rahovec, [AN]) has increased to 15 people killed in a day.⁷⁵⁶ It seemed utopian that in such circumstances a dialogue that could bring peace could be conducted. Nevertheless, the American diplomat expressed optimism, favoring negotiations as an opportunity to end the Albanian-Serbian conflict. "Without negotiations," Hill emphasized, "the people of Kosova will continue to suffer. Through negotiations, we can end the conflict and allow people to restart their lives and build a new future."⁷⁵⁷

In August 1998, international negotiating teams increased pressure on the Albanians to accept some form of negotiated self-government for Kosova within Yugoslavia. This was a proposal that the Albanians rejected.⁷⁵⁸

7.4 On the brink of humanitarian disaster

While the international community insisted on the start of negotiations, the Belgrade regime continued its attacks on Kosova. The areas of bombing were increasing every day. The all-out offensive by Serbian army and police forces against Albanian fighters that began in mid-July 1998 showed no signs of abating, despite statements by Serbian leader Milošević that it had ended.

⁷⁵³ *Koha Ditore*, 14 gushtë, 1998, 2-3; But UÇK Rejects it, RFE/RL, Newline - August 14, 1998.

⁷⁵⁴ Mike O'Connor, "Kosovo Separatist Chief Picks Delegation Without Rebels", *The New York Times*, August 14, 1998

⁷⁵⁵ Mark Heinrich, "Pa UÇK-në procesi paqësore Kosovar në këmbë xhami", *Koha Ditore*, 15 gusht, 1998, 6; Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 161.

⁷⁵⁶ Agani, *Pavarësia*, 358.

⁷⁵⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 14 gusht, 1998, 3.

⁷⁵⁸ Steven Erlanger, "NATO Approval Renews Threat of Force in Kosovo", *The New York Times*, August 4, 1998; Justin Brown, "Kosovo Rebellion Shows Signs of More Pacifist Tilt", *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 20, 1998.

Field reports showed that the offensive had not stopped even in the first week of August. Thousands of Albanians were forced to flee to the surrounding mountains for survival.⁷⁵⁹ Peter Beaumont, a journalist for the British daily newspaper *The Guardian*, reported on the confessions of refugees in the mountains of Kosova. "The police came with soldiers and a large number of tanks. They shelled everything. 50 people were injured. Then they burned our grain," some Albanian citizens said. Outraged by the silence of the international community, they asked the journalist: "Where are the European leaders? Where is the world? Tell them that Serbian forces are killing women and children in these mountains." The massive campaign of ethnic cleansing of Albanians continued, and Milošević had to see how far he could go before international intervention.⁷⁶⁰ A coalition of humanitarian organizations and human rights groups, concerned about the situation in Kosova, sent a letter/appeal to US President Bill Clinton on August 6, 1998, in which, among other things, it is said: "We, humanitarian and human rights organizations, urgently appeal regarding the humanitarian crisis that is escalating in Kosova. The situation is dire and has worsened rapidly in the last few days. In direct violation of Protocol II, Article 13, of the Geneva Convention, unarmed civilians are being systematically killed in a campaign of attacks and atrocities, as happened just three years ago in Bosnia." The appeal highlighted the fact that humanitarian organizations encounter difficulties in the field and that due to blockades, shelling and abuse, they could not reach many people who needed help. "With your leadership, the international community can and must ensure that the civilian victims of Kosova find protection within Kosova and that they are provided with access to food, shelter and basic medical care."⁷⁶¹ UNHCR reported that more than 15,000 houses had become uninhabitable, making it impossible for residents to return even if an agreement had been reached.⁷⁶² International reports confirmed the involvement of most of Kosova's municipalities in the war: Deçan, Gjakovë, Drenas, Istog, Klinë, Lipjan, Rahovec, Malishevë, Pejë, Skenderaj, Mitrovicë, Shtime, Prizren and Suharekë. The population of other areas, although not directly involved in the war, was increasingly affected by the conflict. Many of them had great problems with the supply of basic

⁷⁵⁹ Tom Walker, "Serbian forces put torch to Kosovo villages", *The Times*, August 3, 1998, 12; Guy Dinmore, "Thousands Flee as Serbs Shell Rebel-Held Villages in Kosovo," *The Washington Post*, August 25, 1998.

⁷⁶⁰ Peter Beaumont, "Erdhëm me vetëm ato që patëm në trup", *Koha Ditore*, 4 gusht, 1998, 8; Peter Beaumont, "Spastrimi" i Kosovës përshpejtohet", *Koha Ditore*, 5 gusht, 1998, 7.

⁷⁶¹ *Koha Ditore*, 8 gusht, 1998, 6.

⁷⁶² "UNHCR says Serb's block aid convoy in Kosovo", News and Press Release - *Reuters*, August 28, 1998.

necessities, including food and medical supplies.⁷⁶³ This alarming situation was confirmed by Mick Lorentzen, the United Nations World Food Programme Emergency Coordinator for Kosova, who accompanied the humanitarian aid convoy in Kosova, in a statement by the organization on 3 August 1998. “Based on what we saw, more than 70,000 people fled to the mountains to escape the new offensive in the Malishevë region alone. People were fleeing on tractors, on foot, seeking shelter wherever they could find it... they were fleeing with everything they could carry on their backs.” As a major concern, Lorentzen highlighted: “Every village we passed through was destroyed and abandoned... those who managed to keep food for four or five days were lucky. Many of them had nothing. What we saw was a real nightmare, and it will be even worse when winter comes, because these people have lost everything: their homes, their crops, their livelihoods.”⁷⁶⁴ Ethnic cleansing was a method familiar to international observers who had followed similar crimes during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. History repeated itself in Kosova. When a foreign journalist once asked: “Why is the house burning?” – “Because it’s made of wood” – a Serbian policeman replied after a pause. To the next question: “How did it start burning?” – “I don’t know... maybe they were smoking”, the policeman replied with a smile.⁷⁶⁵ The United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, said the situation had worsened, describing it as a “humanitarian disaster”.⁷⁶⁶ In a press statement on 11 August 1998, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed concern that the Kosova crisis, if left unchecked, could lead to a major humanitarian disaster as winter approaches. He expressed concern about the large number of displaced people who were left without food and shelter.⁷⁶⁷ A “scorched earth” policy was implemented.⁷⁶⁸ Although official Belgrade stated that their only target was the KLA, the main victims in Kosova were Albanian civilians.⁷⁶⁹ As the summer drew to a close, fears of a humanitarian catastrophe began to materialize. International organizations have expressed concern

⁷⁶³ Tadeusz Iwiński Ali Dinçer, “Situation of the Kosovo refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons”, Doc. 8205, September 22, 1998.

⁷⁶⁴ World Food Programme, News and Press Release: WFP reports up to 70,000 people have fled into the mountains to escape a new offensive in Kosovo, August 3, 1998.

⁷⁶⁵ Jeffrey Smith, “Freshly Dug Mass Graves Found in Kosovo”, *The Washington Post*, August 5, 1998.

⁷⁶⁶ “Europe US talks up Kosovo intervention”, *BBC*, August 7, 1998.

⁷⁶⁷ Press Release, SG/SM/6673, August 11, 1998.

⁷⁶⁸ Justin Brown, “Kosovo Rebels May Revert to Tactic That Won Early Gains”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 14, 1998.

⁷⁶⁹ Public statement by the ICRC on the situation in Kosovo, IRRIC No. 325 December 1998; Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 112; Guy Dinmore, “Thousands Flee as Serbs Shell Rebel-Held Villages in Kosovo”, *The Washington Post*, August 25, 1998.

that they are unable to help all displaced civilians. The main concern remained that if a solution was not reached very soon, there would be deaths from disease and injury.⁷⁷⁰ The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) expressed its belief that the situation in Kosova had reached a critical stage, in terms of humanitarian implications for the civilian population. They were subjected to violence, including threats to life, destruction of homes, separation from families and abductions. Thousands had no shelter or protection.⁷⁷¹

Such was the case of the tragedy of the eleven-member Asllani family fleeing Ranca e Shtimes. The event occurred on August 26, 1998, between 1:00 PM and 2:00 PM, when a Serbian shell hit a tractor trailer carrying: Jalldyze (65), Halide (37) and Ajshje Asllani (27), and their children Burim (11), Lumni (11), Ejup (9), Luljeta (7), Shpend (5), Xhafer (3), Antigona (1) and Albiona (6 months).⁷⁷²

Julia Taft, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Refugees, visited some of the war zones during her visit to Kosova on 27 August 1998, and upon her return to Prishtina, she held a press conference: "I have just returned from a six-hour trip to Junik, Deçan, and on the way I visited a number of abandoned villages, I was able to see first-hand the extent of the destruction that has occurred..., it would be an understatement to say that I am just concerned, I am horrified by the destruction and the need for humanitarian assistance". Taft added that she would ask President Bill Clinton for additional financial assistance for Kosova. Finally, the Assistant Secretary of State expressed open concern "that if concrete action is not taken to stop the fighting, we could face a humanitarian catastrophe".⁷⁷³ On the same day, Serbian military police forces turned back a UN convoy carrying humanitarian aid to thousands of families left without food in the Gjakovë municipality. UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesman Kris Janowski said it was the first time since the start of hostilities in Kosova in February 1998 that a UNHCR humanitarian convoy had been turned back without any explanation.⁷⁷⁴ The police explained this prohibition measure by the fact that there is an order to stop all traffic on the roads leading to the airport. But it is true, as reported by humanitarian workers and international diplomatic representatives, who relied on

⁷⁷⁰ Mike O'Connor, "Refugees in Kosovo Are in Peril", *The New York Times*, August 17, 1998.

⁷⁷¹ Public statement by the ICRC on the situation in Kosovo, IRRC No. 325 December 1998.

⁷⁷² KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator (Prishtinë, 1998), 221.

⁷⁷³ *Koha Ditore*, 28 gusht, 1998, 3; More U.S. Aid for Kosova, /RL, Newline - August 28, 1998.

⁷⁷⁴ "UNHCR says Serb's block aid convoy in Kosovo", News and Press Release - *Reuters*, August 28, 1998.

intelligence services, that they saw numerous trucks of Serbian forces transporting anti-aircraft weapons.⁷⁷⁵ Stopping humanitarian aid was in itself a challenge for the international community. John Fox, a former senior State Department official, said, "At least we fed the victims in Bosnia," although it was not healthy that policy was better than this. We have never had 300,000 people roaming the forests".⁷⁷⁶

According to the assessments of the UN High Commission for Refugees, the situation in Kosova was alarming. The report states that around 298,000 people have been displaced from their homes. While 200,000 of them were wandering in the mountains of Kosova, 98,000 had already left Kosova. 42,000 fled to Montenegro, 20,500 to Albania, 20,000 to Serbia, 8,600 to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3,000 to Macedonia, and about 2,000 refugees to Slovenia and Turkey.⁷⁷⁷ KMDLNJ reported on daily fighting in most of Kosova. The number of killings, injuries, kidnappings, tortures grew by the hour. Villages were looted, then completely burned. The main challenge remained the question of what would happen to the over 50,000 citizens who were living homeless in the mountains, and who were being joined by hundreds and thousands of others every day.⁷⁷⁸ Two high-ranking American officials, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights John Shattuck and Senator Bob Dole, reported on such a situation during their visit to Kosova, Belgrade and Podgorica. In a press statement, they stated: "We are deeply concerned about the plight of refugees because every day brings us closer to a humanitarian disaster." What is happening is a war against civilians for political purposes".⁷⁷⁹ With this attitude, American officials met with the Serbian leader Milošević, where they expressed their concern about the situation, which they called a "humanitarian disaster", while he, as could be expected from Milošević, "convinced" the American diplomats that this was not reality. In disbelief after the meeting, Senator Dole said that "nothing encouraging" came out of the meeting. They strongly expressed this concern in Washington after their return: "The time is not promising, and if international action is not taken now, the tragedy that has begun will have the proportions of a catastrophe... therefore, if we do not

⁷⁷⁵ "Kosovo Police Block U.N. Relief Convoy", *The New York Times*, August 28, 1998.

⁷⁷⁶ Fred Hiatt, "While we Watch", *The Washington Post*, August 30, 1998.

⁷⁷⁷ UN Inter-Agency Update on Kosovo Situation Report 69, October 28, 1998.

⁷⁷⁸ About killings, names of victims, confessions of survivors read: KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator (Prishtinë, 1998), 237-290.

⁷⁷⁹ *Bujku*, 7 shtator, 1998; *Koha Ditore*, 9 shtator, 1998.

act immediately, then we will be complicit in Milošević's genocidal campaign."⁷⁸⁰ This was proven the day after the meeting. Serbian military forces continued the offensive with even greater intensity, from which it was reported that at least 19 Albanians were killed near the Albanian border.⁷⁸¹

8. BREACH OF THE AGREEMENT

8.1. Diplomacy threatens Yugoslavia with military attack

President of the Council of the Parliamentary Assembly of Europe Leni Fischer via an author's text in *The New Times*, on August 12, 1998, asked where Europe's conscience was when it looked at two million Albanians in Kosova who were on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe? "Isn't it funny to us that we met and tried to negotiate with the president of Yugoslavia in the name of Europe and European values? We know very well the Yugoslav/Serbian way of warfare: wanton and senseless destruction, with the expulsion of the civilian population. We saw it in Bosnia and Croatia."⁷⁸² US Senator Bob Dole also raised critical questions with the US government. He recalled the failure to implement the "Christmas Warning of 1992", while Kosova was embroiled in a fierce war. Despite the promise, NATO's plans remain a dead letter on paper as Serbian forces burn villages and towns in Kosova and drive tens of thousands of Albanians from their homes.⁷⁸³ "In Bosnia, it took us two years and the horror of the Srebrenica massacre before the partners agreed to at least limited use of air power. In Kosova, again, the partners are not prepared to use force. All these events are astonishing because two months earlier, 16 NATO member states had said: "We will not repeat the mistakes of Bosnia," and then they continued to make that mistake. Because the first lesson from Bosnia was: don't say you will intervene if you don't really mean it."⁷⁸⁴ Thus, criticism of the passive observer policy of international diplomatic missions became more and more numerous, although it was still believed that a diplomatic solution could be found with President Milošević. On the other hand, Milošević knew that certain European leaders⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, September 8, 1998; *Kosova Sot*, 12 shtator, 1998, 3; *Bujku*, 19 shtator, 1998, 4.

⁷⁸¹ "Serbs Reportedly Start Offensive Against Rebels", *The New York Times*, September 9, 1998.

⁷⁸² Leni Fischer "Serbian Rule in Kosovo: Conduct Beyond the Pale", *The New York Times*, August, 12, 1998

⁷⁸³ Bob Dole, "Ka ardhur koha që SHBA-ja të bëhet më e ashpër me Milosheviqin", *Koha Ditore*, 13 gusht, 1998, 7.

⁷⁸⁴ Paul Taylor, "Perëndimi i shmanget termit – sintagmës "spastrim etnik" për të cilësuar gjendjen në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 7 gusht, 1998, 7; Paul Taylor, "Perëndimi përsërit grindjet nga Bosnja në Kosovë", *Koha Ditore*, 8 shtator, 1998, 6.

⁷⁸⁵ Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Greece, England.

insist on a Security Council resolution that Russia, as it promised, will reject.⁷⁸⁶ The strategy that Milošević followed in Kosova was based on two goals: on the one hand, he sought military success on the battlefield and the destruction of opposing forces. On the other hand, he developed diplomacy that tried to neutralize the intentions of Western countries to intervene. He had been engaged in this method since May 1998. When he had the necessary secret information and when the opportunity presented itself, he became militarily active. When Western pressure and the possibility of intervention increased, he accepted dialogue.⁷⁸⁷ In all this diplomatic chaos, something positive was happening, public pressure to do something was growing. Newspaper headlines, with massacres and waves of refugees, began to attract the attention of the public, who began to rebel against images that evoked memories of long columns of refugees in World War II.⁷⁸⁸ In addition to the daily human casualties, this perception has been contributed to by the empty language of the international community over the last six months, which has seriously undermined the credibility of the West, and especially NATO.⁷⁸⁹ The fact that NATO would celebrate its 50th anniversary in a few months has become a challenge. Namely, the question has arisen of how one can stand aside and allow tens of thousands of civilians to die in a war in the middle of Europe.⁷⁹⁰ Critics have rightly insisted that “the international community cannot wait indefinitely for a ceasefire or a political solution to the war in Kosova before taking the necessary actions to stop this humanitarian disaster. The life of unarmed and helpless people was becoming dangerous in Kosova, just like in Bosnia”, the world media wrote.⁷⁹¹ It was clear that Milošević believed that NATO could only respond on the basis of a UN resolution, which Russia had promised to block. However, some diplomatic messages were different: “We must make it clear that while we want to get UN approval, we can operate without such approval,” President Clinton told British Prime Minister Tony Blair in a telephone conversation.⁷⁹² “If we hadn't acted, the crisis would have deepened, many people would have died, we would have looked weak, the pressure on us would

⁷⁸⁶ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 451-453.

⁷⁸⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 26 gusht, 1998, 7.

⁷⁸⁸ Mark Heinrich, “Mos është intervenimi në Kosovë më shumë lehje se kafshim?”, *Koha Ditore*, 8 gusht, 1998, 9; Baudouin, *Lindja e një demokracie*, 127-128.

⁷⁸⁹ Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 140.

⁷⁹⁰ Sullivan, *Mos kij frikë se i ke djemtë në Amerikë*, 253.

⁷⁹¹ Western Press Review: West Called On To Aid Kosovo; Dangers Of The Taliban, RFE/RL, August 12, 1998.

⁷⁹² Documents: E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d) Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, *The White House* Washington, August 6, 1998.

have increased, and in the end, force would have been used in even more difficult and tragic circumstances. Our intention was clear - for NATO to force Milošević to stop the offensive in Kosova", Albright told her colleagues in the administration.⁷⁹³ In early August 1998, the British government concluded that any solution to the Kosova crisis would have to include the possible use of military force.

In an interview with the *BBC*, British Foreign Minister Robin Cook sharply criticized the Serbian authorities for the new actions of the Serbian forces against the Albanian civilian population.⁷⁹⁴ He also announced that plans for a possible NATO military intervention are ready.⁷⁹⁵ In the midst of discussions about a possible intervention against Yugoslavia with or without UN Security Council approval, US Secretary of Defense William Cohen warned on 11 and 12 June 1998, before a meeting of the NATO Permanent Council: "For us, a UN mandate is desirable, but not necessary. The Alliance partners can use the collective defense clause, based on international law."⁷⁹⁶ A similar position is found in the German Minister of Defense Volker Rühe, who, during an interview with the German television *ZDF* on August 11, 1998, announced that NATO could intervene in Kosova without a UN mandate: "We cannot sit on the sidelines and watch as extreme military offensives and massacres of the civilian population are carried out." Rühe also warned: "If we want to start the process of dialogue, then we must stop the war, and this can be done "if Milošević is stopped militarily."⁷⁹⁷ The following day, 12 August 1998, NATO confirmed in a press statement that: "The Alliance fully supports the efforts of the international community to encourage negotiations aimed at resolving the conflict. To this end, the Council today reviewed military planning with a full range of options to end the violence and create the conditions for negotiations. This includes the use of ground and air forces, and in particular the use of air forces alone. NATO is ensuring that it can act quickly and effectively if called upon."⁷⁹⁸ The main challenge until then was that NATO's discussions on Kosova had been almost entirely political, with the lack of political consensus having been known for months. Now a fundamental difference was apparent

⁷⁹³ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 451-452.

⁷⁹⁴ Military police operations conducted in the summer of 1998. See more in Chapter 7.

⁷⁹⁵ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 54; *Koha Ditore*, 11 gusht, 1998, 3.

⁷⁹⁶ Craig R. Whitney, "NATO Ministers Request Contingency Plans for Intervention in Kosovo ", *The New York Times*, June 12, 1998; Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 175.

⁷⁹⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 12 gusht, 1998, 3.

⁷⁹⁸ NATO, Press Release (98)93, August 12, 1998.

regarding the legal basis for military intervention in Kosova. Despite the hesitation of some European states, the main challenge remained Russia, which openly opposed any military intervention with its veto power. Efforts were made to change this strategy. This required action at the highest political level. Thus, US President Bill Clinton stated during a telephone conversation with Russian President Yeltsin on 14 August 1998: "I would like to speak briefly about Kosova. The violence continues and threatens a humanitarian catastrophe. It is clear that Milošević has not kept the promise he made to you and has already displaced over 200,000 civilians from their homes." Clinton warned President Yeltsin that "if Milošević believes he has the green light from Russia for a military solution, it will be much more difficult to get them to negotiate." "Many of us believe that if the situation continues to deteriorate, we will be forced to respond militarily with or without United Nations authorization."⁷⁹⁹

Primakov, in his book, *Russian Crossroads: Toward the New Millennium*, writes that by the end of August, Hill's efforts were moving towards a political solution.⁸⁰⁰ Despite the generally recognized facts that the Serbian forces committed crimes against the Albanian civilian population, the Russian diplomat overlooks the violence, murders, displacements, the risk of a humanitarian disaster, but as if they were happening on another planet. In this context, he accused the Anglo-Saxons of insisting on the adoption of a resolution on Kosova by referring to Chapter VII of The UN Charter, which in the event of a threat to international peace, foresees the escalation of sanctions, up to the use of force.⁸⁰¹ Despite the fact that Russia's ties with Serbia and its attitude towards Kosova were known, there was a serious effort among the Western allies to convince the Russian Federation to maintain a constructive rather than a blocking role. It is worth mentioning the efforts of the Western leaders Jacques Chirac, Helmut Kohl, who had phone conversations with Russian President Yeltsin, to convince the Russian leader not to block the process of military intervention in case the Serbian offensive against the Albanian civilian population is not stopped. After the conversation, Chirac stated that it will be difficult to avoid a military intervention ordered by the UN Security Council, if a cease-fire and new peace negotiations do not start soon. While

⁷⁹⁹ Documents nr. 14. Memorandum of telephone Conversation: Telephone Conversation with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, *National Security Archive*, Washington, August 14, 1998.

⁸⁰⁰ The Americans began their efforts to convince the parties to resolve the problem through negotiations on May 15, 1998. At that time, Russia's role was realized through the meeting between President Yeltsin and Milošević, as a form of Russian guarantee that the Serbian leader would negotiate with the Albanian side.

⁸⁰¹ Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, 184.

Kohl informed the Russian president that with the approach of winter, all measures must be taken to avoid a humanitarian disaster in Kosova. According to Franco-German sources, Moscow then gave signals that it could be constructive by not using the veto in the Security Council.⁸⁰² This message was manifested at the Moscow summit⁸⁰³ September 1-2, 1998, at which Kosova was one of the central topics between the American and Russian presidents. Despite their disagreements on the Kosova issue, the two leaders agreed that the Serbian authorities should put an end to repressive measures in Kosova. They also called on Belgrade to allow humanitarian agencies greater access to the province and to seek an “interim solution” to the status of Kosova. Clinton also highlighted the fact: “If it were not for NATO and the cooperation of Russia, we would not have ended the war in Bosnia.” Therefore, Clinton insisted that there should be the same cooperation in Kosova.⁸⁰⁴

The New York Times columns from the same period stated: “If American diplomacy cannot persuade all other NATO leaders to move forward, Washington must assemble a coalition of those willing to intervene. If necessary, America must act alone. Otherwise, tens of thousands of civilians could freeze or starve this winter.”⁸⁰⁵ Amidst all these events, positive developments were taking place in the Security Council. At the 53rd annual meeting in New York, on 22 September 1998, Kosova became one of the main topics of this annual event attended by leaders from all over the world. In his speech, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan mentioned the dire situation in Kosova, comparing it to the tragedy in Bosnia a few years ago. While British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced in his speech: “Our patience with broken promises and false assurances is running out”. He warned of the adoption of a new resolution proposed the next day by his country and France, which would be based on Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which would require

⁸⁰² *Koha Ditore*, 22 gusht, 4 shtator, 1998.

⁸⁰³ President Clinton visited Moscow on September 1 and 2 for a summit meeting. They agreed to share missile launch and early warning information and to remove 50 metric tons of plutonium from their countries' nuclear weapons stockpiles. The joint statement reaffirmed their obligations to promote the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; after Russia ratified START II, negotiations for the START III treaty would begin. Other joint statements related to the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons, promotion of trade and investment, promotion of technological cooperation and cooperation between non-governmental organizations. A memorandum of understanding related to civil aviation safety and accident investigation was signed. Both called for peace in Kosovo and condemned terrorism. Russia offered to host the 1999 G-8 conference on transnational crime. The State Department: Moscow (Clinton and Yeltsin) September 1-2, 1998; US-Russian Summits, 1992-2000.

⁸⁰⁴ “Text Of Clinton-Yeltsin News Conference”, CNN, September 1, 1998; Clinton, Yeltsin Appeal to Belgrade, RFE/RL, Newline - September 2, 1998.

⁸⁰⁵ Opinion: “Kosovo's Refugee Emergency”, The New York Times, September 20, 1998.

mandatory compliance with the resolution, raising the level of the use of military force, although it did not specifically threaten it.⁸⁰⁶ There was a kind of reflection of Western diplomacy, that it was time to act by all means to stop the Serbian regime in Kosova. Resolution 1199 (1998), adopted by the Security Council at its 3930th meeting, on 23 September 1998, reflected the new approach of the international community. With this Resolution, the Security Council reiterated the previously unclear demands in Resolution 1160 (March 1998) and the request of the Contact Group of 12 June and the joint statement of the Presidents of Russia and Yugoslavia of 16 June. The Council reminded Yugoslavia that: “The excessive use of military and force by the Serbian military and security forces has resulted in countless civilian casualties and the displacement of more than 230,000 people from their homes..., endangers Kosova, leading to a humanitarian catastrophe”. Emphasizing the very important element that “By worsening the situation in Kosova, the Republic of Yugoslavia is endangering the peace and security of the region”. As a result of these circumstances, the Council called for the immediate implementation of measures such as: (a) the cessation of all actions by security forces targeting the civilian population, the withdrawal of all forces used for repression against civilians; (b) effective and continuous international diplomatic supervision in Kosova; (c) full access for humanitarian organizations that could assist in the return of refugees to their homes; and (d) rapid progress with a clear timeframe for finding a political solution. The Council also called on the Albanians to condemn terrorist actions aimed at achieving political goals. And in the last paragraph it was stated: “If the demands contained in the Resolution are not met, other measures will be considered to restore peace in the region.”⁸⁰⁷ So, in short, the Resolution demanded from Slobodan Milošević, through a detailed list, what the Yugoslav state should do, but did not provide an answer on how to ensure implementation, especially in the event that the Serbian leader refused to cooperate.⁸⁰⁸ The US Secretary of Defense and his 15 NATO allies⁸⁰⁹ renewed the military threat during a two-day meeting on September 23

⁸⁰⁶ Steven Lee Myers, “U.S. and Allies Increase Pressure on Serbs”, *The New York Times*, September 22, 1998; *Bujku*, 23 shtator, 1998, 4; *Kosova Sot*, 23 shtator, 1998, 3.

⁸⁰⁷ UN - Resolution S/RES/1199, September 23, 1998.

⁸⁰⁸ Barbara Crossette, “Security Council Tells Serbs To Stop Kosovo Offensive” *The New York Times*, September 24, 1998; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 42.

⁸⁰⁹ Jean-Pol Poncelet (Minister of Defense of Belgium), Ambassador, David Wright (Permanent Representative of Canada), Hans Haekkerup (Minister of Defense, Denmark), Alain Richard (Minister of Defense, France), Frank De Grave (Minister of Defense of the Netherlands), Gunnar Simon (State Secretary of the Ministry of Defense, Germany), Apostolos Tsotatzopoulos (Minister of Defense, Greece), Ambassador Gunnar Palsson (Permanent Representative of Iceland), Beniamino Andreatta (Minister of Defense, Italy), Alex Bodry (Minister de la Force

and 24, 1998, in Vilamoura, Portugal, just one day after the adoption of the UN Resolution, thus moving one step closer to the use of force.⁸¹⁰ In the media statement given by Secretary Solana after the meetings, it was announced that the North Atlantic Council approved the so-called Activation Alert (ACTWARN), which means the start of preparations for a limited phase air campaign in Kosova. Solana reminded that "the use of force will require further decisions" by the North Atlantic Council. "But today's decision is an important political signal of NATO's readiness to use force if necessary." In other words, NATO ordered its allies to a certain degree of military preparation in case Milošević does not fulfill the demands of the UN-NATO international community.⁸¹¹ ACTWARN gave General Clark special authority to request that Allied governments identify the types and numbers of aircraft they could provide for a military mission. However, ACTWARN did not obligate Allied governments to participate. It was required by ACTREQ as a second step, a Request for Activation, while a subsequent binding legal commitment, the so-called ACTORD (Activation Order), was required for final military action.⁸¹²

The White House spokesman spoke about the seriousness of the situation and pointed out that the international community has now clearly set its demands on what Milošević should do to end the tragedy in Kosova and give him the responsibility of immediate action.⁸¹³

8. 2. Milošević ignores warnings

While the international community was busy passing a resolution and waiting for Milošević to stop fighting against the Albanian civilian population, the data from Kosova said the exact opposite. The Serbian offensive continued with even greater intensity. At a meeting held on September 21, 1998 with American mediator Chris Hill, the Yugoslav leader insisted that there was no "humanitarian catastrophe" in Kosova.⁸¹⁴ Meanwhile, the ambassador himself visited the

Publique, Luxembourg), Dag Jostein Fjaervoll (Minister of Defense, Norway), Jos Veiga Simno (Minister of Defense, Portugal), William Cohen (Minister of Defense, USA), George Robertson (Secretary of State for Defence, UK), Ismet Sezgin (Minister of National Defense, Turkey), Eduardo Serra Rexach (Minister of Defense, Spain). NATO Defense Ministers.

⁸¹⁰ Jonathan S. Landay, "NATO's Drums Beat Louder Over Kosovo", *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 25, 1998.

⁸¹¹ NATO Press Statement Vilamoura, September 24, 1998.

⁸¹² Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 169.

⁸¹³ *Bujku*, 26 shtator, 1998, 4.

⁸¹⁴ Steven Lee Myers, "U.S. and Allies Increase Pressure on Serbs", *The New York Times*, September 22, 1998.

village of Pagarushë two days later, where he met with thousands of displaced residents. "I'm sorry, but I have to say that there are very few signs that anyone can return to their villages. I saw a lot of Serbian forces and security forces. We also went to villages far from paved roads and spoke to displaced people living in tents in very difficult conditions. They told us that they would very much like to return to their homes when their return is assured, but now they have no confidence and are absolutely convinced that it is not safe for them to return to their homes," Hill told *Voice of America* - Serbian language editorial office.⁸¹⁵ With a similar nihilistic tendency, Milošević disputed the number of civilians in the mountains during a meeting with the UN High Representative for Refugees, Sadako Ogata. At the press conference, when Ogata stressed that it was about the displacement of 50,000 people, who are homeless, Milošević intervened, stressing that it was about only 700 people.⁸¹⁶ The saga of denials by the Serbian leader continued. One such incident is remembered by the English diplomat Paddy Ashdown, during a meeting in late September 1998. Milošević told him that "no one in Kosova lives under the open sky."⁸¹⁷ At that meeting, Lord Ashdown handed him a letter from Prime Minister Tony Blair warning the Yugoslav president that he risked being indicted for war crimes. "I told him he would end up in court if he did not stop the ethnic cleansing in Kosova."⁸¹⁸

Just three days after the UN and NATO warnings, the Serbian Parliament continued its propaganda goals with an extraordinary session. On 28 September 1998, Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Marjanović told the Serbian Parliament that "armed terrorist groups have been defeated". "As of today, all anti-terrorist activities have ended. They will only be resumed if new bandit activities re-emerge. From now on, security forces can start withdrawing to their barracks." He stressed that the troop reduction would be carried out in accordance with the agreement that Milošević had signed in Moscow with Russian President Yeltsin in June 1998. These activities implied that the Serbian government did not recognize the direct demands arising from Security Council Resolution 1199 and NATO's ACTWARN.⁸¹⁹ Instead, Serbian propaganda nonsense exceeded all imagination: "Life is normalized," declared the Serbian prime minister. Moreover, he promised

⁸¹⁵ *Bujku*, 24 shtator, 1998, 9.

⁸¹⁶ *Kosova Sot*, 28 shtator, 1998, 3.

⁸¹⁷ Paddy Ashdown, "Duhet ta përdorim forcën", *Bujku*, 1 tetor, 1998, 5.

⁸¹⁸ Andrew Osborn, "Tearful Ashdown in court skirmish with Milosevic", *The Guardian*, March 16, 2002.

⁸¹⁹ RFE/RL, Newsline - September 28, 1998; Guy Dinmore, "Serbs Pound Kosovo Rebels", *The Washington Post*, September 29, 1998.

"full protection for Albanians who return to their homes".⁸²⁰ While the Serbian Prime Minister was giving a speech in the Parliament, the Serbian military police in Drenica committed one of the most terrible massacres since the Second World War.

The crime occurred on September 26, 1998, when Serbian military and police forces, escorted by armored vehicles, moved towards the village of Abri e Epërme, in the neighborhood of the Deliu family. They first killed the paralyzed old man Fazli Deliu (94) in his house, and then burned him and his house.⁸²¹ They then headed for the forest where the Deliu family had taken refuge. Sadri Deliu, who managed to survive the massacre, recalled the event for the New York Times. "We sent the women and children, the aunts and uncles to the valley (Zabeli i Rënjëve), where it was thought to be safer. There they had shelter to sleep and eat for days."⁸²² Fred Abraham, a representative of Human Rights Watch who was among the first to arrive in Abri, writes in his report: "There we saw a tent that they had set up themselves, because their village had been bombed for days. There were clear signs of where they had slept. When we arrived, the mattresses were soaked in blood, and in one place a little further away, the bodies of the massacred were found."⁸²³ Imer Deliu, another witness whose 13 family members were killed, recalls the moments when he identified them. He held back until he saw 18-month-old Valmir with his throat slit and Luljeta, nine months pregnant. At that point, he could no longer hold back his tears. The facts were shocking. Among the massacred were children: Valmir Adem Deliu (1 and a half years old), Donjetë Hajriz Deliu (4), Gentianë Hajriz Deliu (7), Jeton Imer Deliu (10, throat slit), Antigona (14) and Mihane Hysen Deliu (16). The last two were raped and then massacred. As witness Xh. S. remembers, it was quite clear that these children did not die in battle or accidentally during artillery attacks. On the same day, at the other end of the settlement, Serbian police executed Habib Deliu, his brother Hysen, and his daughter, while Adem Deliu (33) was found near the forest with his throat slit.⁸²⁴ The massacre was first reported by KMLDNJ staff, where after the departure of Serbian forces on September 27, the sub-council of the Drenas branch went into the field and

⁸²⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 29 shtator, 1998, 5.

⁸²¹ DOCUMENTARY: Masakra në Abri të Epërme – Krim i pandëshkuar! - September 26, 2021. About the murders, the names of the massacred, read: KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator (Prishtinë, 1998), 34-35; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 52.

⁸²² Jane Perlez, "Massacres by Serbian Forces in 3 Kosovo Villages", *The New York Times*, September 30, 1998.

⁸²³ *Bujku*, 2 tetor, 1998, 4.

⁸²⁴ KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator (Prishtinë, 1998), 96-97; TV Dielli Radio Kosova e Lirë: Interviste - Imer Deliu, 25 shkurt, 2022. Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 52.

discovered the crimes against members of the Deliu family.⁸²⁵ The information was then leaked to the US and EU Monitoring Mission delegation. On Monday, September 28, 1998, diplomats from those countries went to the scene and examined the bodies of the massacred Deliu family. That day, they wrote a report on what they had seen for their embassies in Belgrade.⁸²⁶ The EU mediator, Austrian Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, upon his return to Prishtina after a meeting with the Kosova leadership, stated that he did not want to discuss the issue of the massacre in more detail, but briefly added: "We have seen some evidence that something terrible happened."⁸²⁷ Taking a more direct approach, Lord Paddy Ashdown stated that he had been authorized by the Contact Group to write a report on the crimes in Drenica - Abri e Epërme. His appeal was for NATO to launch airstrikes against Serbian targets in Kosova: "There is no doubt that what we have seen is a crime against humanity, a deliberate and systematic policy of scorched earth using weapons of total war against innocent victims."⁸²⁸ Many journalists and employees of international human rights organizations hurriedly headed towards Drenica after receiving the information. Jonathan Steele, a journalist for the British daily newspaper "The Guardian", recounted the journey to the crime scene. "The journey along the dirt roads from Drenas took us through burned villages and houses destroyed by Serbian artillery... but we did not yet know that we would see the greatest atrocity that independent witnesses could see in the last six months of the war."⁸²⁹ In a statement issued on September 29, 1998, Human Rights Watch stated that the Abri e Epërme massacre was a massacre committed against helpless Albanian civilians who were hiding in the forest. That organization, together with Western journalists, assessed the murder, massacre of children and the elderly as a gruesome act.⁸³⁰

All the victims belonged to three families with the same surname Deliu. Without a doubt the most gruesome scene was the murder of 18-month-old Valmir in the arms of his murdered mother. Nearby lay the bodies of a slightly older couple, the wife's throat slit, while her husband's head was shot. Nearby was the body of the elderly Ali Deliu, killed from behind, his throat slit and a

⁸²⁵ KMDLNJ, in its report No. 437 of 27 September, reported 14 people killed. For more information, see Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator (Prishtinë, 1998), 288.

⁸²⁶ Jane Perlez, "Massacres by Serbian Forces in 3 Kosovo Villages", *The New York Times*, September 30, 1998.

⁸²⁷ *Bujku*, 30 shtator, 1998, 2.

⁸²⁸ Tom Walker, "Hidden Horror Betrays the Butchers of Kosovo," *The Times*, September 30, 1998.

⁸²⁹ Jonathan Steele, "Among the 16 victims was a baby, beneath her mother's corpse and a boy his throat cut", *The Guardian*, September 30, 1998.

⁸³⁰ *Bujku*, 1 tetor, 1998, 4.

knife thrust into his chest.⁸³¹ “The first body we saw was that of a girl of four or five years old, her throat torn open by a knife cut that extended to the corner of her mouth. A few steps above were four women, all shot in the head at close range,” writes Tom Walker, a journalist for *The Times*. Continuing his account, he emphasizes: “We went further and found the bodies of a woman and two children with their heads split open. We breathed through our mouths to avoid nausea, while the Albanian cameraman cried incessantly.”⁸³²

In addition to this massacre, Serbian military and police forces took further action. Witnesses who managed to survive testified before the Human Rights Council about multiple executions. A woman and nine children aged 9 to 17 were executed in the village of Galicë in Vushtrri. A witness testified about another massacre in the village of Gollubovcë on 26 September 1998, where Serbian police and soldiers beat and abused 14 men for hours and finally killed them. In his testimony, he stated: “They separated the men from the women and children... Police and soldiers in different uniforms sent us to the yard of a house where they forced us to put our hands behind our heads. Then the policemen started beating the civilians with agricultural tools, clubs and forks, and some died from the torture. At the very end, one policeman completed the execution with an automatic rifle. They shot me in the leg and I was as good as dead and I did not dare to move until the Serbian policemen left.”

The list of massacred and executed civilians on September 26, 1998 alone, according to confirmed data from the KMLDNJ, reached 71, while in the ten days from September 20 to 30, there were 256 of them, recorded by name and surname.⁸³³

8.3. The Holbrooke - Milošević Agreement

The horrors witnessed by diplomats and international journalists soon seeped into their governments and the pages of the daily press. Faced with such pressure, the reaction was immediate. On September 30, 1998, the National Security Council (NSC) General Committee met

⁸³¹ Guy Dinmore, “New Kosovo Massacre May Spur NATO to Act”, *The Washington Post*, September 30, 1998.

⁸³² Tom Walker, “Hidden Horror Betrays the Butchers of Kosovo”, *The Times*, September 30, 1998.

⁸³³ About the murders, the names of the massacred, read: KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 8 Korrik – Shtator (Prishtinë, 1998), 30-36 dhe 96; Guy Dinmore, “New Kosovo Massacre May Spur NATO to Act”, *The Washington Post*, September 30, 1998; Jane Perlez, Conflict in the Balkans: In Kosovo; Survivor of Kosovo Massacre Describes the Killing Garden, *The New York Times*, October 2, 1998.

at the White House. Participants Albright and Talbot recall that The New York Times newspaper was placed on the conference table with a front-page photograph showing a massacred Albanian man with his head severed. This was understood as Milošević's response to Resolution 1199 of September 23, 1998 of the United Nations and the NATO Activation Warning.⁸³⁴ The declassified document revealed the conclusions of this meeting: NATO should approve the issuance of an activation request (ACTREQ) for a limited air strike option and for an air campaign, a new Contact Group meeting should be organized in London for a political solution, the UN Secretary General should be pressured to release his report on compliance with Resolution 1199, while working to convince the French and German governments not to seek a new Security Council resolution, efforts should be made to contain Russia "on our side", but they must be made aware that the Alliance is ready to act if necessary despite Russian objections. It was further agreed that work must be done to secure an agreement for NATO to approve the issuance of an activation order (ACTORD) by October 7, 1998. At the end of the meeting, it was concluded that Holbrooke must go to Belgrade and give Milošević a clear military ultimatum to fulfill the demands of the international community.⁸³⁵

In the following days, efforts were intensified to coordinate a common criminal policy against the Milošević regime. At the initiative of British Foreign Minister Robin Cook, the Security Council was called to quickly condemn the massacres of the Albanian civilian population in Kosova, noting that a military action by NATO could follow very soon. In a statement to the media, the British secretary said, among other things: "I am horrified by the massacre in Kosova. Most of the killed are women and children. This was not an act of war. This was a planned and cold-blooded murder. I was in contact with the prosecutor of the Hague war crimes tribunal and I asked her to investigate this monstrosity". Cook also announced that he had convened a meeting of the Contact Group in London to discuss the implementation of peace in the Balkans and the possibility of a political settlement.⁸³⁶

On October 3, 1998, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan published his report on Kosova. Annan first pointed out the double language of the Serbian government: on the one hand, they were

⁸³⁴ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 452; Talbot, *The Russia Hand*, 302.

⁸³⁵ Declassified Documents concerning National Security Council, Situation Room: WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504, Summary of Conclusions of Princip s Committee Meeting on Kosovo, September 30, 1998.

⁸³⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 1 tetor, 1998, 3-4.

promoting the end of the offensive in Kosova, while the facts spoke of the continuation of new offensives and massacres. "I am outraged by reports of mass killings of civilians in Kosova, reminiscent of the crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina." The report further emphasized that in recent weeks the international community had witnessed terrible crimes against victims in Kosova, most of whom were women, children and the elderly. These crimes were confirmed by reports from the Diplomatic Observation Mission in Kosova and other reliable sources.⁸³⁷ "I have no doubt that these acts were committed by security forces in Kosova, operating under the authority of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia."⁸³⁸

In Brussels on 5 October 1998, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, during the opening ceremony of the academic year at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, pointed out that Milošević's failure to meet the Security Council's demands could lead to a humanitarian catastrophe that could threaten peace and security in the region. These were sufficient preconditions for NATO to intervene militarily in the event that the Serbian leader was not prepared to comply with the demands.⁸³⁹ The main problem facing NATO was the fact that Russia and China had made it clear that they would veto any UN Security Council resolution.⁸⁴⁰ The Russians insisted that the "domino principle" was still at work in the Balkans⁸⁴¹, recalling that two world wars began precisely in this area.⁸⁴² On October 5, 1998, Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev warned that any intervention would reactivate the "Cold War". President Boris Yeltsin discussed Kosova with Kofi Annan, the new German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Bill Clinton on the same day, stating that Moscow remains firmly against military intervention.

⁸³⁷ With the "Moscow Agreement" with the Russian president, Milošević agreed that international humanitarian organizations have free movement in Kosovo.

⁸³⁸ UN Document Kosovo: Report of the UN Secretary-General, S/1998/912, October 3, 1998.

⁸³⁹ NATO - Allocution du Secrétaire général, Dr. Javier Solana, lors de l'ouverture de l'année académique de l'ULB, Bruxelles, 5 octobre 1998; Petritsch, Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 126-127.

⁸⁴⁰ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 44; Judah, *Kosova*, 225.

⁸⁴¹ The theory was first proposed by Pres. Harry S. Truman to justify sending military aid to Greece and Turkey in the 1940s, but became popular in the 1950s when President Dwight Eisenhower applied it to Southeast Asia, particularly South Vietnam. The theory suggested that a communist government in one nation would quickly lead to a communist takeover in neighboring states, each falling like a perfectly aligned line of dominoes. From the Russian perspective, President Clinton dusted off the Cold War-era "domino theory" - used to rationalize US intervention against Yugoslavia, a policy strongly opposed by Russia. Stewart M. Powell, "Clinton: Domino theory at work in Balkans", *SFGATE*, March 28, 1999.

⁸⁴² Talbott, *The Russia hand*, 300.

In a conversation held on October 5, 1998, President Clinton expressed to the Russian leader his concern that Milošević was "playing the classic game of false promises" in order to avoid NATO military attacks. For this reason, he stated that Milošević's actions "must be verifiable, tangible and irreversible".⁸⁴³ Moscow clearly understood the warnings about NATO's armed attack on Yugoslavia, as well as the fact that the West would not be satisfied with words and pressure this time.

On 4 October 1998, Ministers Igor Ivanov, Igor Sergeyev and the Deputy Head of Russian Security Service flew to Belgrade for a meeting with President Milošević. In this context, Yeltsin's message to Milošević, conveyed by Russian diplomats, was that NATO air strikes would become a reality if "decisive measures" were not taken. The meeting discussed the need for Belgrade to take urgent measures to calm the situation in Kosova, in particular to end the armed actions.⁸⁴⁴ The next day, on October 5, as authorized by the National Security Council, President Clinton authorized Holbrooke to go to Belgrade to present the "new" terms to the international community. Holbrooke first stopped in Brussels where he met with Secretary Solana, General Wesley Clark and US Ambassador to NATO Alexander Vershbow to get clear military instructions to help him negotiate.⁸⁴⁵ The architect of Dayton now had strong support, resources, and public support, and NATO's willingness to act in the event that Milošević refused to meet the demands of the international community.⁸⁴⁶

At the meeting held on October 5, 1998, although there were no statements or press conferences, Tanjug agency sources announced that the Yugoslav president rejected the efforts of American mediator Holbrooke to urgently end the conflict. Milošević allegedly told American diplomats Holbrooke and Hill that "there has been no fighting in Kosova for almost a whole week" and that Yugoslavia was providing humanitarian aid. However, a day earlier, Holbrooke and Hill received a "disturbing report" about the presence of Serbian police in Kosova and preventing exiles from returning to their homes. Holbrooke was used to Milošević's tactics, so he made it clear to him that

⁸⁴³ Barbara Crossette, "Serbs Continue Kosovo Terror, Annan Asserts", *The New York Times*, October 6, 1998; *Koha Ditore*, 6 tetor, 1998, 5.

⁸⁴⁴ Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 186; *Kosova Sot*, 5 tetor, 1998, 4.

⁸⁴⁵ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 172.

⁸⁴⁶ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 145.

airstrikes would be inevitable if Belgrade refused to calm down the situation in Kosova.⁸⁴⁷ Despite clear demands, the meeting was unsuccessful. However, Holbrooke's efforts to convince Milošević did not stop during the meeting on October 6, 1998. His meetings in Belgrade and Prishtina continued for several days in a row. The plan was to find a political solution within the two poles. Even on the third attempt, the Serbian leader did not accept the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova. His game of buying time continued, with the idea that the longer the negotiations lasted, the more difficult it would be for NATO to launch a military attack.⁸⁴⁸ Since Holbrooke left Yugoslavia without diplomatic results, international pressure to force the Serbian leader to comply with the demands of the international community grew.

On October 8, Albright and Holbrooke met with representatives of the NATO Alliance. Their arguments were that a political agreement with Milošević could only be reached if NATO authorized the use of force. "We talked with Secretary Solana about NATO's role in this crisis," Albright said at a press conference. "I fully agree with his assessment that the Alliance has the legitimacy to act to stop the disaster." She pointed out that there is an attempt to divide the international community over the basic positions in the Kosova crisis, but that this will not happen. "We must be ready for action, because we know that if we are not there, there is no way to prevent people from being killed. Speaking on behalf of the United States, I believe it is time for the Alliance to move to the next stage of decision-making—that is, to make the difficult but necessary decision to authorize military force if Milošević does not immediately halt military and police actions in Kosova."⁸⁴⁹

This is a view that the British also agreed with. The British Government's position was as follows: "There is compelling evidence of an imminent humanitarian catastrophe (Resolution 1199, reports of the UN Secretary-General, UNHCR)." They assessed that, based on the way the FRY had treated Kosova this year, a humanitarian catastrophe could not be prevented unless Milošević could be persuaded to desist from further repressive actions. In this respect, only the threat of force could achieve this goal. "It is therefore the view of Great Britain that, as things stand and if there is no possibility of action through the Security Council, NATO intervention would be legal on the

⁸⁴⁷ *Bujku*, 6 tetor 1998, 1; *Bujku*, 7 tetor 1998, 4; *Koha Ditore*, 7 tetor, 1998, 3.

⁸⁴⁸ Jane Perlez, "Holbrooke Is Unable to Wrest Concessions From Milosevic", *The New York Times*, October 7, 1998.

⁸⁴⁹ Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright Press Conference on Kosovo Brussels, Belgium, October 8, 1998; Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 453; *Kosova Sot*, 9 tetor, 1998, 3.

basis of extraordinary humanitarian need."⁸⁵⁰ At last, Western positions seemed to be taking a more coordinated form. French President Jacques Chirac, in a statement to the press after a meeting with the Italian Prime Minister, warned Yugoslavia that NATO intervention in Kosova was inevitable if its forces did not withdraw from Kosova. He added that military action would normally require a UN resolution. But that Security Council Resolution 1199, which called for a ceasefire, now "pave the way for possible military intervention." Likewise, the humanitarian situation provides a reason that may justify an exception to this rule. "If the humanitarian situation appears to require it, France will not hesitate to join those who wish to intervene to help those in danger."⁸⁵¹ German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder supported military intervention during a meeting with President Clinton at the White House on 9 October 1998. "We will support the decision of the German interim government to authorize NATO to use force in Kosova if necessary." Since Germany was in the process of changing its government, he made it clear that any approval that would allow the participation of German troops and aircraft would have to wait for the newly elected parliament, which would take formal power on 26 October. However, he assured that: "Nobody, and above all the Yugoslav president, should expect us to have a less decisive approach than the current government of Helmut Kohl. Milošević must fully comply with the UN Resolution and we will do everything to ensure that this is fulfilled. The US knows that this is our view," Schröder stated.⁸⁵² The only effort left was to convince Russia. Although no one expected them to approve a military coup against a Balkan ally. The intentions were that Moscow would at least remain neutral and not do anything that could destabilize the area.

The opportunity for reconciliation arose at the long-announced meeting of the Contact Group to be held in London. At the meeting on October 8, 1998, in addition to the six foreign ministers, representatives of the OSCE, American diplomats connected with Kosova, Holbrooke and Hill participated this time.⁸⁵³ One of the main issues of this meeting was to persuade Russia to vote in favor of a UN resolution that would authorize military intervention in Kosova. Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, who had just arrived from Belgrade, insisted that the issue be discussed in the

⁸⁵⁰ Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar*, 174-175.

⁸⁵¹ Koha Ditore, 7 tetor, 1998, 7.

⁸⁵² Steven Erlanger, "Schroder Tells Clinton He Backs Action by NATO in Kosovo", *The New York Times*, October 10, 1998.

⁸⁵³ Petritsch, Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 127.

Security Council, arguing that Milošević had already withdrawn some troops from Kosova. At this point, Albright intervened, saying: "Milošević is a born liar." The meeting finally clarified the Russian view that Russia would block any resolution aimed at the use of force against Yugoslavia with its veto. The insistence on the alleged "protection" of international law against war revealed Russia's true position that by threatening a veto in the Security Council it was protecting an aggressor known for several wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.⁸⁵⁴ The meeting could not change Russia's position, but on the other hand it helped convince the Europeans that the UN Security Council would not be able to make a final decision.⁸⁵⁵ After the meeting concluded, Cook stated at a press conference: "We will not call on Russia to authorize the use of force, that is a matter for NATO," making it clear that from now on NATO is the only one that will act.⁸⁵⁶ On the same day, President Bill Clinton signed the US government's consent for the participation of American aircraft and pilots in joint NATO air operations against military targets in Yugoslavia. The President emphasized that he expected other NATO members to also give their consent for joint action.⁸⁵⁷ This meant that the Allies would place aircraft ready for attack under NATO central command in case Milošević did not comply with UN demands. It was also calculated that the order for NATO activation would serve as a form of pressure on the American mediator Richard Holbrooke, who was conducting talks with the Yugoslav president.⁸⁵⁸ After the meeting in London, things took an affirmative diplomatic direction. It was said in diplomatic and military circles that there were a few days left to find a political solution that would avoid the bombings. The British newspaper *The Guardian* warned that any agreement with the Serbs, which leaves the possibility that the Serbian army and police will continue to shoot and burn villages in Kosova, would be a small "Munich"⁸⁵⁹ which the West will regret very soon.⁸⁶⁰ However, Holbrooke and

⁸⁵⁴ Fischer, *Vitet kuq- gjelbër*, 114.

⁸⁵⁵ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 454; Petritsch, Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 127; Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 188.

⁸⁵⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 9 tetor, 1998, 2.

⁸⁵⁷ *Bujku*, 9 tetor, 1998, 1.

⁸⁵⁸ *Kosova Sot*, 10 tetor, 1998, 4.

⁸⁵⁹ Driven by a strong desire to preserve peace and stability in Europe, on September 30, 1938, the leaders of Great Britain, France, and Italy signed an agreement with Adolf Hitler that allowed the Nazis to annex Sudety, a region of Czechoslovakia. The Munich Agreement did not actually bring peace. On the contrary, the Nazis occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1939 and invaded Poland in September 1939, starting World War II. Thus, the prevailing concern among Albanians and critics of the international community's soft approach was that an agreement that did not commit all Serbian forces to withdraw from Kosovo could increase its appetite to continue its policy of conquest in other neighboring countries, only to end in a Balkan war that could have global consequences. *The New York Times*, September 30, 2011.

⁸⁶⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 14 tetor, 1998, 7.

his team headed towards Belgrade.⁸⁶¹ This time, Michael Short, commander of NATO air forces in the south, was attached to the negotiating team as military support, who would command the airstrike campaign.⁸⁶² At the beginning of the meeting, President Milošević said to him: “So, General, are you the man who will bomb us?” The General replied without hesitation: “Mr. President, I have B-52s in one hand and U2 surveillance spy planes in the other. It is up to you what will I use.” It seems that the military presence had a real effect.⁸⁶³ In parallel with the Belgrade talks, NATO’s North Atlantic Council reported on the evening of 12 October on progress in the talks, largely as a result of pressure from the Alliance. As further support, the North Atlantic Council decided to issue an order to activate ACTORD, which would be implemented within about 96 hours. The statement said: “We have taken this decision after a thorough review of the situation in Kosova. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has not yet fully complied with Security Council Resolution 1199, and time is running out. NATO continues to believe that diplomacy can succeed and that the use of military force can be avoided. The responsibility lies with President Milošević. He knows what to do.”⁸⁶⁴ ACTORD means that General Wesley Clark has been given the green light first for limited airstrikes and then for a phased air campaign. Execution can only be carried out after 96 hours have passed. Which means that if Holbrooke fails to reach an agreement, the first bombings could begin in the early hours of October 17.⁸⁶⁵ Following this pressure, US President's National Security Advisor Samuel R. Berger told CNN: "The Yugoslav president can still avoid a NATO attack by agreeing to withdraw military and police forces from Kosova; cooperating with humanitarian workers who must care for some 300,000 people displaced during the seven months of conflict."⁸⁶⁶ The atmosphere seemed gloomy, when it was calculated that Belgrade was only hours away from being bombed. Many of the embassies of Western countries began evacuating diplomatic personnel.⁸⁶⁷ Faced with an open threat after more than 50 hours of talks, the Serbian leader sensed that this time it was a real military threat and on October 13, 1998,

⁸⁶¹ Holbrooke was a key figure in the negotiations. He was almost always accompanied by the American ambassador in Skopje, Christopher Hill, who was in charge of American mediation in the event of a war in Kosova. In this case, Albright insisted that Michael Short, the commander of the Allied forces in southern Europe, be with Holbrook in Belgrade for the talks, in order to inform Milošević of the consequences.

⁸⁶² Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 177.

⁸⁶³ PBS - *Frontline*: Interview with Richard Holbrooke, 1999.

⁸⁶⁴ NATO Statement to the Press by the Secretary General Following Decision on the ACTORD, October 13, 1998.

⁸⁶⁵ *Bujku*, 14 tetor, 1998, 1.

⁸⁶⁶ Jeffrey Smith, George Lardner Jr. “Accord on Kosovo Remains Elusive”, *The Washington Post*, October 12, 1998.

⁸⁶⁷ Pettifer, *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, 190; *Koha Ditore*, 13 tetor 1998, 4.

he accepted the main demands of the international community.⁸⁶⁸ Milošević announced the decision via Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), saying that "peace has been preserved."⁸⁶⁹ Milošević's trick continued when he delegated the issue to the Government of Serbia, which expressed its willingness to create an 11-point political framework for resolving the political issue of Kosova. Moreover, this allowed "Serbia to argue that the fate of Kosova is solely in its hands and that it is not the job of Yugoslavia or international mediation".⁸⁷⁰ Holbrooke, who revealed the details of the agreement, warned of caution until the signing: "Victory must not be declared so soon. It is too early to use the "T" (triumph), we are not out of danger. We are still in it."

In any case, it was announced that Yugoslavia would sign the agreement in a few days,⁸⁷¹ by which: Milošević agrees to reduce the number of police and military units to pre-war levels, ensures the return of Kosova refugees to their homes, deploys 2,000 unarmed international observers under the umbrella of the OSCE, gives NATO the right to fly over Kosova to check Serbian activities, Yugoslavia should cooperate with the investigations of the War Crimes Tribunal, Yugoslavia commits to talks with Kosova leaders in order to reach a solution that would restore Kosova's autonomy.⁸⁷² Despite the agreement, there were doubts about its implementation. Yugoslavia should work quickly to meet the demands it had agreed to, NATO said. The signing process involved a wide range of organizations. The Holbrooke-Milošević agreement was expected to be finalized in talks between the OSCE, NATO and Yugoslav authorities over the next few days. The verification mission (OSCE) was to be signed by Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek as head of the OSCE. "This mission represents an extraordinary challenge for us," Geremek said after the signing. "So far we have only been election observers, from today we will deal with peace in Kosova." This time its task was: "to monitor President Slobodan Milošević's promise to end the violent attack on Kosova." But much remains unresolved about the mission's exact role and powers, including how its "verifiers," as Holbrooke insisted on calling them, would

⁸⁶⁸ The Holbrooke-Milošević agreement was reached on October 13, 1998. With that agreement on resolving the Kosova crisis, the danger of NATO bombing the FRY was temporarily removed.

⁸⁶⁹ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 156; Biberaj, *Çështja kombëtare*, 95.

⁸⁷⁰ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 179.

⁸⁷¹ *Koha Ditore*, 14 tetor 1998, 3.

⁸⁷² Albright, *Zonja sekretare*, 454; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 302; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 48; Petritsch, Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 130; Judah, *Kosova*, 231.

respond to violations.⁸⁷³ Geremek appointed the former US ambassador to El Salvador, William Walker, as the head of this OSCE mission. Since his appointment, he has been distrusted by the Yugoslav side based on his close connection with the American secret service. Belgrade's reservations were partially balanced by the appointment of Frenchman Gabriel Keller, former commercial attaché in Belgrade, as Walker's deputy, which the Albanians expressed doubts about.⁸⁷⁴ On October 15, 1998, Javier Solana, accompanied by General Wesley Clark, went to Belgrade to agree on an agreement that would allow NATO air flights and surveillance verification over Kosova. As could be expected, the main challenge of these discussions was the withdrawal of Serbian police and military forces from Kosova. "I am not at all satisfied with the fulfillment of the requirements of the UN Security Council," said Solana on the occasion of signing the agreement with the President of the FRY.⁸⁷⁵ Given the past, distrust of the Yugoslav leader was very high, many issues still remained technically questionable feasibility within the framework of the implementation of the agreement. "Only actions are believed", US President Bill Clinton said: "Promises are not kept. The cemeteries of the Balkans are filled with his promises. In the coming days we will focus not only on what Mr. Milošević says, but also on what he does".⁸⁷⁶ The pressure to fulfill the agreement grew. "We are still far from full compliance," says the NATO press release. "There is clear evidence that numerous forces of the Serbian army and special units are still stationed in Kosova. As a result, the North Atlantic Council⁸⁷⁷ decided to maintain readiness for air attacks on Yugoslavia by extending the deadline until October 27."⁸⁷⁸ On *ABC News*, Holbrooke announced that NATO remained prepared to use force if necessary. "The Serbs know full well what the consequences will be if they don't respect the agreement, and this is not a bluff on our part." However, NATO postponed the deadline for military intervention by ten days, at a time when Milošević had failed to fulfill any of his promises, showing that "there is nothing serious

⁸⁷³ John Reed, "NATO Force Is to Monitor Pact As Yugoslavia Avoids the Brink", *The Wall Street Journal*, October 14, 1998; Steven Lee Myers, "2,000 Monitors to Go to Kosovo, but Their Power Is Unclear", *The New York Times*, October 15, 1998; *Koha Ditore*, 15 tetor, 1998, 7.

⁸⁷⁴ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 136.

⁸⁷⁵ *Kosova Sot*, 17 tetor, 1998, 9.

⁸⁷⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 14 tetor, 1998, 3.

⁸⁷⁷ North Atlantic Council hereinafter referred to as NAC. NATO Statement to the Press by the NATO Spokesman on the NAC of 16 October 16, 1998.

here.”⁸⁷⁹ This created the impression that the West was more behind the rhetoric of "threats of force" with the aim of reaching an agreement that would, if for no other reason, enable the avoidance of a humanitarian catastrophe. Because there was still no unity and readiness for military intervention.⁸⁸⁰ However, the insistence on fulfilling the demands of the international community continued, and all these statements were supported by the meeting of the Contact Group in Paris on 15 October 1998, where the Yugoslav leader was asked to fulfill the promises made. As a conclusion to this meeting, the approval of a new UN Security Council resolution was requested.⁸⁸¹ On October 24, 1998, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1203. By that resolution, the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, recalled the current implementation of previous resolutions 1160 and 1199. It also expressed support for the agreement signed in Belgrade between the OSCE, NATO and Yugoslavia. It calls for full compliance with the Security Council resolution and full cooperation with the OSCE Verification Mission in Kosova and the NATO Air Verification Mission, in order to avoid an inevitable humanitarian disaster. But the resolution avoided NATO's threats to launch airstrikes against Yugoslavia if Milošević did not implement the decisions from the new resolution. However, Resolution 1203 stated that by not resolving the Kosova issue, Yugoslavia is a constant threat to peace and security in the region.⁸⁸² The main drawback remained the slow implementation of all agreements.

In his book, Clark recalls the "marathon talks" between NATO representatives (Solana, Clark, Naumann) and Slobodan Milošević. "While we insisted on the removal of all additional forces, the main concern of the Yugoslav leader was to remove the NATO threat, ACTORD." It took three meetings with intense discussions to finally reach an agreement. The end of the meeting resulted in the fact that Milošević did not change anything in relation to the Albanians. At one point he addressed him: "You know, General Clark, that we know how to deal with the Albanians." When Clark asked him in what way, Milošević replied: "We did that before, in Drenica, in 1946, we

⁸⁷⁹ Steven Lee Myers, "Reprive by NATO allows Milosevic another 10 Days", *The New York Times*, October 17, 1998; Steven Lee Myers, "Serb Forces Leaving Kosovo, But at a Slow Pace, U.S. Says", *The New York Times*, October 19, 1998.

⁸⁸⁰ Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 143.

⁸⁸¹ *Bujku*, 16 tetor, 1998, 1.

⁸⁸² UN Resolution S/RES/1203, October 24, 1998.

killed everyone. It took us several years, but in the end, we killed them all." This meant that reaching an agreement was temporary.⁸⁸³

On October 27, 1998, the Secretary of NATO reported to the North Atlantic Council: "I am pleased to inform you that over the last 24 hours, more than 4,000 members of the Special Police have been withdrawn from Kosova. Police and military units normally stationed in Kosova are now returning to their barracks along with their heavy weapons. Blockages are removed. Security forces are returning to the level they were at before the start of the current crisis. This improvement in the security situation in Kosova, first of all, enabled the immediate improvement of the humanitarian situation", stated Solana's statement. Aware that in the Holbrooke-Milošević Agreement there were many dilemmas regarding implementation, the North Atlantic Council decided: "If we see that in the future there will not be full fulfillment of the requirements from Resolutions 1199 and 1203 (1998), we will be ready to use force." Reaffirming that ACTORD will remain in force for limited air operations, the execution of which will be subject to the decision and assessment of the North Atlantic Council.⁸⁸⁴

8.4. Agreement only to get through the winter

Few believed that the October Holbrooke-Milošević agreement could be implemented. In addition, many things from the agreement remained unexplained. The main dilemma was about the guarantor of the agreement, Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milošević. "As long as Milošević is in power, finding a peaceful solution for Kosova will be impossible," said Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schäuble.⁸⁸⁵ The agreement was signed only after Milošević had achieved many of his goals: he avoided airstrikes, the deployment of NATO military units in Kosova, and he kept over 10,000 policemen and 15,000 Serbian soldiers in Kosova.⁸⁸⁶

The Holbrooke - Milošević agreement, as short-term and hopeless as it may seem, created the possibility of the return of refugees. Although they were in fear, the inhabitants of Kosova decided

⁸⁸³ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 180-187.

⁸⁸⁴ NATO Release Press: Following The Meeting Of The North Atlantic Council, October 27, 1998.

⁸⁸⁵ Andreas Schwarz, "Varrezat e paqes", *Bujku*, 30 tetor, 1998, 5.

⁸⁸⁶ Judah, *Kosova*, 233; Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 179-182; Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër*, 117; Sullivan, *Mos kij frikë se i ke djemtë në Amerikë*, 255; *Koha Ditore*, 28 tetor, 1998, 7.

to return to their homes, although a large part of them had nowhere to return.⁸⁸⁷ The fact that more than 25,000 members of the Serbian police and army will officially remain stationed in Kosova did not have a calming effect on the Albanians. From the beginning of the war, from January to November 1998, 1,800 Albanians were killed and massacred, half of whom were children, women and the elderly. Over 1,500 of them were captured and another 900 were kidnapped. During that period, more than 450,000 Albanians were forced to leave their homes. More than 40,000 houses and other buildings that the Serbian government deliberately made uninhabitable in order to achieve its evil goal of ethnic cleansing were looted, destroyed and burned.⁸⁸⁸

The following week, on November 3, 1998, the KLA announced in a statement that it would "not recognize any agreement concluded without it, which is without the independence of Kosova."⁸⁸⁹ There were also dilemmas among the drafters of the agreement: "We have managed to stop the war in Kosova, but we are far from peace," NATO General Neuman emphasized in an interview with the German daily *Die Welt* on November 8, 1998. The proposed autonomy does not solve the problem either. The crisis in Kosova will only be overcome when "we reach a political agreement that properly resolves the Kosova issue."⁸⁹⁰ General Clark also worriedly expressed this point of view during the parliamentary session of the NATO alliance where he announced: "We have to admit that currently the Kosova Liberation Army and the Serbs are rearming and preparing for war..., this means that we have to deal with the source of the problem, not the symptoms. That source is Serbia, not problematic Kosova. With the agreement, we did nothing more than buy time, if diplomacy does not work, we will face a conflict very soon."⁸⁹¹ "I have great distrust in Milošević. This is exactly why we decided to keep ACTORD in force", Solana said a few days after signing this agreement.⁸⁹² The most concrete example of Serbia's failure to comply with the Agreement was its refusal to cooperate with the Hague Tribunal. Under paragraph 14 of UN Resolution 1203, the UN called for an urgent investigation of all crimes against the civilian population and unconditional cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former

⁸⁸⁷ UN - Press Release SC/6594, November 10, 1998.

⁸⁸⁸ *KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 9 tetor – dhjetor*, (Prishtinë, 1998), 102; o imenima zatvorenika i trajanju kazne čitaj: *Bujku*, 10 dhjetor, 1998, 3.

⁸⁸⁹ "Deklaratë Politike Nr. 17 e Ushtrisë Çlirimtare të Kosovës", *Koha Ditore*, 4 nëntor, 1998.

⁸⁹⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 9 nëntor, 1998, 3.

⁸⁹¹ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 189; Paul Taylor, "Duhet të bëjmë diçka – luftimet do të rifillojnë", *Koha Ditore*, 14 nëntor, 1998, 3.

⁸⁹² *Bujku*, 4 nëntor, 1998, 5.

Yugoslavia, including compliance with its orders, requests for information and investigations.⁸⁹³ The refusal to issue visas to Chief Prosecutor and President Louise Arbour and Gabrielle Kirk McDonald to travel to Kosova to collect evidence of crimes against humanity prompted the latter to express deep dissatisfaction, calling Yugoslavia a "lying state that does not respect the rules of international law."⁸⁹⁴ On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia disparagingly explained the decision in a demarche sent to the UN and the Contact Group: "The Hague Tribunal has nothing to investigate in Kosova, because there was no war in Kosova, but only incidental incidents during the elimination of terrorists, this is not the competence of the Tribunal, but an internal matter of the Serbian state".⁸⁹⁵ When asked by journalists, the signatory of the Agreement, American diplomat Richard Holbrooke, said that Milošević agreed to guarantee "access" to UN researchers. The international human rights organization Human Rights Watch, concerned by this behavior, strongly condemned this action of the Yugoslav government. "Slobodan Milošević once again bought time for himself with empty promises. If he is allowed to continue with such a thing, it will be like giving him the green light to continue his repressive campaign".⁸⁹⁶ Concerned, the UN Security Council adopted a new resolution 1207 in which it strongly condemned Belgrade's refusal to cooperate with the International Court in The Hague. Serbian government officials continued to ignore the demands of the international community.⁸⁹⁷

On November 18, 1998, the Serbian President Milan Milutinović, accompanied by the Vice President of the Yugoslav Government Vladan Kutlešić, came to Prishtinë to present the "dialogue for Kosova". With this attempt, Serbia made it clear that it does not support Hill's diplomatic efforts ("Hill's Plan") with the argument that it "violates Serbia's jurisdiction", so the Serbs offered an "internal dialogue with the communities in Kosova" as an alternative. Although it was announced that it would be a meeting with wide participation, this idea was rejected by the Albanian leadership and international mediators Hill and Petritsch, Russian and Chinese representatives. Therefore, the Serbian political team allegedly asked Milutinović "not to give in when it comes to

⁸⁹³ UN Resolution S/RES/1203, October 24, 1998.

⁸⁹⁴ Charles Trueheart, "Jugosllavia ndalon vizat për hetuesit e OKB-së për krime lufte", *Koha Ditore*, 6 nëntor, 1998, 8.

⁸⁹⁵ Baftiu, *Kosova krizë ndërkombëtare*, 213.

⁸⁹⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 7 nëntor, 1998, 8. *Koha Ditore*, 9 nëntor, 1998, 7.

⁸⁹⁷ UN - Resolution S/RES/1207, November 17, 1998.

the interests of Serbia and all national communities in Kosova".⁸⁹⁸ This illegitimate Serbian diplomatic and political activity, shaped in the form of the so-called "dialogue for Kosova", directly contradicted the Holbrooke-Milošević Agreement and ended without success.⁸⁹⁹

A heightened presence of Serbian police and military forces has been recorded in most areas of Kosova since 2 November 1998. In order to evade the OSCE Verification Mission, Serbian shelling began at 10:00 PM and continued until the morning hours.⁹⁰⁰ During the shelling of Duhël village in Suharekë, Serbian military forces fired at a vehicle of the Kosova Diplomatic Observation Mission (KDOM) without any reason.⁹⁰¹ KDOM had neither the equipment, nor the power, nor the mandate to make key conclusions about war operations. "If we learn that there is a war ahead, we will not go and watch the bullets fly... we will just report that there is a battle," said OSCE mission chief William Walker.⁹⁰²

The purpose and goal of the shelling was to create an impression of general insecurity among citizens who wanted to return, so the number of those staying in the mountains, in plastic tents, instead of decreasing, grew day by day.⁹⁰³ Those who returned to their homes slept in their clothes, keeping their valuables close to them, ready to escape at any opportunity.⁹⁰⁴ The month of November indicated the first effects of the failure of the Agreement, and in most areas of Kosova reports reported on tensions. Concerned about the security situation in Kosova, NATO issued a press release. "Increased tension as a result of incidents caused in some cases by Serbian security forces, and in other cases by KLA elements, could destabilize the ceasefire, call into question the recent improvement in the humanitarian situation and threaten the agreements established by NATO, OSCE, also supported by the UN".⁹⁰⁵

On November 25, 1998, Milošević changed the command structure of the army, replacing Momčilo Perišić with Dragoljub Ojdanić. He appointed his confidant Nebojša Pavković,

⁸⁹⁸ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 169; *Koha Ditore*, 19 nëntor, 1998, 3.

⁸⁹⁹ Rustem Rugova, "Serbët sërish kërcënojnë", *Bujku*, 23 nëntor, 1998, 2.

⁹⁰⁰ *Bujku*, 30 tetor, 1998, 7; *Bujku*, 3 nëntor, 1998, 1.

⁹⁰¹ *Koha Ditore*, 17 nëntor, 1998, 2.

⁹⁰² Tim Weiner, "NATO Warns Time Is Short For Talks On Kosovo", *The New York Times*, November 20, 1998; Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër*, 118.

⁹⁰³ *KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 9 tetor – dhjetor*, (Prishtinë, 1998), 174.

⁹⁰⁴ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 139.

⁹⁰⁵ NATO Press Release (98)130, November 19, 1998.

commander of the Priština Corps, as the commander of the Third Army, which was responsible for Kosova and stationed in Kosova. Personnel changes also affected the secret service, the Directorate of State Security (RDB). There he dismissed Jovica Stanišić and replaced him with Radomir Marković. The known or publicly argued reasons for these changes remain unclear. It was rumored in Belgrade that they were dismissed because they did not agree with the government's policy in Kosova, fearing that Milošević was going into direct conflict with the West.⁹⁰⁶ Perišić stated that the situation in Kosova was becoming a farce, "on the one hand we are fighting for Kosova and the preservation of national sovereignty, and on the other hand we are bringing in NATO and complying with its demands". Opposing his dismissal on 26 November 1998, in a statement to the Beta agency, Perišić stated: "The current government did not suit leaders with high integrity who think for themselves. I was dismissed without consultation; therefore I do not accept the offered position in the current federal government!"⁹⁰⁷

All these events took place at a time when Hill Petritsch's "flying diplomacy" continued the international community's efforts to find a peaceful solution. Despite rejection from both sides, the Albanians remained a constructive party in the talks, while senior Serbian officials such as Ratko Marković, a member of the Serbian negotiating delegation, and Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Milovan Bojić, in some of their statements, threatened war. "Hill's plan is an indirect way of seceding Kosova from Serbia," Serbian representatives accused him. "There is no solution for Kosova if it is outside Serbian rule. Any status higher than self-government will cause "an inevitable tragic political act that will provoke a military conflict, not only in Serbia, but also in the countries bordering Kosova."⁹⁰⁸ Although Hill's efforts continued, the "flying diplomacy" format was no longer sustainable. Hill and Petritsch conclude: "instead of starting from points of compromise, Prishtina and Belgrade deepened their differences even further." As a result, violence continued to spread.⁹⁰⁹

The truce declared in the Holbrooke - Milošević agreement in October was fading, while the number of people killed was increasing day by day. On December 2, 1998, in the settlement of "Kodra e Trimave" in Prishtina, state security forces opened fire on a civilian car and killed three

⁹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 58. Bujku, November 26, 1998, 4.

⁹⁰⁷ *Koha Ditore*, 26 nëntor, 1998, 2. *Koha Ditore*, 27 nëntor, 1998, 8.

⁹⁰⁸ *Koha Ditore*, 27 nëntor, 1998, 3; RFE/RL, Newline – November 30, 1998.

⁹⁰⁹ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 456; Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar*, 169. *Koha Ditore*, 13 dhjetor, 1998, 3.

Albanians. The next day, 8 more civilians were killed on the Albanian border. The murders and arrests of Albanians continued in the coming period.⁹¹⁰ International observers have expressed concern about the new wave of killings. The head of the OSCE mission in Kosova, William Walker, speaking at NATO headquarters, expressed deep concern. "We thought the level of violence was decreasing... but three incidents in just one day, causing the deaths of 12 people, is not a good sign."⁹¹¹ Parallel to these events, on December 5, 1998, NATO approved the order to send rescue forces to Macedonia. The press release states that NATO has developed plans in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1203 in consultation with the OSCE for a rescue force that could evacuate OSCE monitoring missions or other persons designated by Kosova in the event of an emergency.⁹¹² Serbian military and police forces suspended activities and operations on December 14. The output balance of the operations was: 36 killed Albanians in the border area of Kosova and Albania. It was about killed KLA soldiers who were ambushed by Yugoslav military forces.

That same evening (December 14), in the "Panda" cafe in the Pejë municipality, two masked men killed 6 young Serb men with automatic weapons.⁹¹³ In response to these killings, Serbian police forces beat and arrested over 150 Albanians. Six young Albanians were beaten and tortured and, after unconfirmed facts, sentenced to a year in prison. Although Albanians never claimed responsibility for this crime, the Serbian state apparatus manipulated the "Panda" case for 15 years in a row by accusing the KLA of the murder. The event came to light in 2013 when former Serbian Propaganda Minister Aleksandar Vučić (since July 2023, President of Serbia) stated in a television interview that Albanians were not the perpetrators of this crime. "In Serbia, the government killed those who thought differently, including their opponents... we are talking about the government in which I was also a member. There are terrible things that we have to face. For example, the murder of six young Serbs in the "Panda" cafe in Pejë in 1998. There are no facts that this crime was committed by Albanians, as was believed."⁹¹⁴

⁹¹⁰ About the names of those killed, read: *KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 9 tetor – dhjetor*, (Prishtinë, 1998), 203-204.

⁹¹¹ Sean Maguire, "Shpërthimi i fundit i dhunës shqetëson vëzhguesit ndërkombëtar", *Koha Ditore*, 6 dhjetor, 1998.

⁹¹² Press Release (98)139 December 5, 1998.

⁹¹³ *KMDLNJ, Buletin viti VIII Nr. 9 tetor – dhjetor*, (Prishtinë, 1998), 218-219.

⁹¹⁴ Documentary film: "Vrasje tek Panda" - Si u inskenua ekzekutimi i 6 të rinjve serbë, duke fajësuar UÇK-në, Top Channel Albania, 22 dhjetor, 2020.

The killings on December 14th made it clear that maintaining a ceasefire would be extremely difficult.⁹¹⁵ In an interview given to the American newspaper "The Washington Post", Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milošević showed an irrational concept: "In the event that the NATO rescue forces stationed in Macedonia enter Kosova, we will respond. This is the duty of our army - to prevent the entry of foreign troops into our country". Speaking about the degree of autonomy of the Albanians, Milošević showed the imperial character of the administration of the area with a dominant Albanian population (92%): "It was not reasonable for them to have autonomy, because they abused the power to threaten the rest of the population." When a journalist asked him if the Serbs, who make up only 10% of the total population, control everything in Kosova, Milošević replied: "No, this is distorted propaganda because many Albanians work in the administration and they cannot demand greater rights than others." Speaking about the wars in Bosnia and Croatia, he said: "All I did was fight for peace."⁹¹⁶

9. MASSACRES PROMPT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN LAST-TIME DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

9.1 Reçak massacre

Since the Holbrooke-Milošević agreement was signed on October 13, 1998, many domestic and international sources have warned of potential new fighting in the spring, "in the event that a quick diplomatic solution is not reached."⁹¹⁷ Not a single day in January 1999 passed without serious security and military incidents, without dramatic events and without numerous victims, so that many international decision-making centers had already lost confidence in the declared ceasefire.⁹¹⁸ Information about the increase in Serbian military-police forces from Serbia arrived daily, warning of a new Serbian offensive.⁹¹⁹ All of these warnings were confirmed on January 15, 1999. It was clear that Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević was breaking every important promise he had made in October 1998 to stop his offensive in Kosova.

⁹¹⁵ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 182.

⁹¹⁶ *The Washington Post*, December 13, 1998.

⁹¹⁷ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 455; Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 189; Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër*, 117

⁹¹⁸ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 193; Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 153; Judah, *Kosova*, 238; Bugajski, *Ngritja e Kosovës*, 51.

⁹¹⁹ KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti IX Nr. 10 janar – mars*, 63; *Koha Ditore*, 10 janar, 1999, 2.

Serbian military-police forces, contrary to the agreement, committed a crime in the village of Reçak by massacring 45 ethnic Albanians.⁹²⁰ According to witness statements, the massacred had previously taken refuge in the basement of a house in order to escape from the shelling that the Serbian forces started in the early hours of the morning. "So many military forces surrounded the village that it was impossible for civilians to pass the iron ring. When shelling destroyed almost everything, the village was filled with Serbian infantrymen, who destroyed houses one by one, while Albanian civilians were later liquidated on Kodra e Bebusht hill".⁹²¹ The first peace observers and journalists who entered Reçak on Saturday, January 16, 1999, were terrified of what they might find. And indeed, what they saw was terrible and indescribable.⁹²² Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that Nazmi Ymeri (76) was executed in his backyard. Banush Kamberi, whose headless body was found in his yard, was last seen alive in police custody. Bajram Mehmeti and his daughter Hanumshahe (20) were killed by a grenade thrown by the police while they were running down the street. Three members of the Beqa family, Rizah (44), Zejnel (22) and minor Halim (12), were also killed near their yard. In addition to the above, a total of 45 locals.⁹²³ Rrahim, a survivor of the massacre, told reporters: "...early in the morning, the police came accompanied by armed soldiers." They entered the village furiously, arrested and beat half the population, the rest... here they are," pointing to a crowd of massacred people.⁹²⁴ All information confirms that the murders were committed at close range and that they were shot in the head and other parts of the body. While the other villagers were shot as they began to flee.⁹²⁵ Jacky Rowland, a *BBC* journalist, was among the first to confront the crime scenes in Reçak. "We came across a pit at the top of a hill, where we saw the first body. It was an old man who had been shot in the eye." Then we moved on and saw body after body, all of them ordinary villagers. – They were all shot in the head.⁹²⁶ William Walker, the head of the OSCE evaluation mission, was able to verify everything that was said at the scene. In the company of locals and a group of journalists, Walker, after seeing

⁹²⁰ "Crisis in Kosovo", *The New York Times*, January 20, 1999.

⁹²¹ KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti IX Nr. 10 janar – mars*, 32; *Koha Ditore*, 17 janar, 1999, 2; *Kosova Sot*, 17 janar, 1999, 2.

⁹²² Peter Beaumont & Patrick Wintour, "Kosovo: the untold story" *The Guardian*, July 18, 1999.

⁹²³ Human Rights Watch Report, investigation finds: Yugoslav Forces Guilty of War Crimes in Racak, Kosovo, January 29, 1999.

⁹²⁴ *The New York Times*, January, 17, 1999.

⁹²⁵ KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti IX Nr. 10 janar – mars*, 33; Human Rights Watch Report, investigation finds: Yugoslav Forces Guilty of War Crimes in Racak, Kosovo, January 29, 1999.

⁹²⁶ Jacky Rowland, Kosovo massacre: 'A twisted mass of bodies', *BBC*, January 16, 1999.

the massacred faces of Albanians, needed time to recover. Returning to his office, the ambassador called Washington for further consultations on how to proceed. James Steinberg, the deputy national security adviser at the White House, received a call directly from Reçak at 6 a.m. on January 16, 1999. Walker “called the House and offered a first-hand view. My first reaction: this is exactly what we feared. Second, that’s why we wanted the observer force there.”⁹²⁷ During a press conference, Walker stated in an agitated tone: “I have no words to describe my personal disgust and that of everyone who was with me.”⁹²⁸ He stated that the crimes committed had the effect of an execution. Of the 45 massacred, 2 were women, 1 was a child, and the remaining 42 were over 60 years of age. Walker further added that “all those I saw were old men who were obviously peasants, simple and suffering people. None of them had any other clothes than civilian clothes... I have been to other places of war and I have seen terrible things, but this surpasses anything I have ever seen before.”⁹²⁹ “Therefore, I have no words to describe my personal grief, in the face of a scene that can only be described as an inexplicable crime, although I am not a lawyer, from what I have personally seen, I do not hesitate to describe the event as a massacre, a crime against humanity. I also do not hesitate to accuse the government security forces of responsibility.”⁹³⁰ Because of the above, Walker publicly called on the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Louise Arbour, to launch an investigation into this crime within 24 hours, with the Belgrade regime cooperating with the Tribunal to find the criminals responsible for the massacre in Reçak.⁹³¹ More than anything else, the scenes of the massacre exposed the failures of Western policy, which seemed inadequate and wrong compared to Belgrade's successive lies.⁹³² It took a few hours for footage of the slaughtered victims to flood the world and become a turning point for the United States and its NATO allies.⁹³³ US President Bill Clinton strongly condemned the Serbian security forces for the massacre of civilians in Reçak, describing it as “premeditated, done to sow fear among Kosovars”.⁹³⁴ M. Albright writes in her

⁹²⁷ Barton Gellman, “Slaughter in Racak Changed Kosovo Policy”, Washington Post, April 18, 1999.

⁹²⁸ Special Report: Massacre of Civilians in Racak Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) January 17, 1999.

⁹²⁹ PBS – Frontline, Interview with Ambassador William Walker, 1999; *Koha Ditore* 17 janar, 1999, 3; *Kosova Sot*, 17 janar, 1999, 3.

⁹³⁰ Special Report: Massacre of Civilians in Racak Kosovo Verification Mission; *Koha Ditore* 17 janar, 1999, 3; *Kosova Sot*, 17 janar, 1999, 4.

⁹³¹ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 205.

⁹³² Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 149-50.

⁹³³ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 64.

⁹³⁴ *Kosova Sot*, 18 janar, 1999, 3.

memoirs that she heard the news on the radio in the early hours of the morning. Worried about the events, she recalls spending the entire Saturday (January 16, 1999) on the phone talking to half the world about the urgent steps that needed to be taken.⁹³⁵

A meeting of the National Security Council's Main Committee was held on this issue on January 17, 1999, at the White House, where some of the conclusions were: that Generals Wesley Clark and Klaus Naumann⁹³⁶ to travel to Belgrade as soon as possible, to urge the Russian government to publicly condemn Belgrade for the Reçak massacre, to have the National Security Council prepare a report to present the President with updated objectives for a limited air strike by January 19, 1999.⁹³⁷

On January 17, 1999, an extraordinary meeting of the ambassadors of NATO member countries was held, where "the Council strongly condemns the massacre of Albanian civilians in the village of Reçak in Kosova, which it considers a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law." The council also called on the FRY government to "take urgent steps to ensure that those responsible for these massacres are brought to justice. The names of those who participated in these murders and those who ordered them should be given to the International Court..." In this sense, "Milošević must be subject to all obligations towards NATO, OSCE and Security Council resolution 1199". Therefore, for all these and other issues, the Council decided to send the two main generals, Clark/Naumann, "in order to convey a clear message to Milošević and the seriousness of the serious situation in Kosova".⁹³⁸ All these events took place at a time when the Serbian media and politicians, despite numerous facts, as in other cases, continued to deny the crime. As a justification, they began to accuse others of "fabrication", as was the case with Ambassador Walker, who violated his mandate by protecting "Albanian terrorists".⁹³⁹ In fact, the only achievement of the "October agreement" was the establishment of the OSCE evaluation mission, whose purpose was to give the international community "eyes and ears" to document the violence.

⁹³⁵ Albright, *Zonja sekretare*, 458-459.

⁹³⁶ Until early May 1999, German General Klaus Naumann served as the Chairman of NATO's Military Committee and reported directly to NATO's political representatives. Before NATO went to war against Serbia, Naumann was part of the negotiating team that tried to get Milošević to withdraw his forces from Kosovo. *PBS – Frontline*, Interview with General Klaus Nauman, 1999.

⁹³⁷ Declassified Documents concerning National Security Council, Situation Room: WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504, Summary of Conclusions of Princip s Committee Meeting on Kosovo, January 17, 1999.

⁹³⁸ NATO Press Release (99)003, January 17, 1999.

⁹³⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 18 janar, 1999, 9.

As is well known, unarmed evaluators could not prevent the excesses of either side, but they could publicize the crime and point to the culprit.⁹⁴⁰ The unarmed observers of the OSCE were only spectators of the crimes and ethnic cleansing of Kosova.⁹⁴¹

In every subsequent meeting with international representatives, Milošević accused the Western media of propaganda fabrications. He completely denied the massacre in Reçak, recalls American diplomat James Pardew⁹⁴² who was on a mission in Kosova. His narrative was that: "a battle took place between Serbian forces and the KLA and that all the Albanians killed were members of the KLA. He spoke with the conviction of someone who believes what he is saying. He may have been mistaken, although more likely he thought I was stupid enough to believe what he said. I said: "If that's what your people are saying, they are lying to you", I have pictures of the massacred with me."⁹⁴³ In his article in the *Washington Post*, Jeffrey Smith presented evidence of a series of telephone conversations between Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Nikola Šainović and Minister of Internal Affairs Sreten Lukić, which proved their order to "hit hard" on Reçak. From those talks, two senior Serbian officials expressed concern about the international response to the Reçak attack and discussed how to portray the killings as the result of fighting between government troops and KLA members.⁹⁴⁴ Evidence that a twelve-year-old child, women, old women, and old men were also killed suggested a completely different truth.⁹⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, after speaking with survivors, determined that a massacre had taken place by Serb forces. Referring to more than 20 men found shot in the head in a dried-up stream bed above Reçak, the report said: "Villagers told stories of being rounded up, tortured, and then executed by government forces on a hill outside the village."⁹⁴⁶

Milošević refused entry to the UN war crimes prosecutor who arrived at the border to investigate the crime. He also ordered the deportation of Walker, explaining that "he is undesirable for Serbia

⁹⁴⁰ Kurt Schork, "Në Kosovë Serbisë po i kalon koha", *Koha Ditore*, 1 shkurt 1999, 7.

⁹⁴¹ Bardh Hamzaj, "Diplomaci dhe Forcë", *Zëri*, 30 janar, 1999, 6-7.

⁹⁴² James W. Pardew (February 5, 1944 – June 2, 2021) was a diplomat, international negotiator, and American military officer. His involvement in the Balkans began with the Dayton Accords. He served as Deputy Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State for Democracy in the Balkans during the Kosovo conflict and subsequent peace implementation from 1999 to 2001. [AN].

⁹⁴³ Pardew, *Paqebërësit*, 204-205.

⁹⁴⁴ Jeffrey Smith, "Serbs Tried to Cover up Massacre", *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1999.

⁹⁴⁵ "Letting Kosovo Burn", *The Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 1999.

⁹⁴⁶ Chris Bird & Ian Black, "Recak prepares to bury its dead", *The Guardian*, February 11, 1999.

and that he should leave within 48 hours".⁹⁴⁷ As expected, international reactions were immediate. The Security Council condemned the massacre of 45 Albanians in the strongest terms, demanding an urgent investigation, and also ordered the immediate withdrawal of the decision to declare William Walker persona non grata.⁹⁴⁸ The Russian newspaper *Vremja* reported that "Belgrade has once again put Russia in a difficult position, which traditionally takes a pro-Serbian position even when the Serbian genocide in Kosova is proven by facts." This time, Moscow has no more arguments to defend its ally.⁹⁴⁹ Russia, together with another Serbian ally, Greece, condemned the massacre in Reçak, calling on the Yugoslav state to withdraw the decision on the head of the peacekeeping mission and to enable the participation of Hague Court investigators in the investigation into the massacre. On the other hand, the signatory of the October 1998 agreement, R. Holbrooke, pointed out in his statement that: "this decision does not make sense... I cannot refuse the elected leader of an organization that gathers 54 countries, a diplomat with world experience who calls things as he sees them".⁹⁵⁰ This behavior by the Yugoslav government brought into question not only Walker but the entire mission. As OSCE spokesperson for Europe Melissa Fleming said, "it is very difficult to imagine how the Mission would operate if they were not allowed to tell the truth."⁹⁵¹ Thus, once again, Slobodan Milošević pushed NATO to the brink of military action in Kosova. Whether he intends to go all the way will depend on the dialogue with the two military generals, Clark/Naumann.⁹⁵² The general's demands were clear: enable an international investigation of the massacre, Walker's stay in Yugoslavia, and respect for the promises made to NATO in October.⁹⁵³ As Clark recalls, the meeting was very tense. Milošević denied everything: there was no massacre, the Serbian police were investigating, the Chief Prosecutor could not come because Yugoslavia did not recognize the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, and Walker had to leave because that was the will of the Serbian government. Milošević also refused to honor the promises made to NATO in the preliminary agreement. When the generals told him, "If we forward these answers to NATO, they will tell us to launch the planes... your

⁹⁴⁷ Jane Perlez, "Defiant Yugoslav orders Expulsion of U.S Diplomat", *The New York Times*, January 19, 1999.

⁹⁴⁸ Baudouin, *Lindja e një demokracie*, 143; *Kosova Sot*, 20 janar, 1999, 3.

⁹⁴⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 20 janar, 1999, 7.

⁹⁵⁰ Vukaj, *Kosova dhe Rusia*, 234; *Zëri*, 23 janar, 1999, 6.

⁹⁵¹ Neil King Jr. & Carla Anne Robbins, "Milosevic Orders Top U.S. Monitor To Leave Country, Bars Scrutiny", *The Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 1999; *Koha Ditore*, 20 janar, 1999, 8.

⁹⁵² Douglas Hamilton, "A e di Milosheviqi se ku është fundi", *Koha Ditore*, 20 janar, 1999, 6.

⁹⁵³ Jane Perlez, "Defiant Yugoslav orders Expulsion of U.S Diplomat", *The New York Times*, January 19, 1999.

country will end up in ruins if you do not obey.” Milošević replied, “you are threatening! – you are war criminals.”⁹⁵⁴ The generals reported to NATO's Permanent Representatives Council that there was no flexibility in the FRY's position and that there was little willingness to cooperate with the international community or for Serbia to fulfill its obligations under the October agreement. As a result, NATO continued consultations to take some defensive measures, not ruling out any options.⁹⁵⁵ NATO also announced that it had shortened the readiness period for executing orders for attacks on "Yugoslav" targets from 96 hours to 48 hours.⁹⁵⁶

9.2 Rambouillet Conference

The conclusion after the massacre in Reçak was clear: if European politicians want to develop an independent policy focused on human rights, then despite complicated interests within the EU, the true address of the Albanians of Kosova must not be forgotten.⁹⁵⁷ Given the fact that this is a war taking place in Europe, Europeans must do their part to stop the fighting, including the military aspect. Western leaders have turned a blind eye to the crimes of the Belgrade regime during the wars in Yugoslavia, “believing in political agreements,” Bugajski writes. More than 200,000 people lie in mass graves. It was a silent accusation of the West's inaction and incompetence. So if NATO, or rather the international community, hesitates to act decisively this time too, the result should come as no surprise to anyone.⁹⁵⁸ Quick action was needed. The facts so far were: the "flying diplomacy" of Prishtina-Belgrade, after a year of efforts, entered a dead end where both sides rejected the mediation plan, the implementation of the October agreement failed, the number of people expelled from their homes grew day by day, at a time when the air temperatures fell below zero. If the massacre in Abri in September 1998 sensitized Western opinion in favor of stronger diplomatic action, including ACTORDER, the massacre in Reçak was an example of Serbian violence that awakened memories of the repetition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's crimes in Kosova.⁹⁵⁹ British-American journalist Christopher Hitchens reported: “It was quite clear to those of us who supported the intervention that Milošević wanted the territory

⁹⁵⁴ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 196.

⁹⁵⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 21 janar, 1999, 2.

⁹⁵⁶ *Kosova Sot*, 21 janar, 1999, 2.

⁹⁵⁷ Erich Rathfelder, “Evropës duhet t'i bjerë ndërmend se nuk ka paqe pa lirinë e shqiptarëve”, *Koha Ditore*, 24 janar, 1999, 6.

⁹⁵⁸ Bugajski, *Ngritja e Kosovës*, 65; Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër*, 127.

⁹⁵⁹ Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 152.

of Kosova without the local Albanian population and that a plan for mass deportation, preceded by several murders, was already in preparation.”⁹⁶⁰ Faced with these facts, Western diplomacy has begun to take serious steps towards a solution. The general conclusion is that it is necessary to "act immediately, to reach a binding" political agreement.⁹⁶¹

Washington has long expressed a willingness to intervene militarily, while some European partners remained hesitant to enter the war before giving it a final chance to negotiate.⁹⁶² From a European perspective, there was a belief that everything should be done to achieve a political solution that would avoid military confrontation.⁹⁶³ This idea was announced at a meeting of political leaders of the Contact Group on January 22, 1999 in London. In a statement to the media, the Group announced that it had identified the goals and fundamental elements for the start of direct negotiations with international mediation. All members of the Contact Group, especially Hill and Petritsch, "will increase the pressure on the parties to make these negotiations successful".⁹⁶⁴ As has long been known, the main dilemma remained the diametrically opposed positions of the warring parties. The Albanians had armed themselves to gain their independence, while the Serbs continued to insist "that the Kosova problem was their internal problem." The new diplomatic initiative meant a "take it or leave it" option. Washington insisted that the peace proposal would be on the "table" for only 96 hours, during which the Contact Group and NATO would exert maximum military and political pressure on both sides, with as few changes as possible to accept what they had so far refused. The Serbs were asked to accept granting autonomy to Kosova or face NATO air strikes, while the Kosovars would have to choose between accepting anything less than independence or risk losing Western support.⁹⁶⁵ Diplomatic momentum intensified in the last week of January 1999. Support for the combined political-military initiative of the Contact Group required detailed coordination among all international organizations. NATO had already confirmed that it had reviewed the plan and would contribute to the combination of politics and

⁹⁶⁰ Christopher Hitchens, "Body Count in Kosovo" *The Nation*, June ISSUE 11, 2001.

⁹⁶¹ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 153; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 64; Weller, *Shtetësi e kontestuar*, 189; Shala Vitet e Kosovës, 210.

⁹⁶² Hill, *Pararojë*, 183.

⁹⁶³ Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër*, 123.

⁹⁶⁴ Statement of the Contact Group, Chairman's Conclusions – London, 22 January 1999.

⁹⁶⁵ Mirko Klarin "Pavarësia nuk është përfshirë – por as nuk përjashtohet", *Koha Ditore*, 25 janar, 1999, 3; "Diplomatic 'Offensive' Under way for Kosovo", RFE/RL, Newline, January 25, 1999; *Kosova Sot*, 25 janar, 1999, 3.

force.⁹⁶⁶ According to a confidential National Security Council document dated January 25-26, 1999, the US continued to insist that NATO should give Belgrade a clear warning before the Contact Group meeting.⁹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Secretary of State Albright traveled to Moscow and other European capitals to broker an agreement on which points would trigger NATO airstrikes. The main obstacle to diplomatic action turned out to be the reluctance of the Allies. With the exception of Great Britain and to some extent France, none of the Allies was yet prepared to use force, at least at this stage, even as the horrors of Reçak became fully apparent.⁹⁶⁸ This is why Washington has issued an ultimatum to the Contact Group: if they refuse to support NATO's engagement, the US and its closest allies will have no choice but to act.⁹⁶⁹ During a meeting of the EU Council of Ministers on 25 January 1999, the British Foreign Secretary said: "It is very frustrating to see on our television screens the crimes that we saw last week in Kosova, crimes that were happening before our eyes on European soil". On the other hand, Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Pos assessed: "A political plan for military action is needed, and this political plan must be found by the EU together with others". Jacques then added: "It is necessary to start with the Albanians to define a transitional status so that the Albanians can accept it, and then it is necessary to go to Milošević and say – take it or leave it".⁹⁷⁰ Despite the reluctance of the European allies, the main challenge remained Russia. Albright recalls a meeting on January 26, 1999, with Foreign Minister Ivanov, while they were watching the play "La Traviata" at the Bolshoi Theater. "During one of the pauses, I didn't mince my words: 'Listen Igor, I'm telling you frankly. If Kosova explodes, we will have enormous obstacles to working together on a number of other issues. We must not let that happen. We must find a political solution. The Europeans are concerned about your reaction if NATO tries to act. The situation is serious. I must tell the Europeans that NATO can use force to achieve a political solution and you will find a way to accept that.'" The discussions continued, until the Russian diplomat replied: "Russia will not accept aerial bombing of the Serbs... such a thing is unacceptable. NATO has no right to attack a sovereign state." To soften the stance, Ivanov said: "We, however, agree with your desire for a political solution and perhaps the threat of the

⁹⁶⁶ *Kosova Sot*, 26 janar, 1999, 2.

⁹⁶⁷ Declassified Documents concerning National Security Council, Situation Room: WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504, Summary of Conclusions of Principals Committee Meeting on Kosovo, January 25-26, 1999.

⁹⁶⁸ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 72.

⁹⁶⁹ Bugajski, *Ngritja e Kosovës*, 73.

⁹⁷⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 26 janar, 1999, 4.

use of force is necessary to achieve such a thing.”⁹⁷¹ The official talks between the two ministers ended in Moscow with a joint statement in which the two senior officials expressed concern about the worsening situation in Kosova. They positively assessed the results of the Contact Group meeting of 22 January 1999, calling on the parties to intensify efforts to reach a consensus for a political solution for Kosova. Russia and the USA insist that Yugoslavia fully meet the demands of the international community. They also express outrage at the killing of Kosova Albanians in the village of Reçak, which is unjustified and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.⁹⁷² The joint statement was useful because it showed Yugoslav leader Milošević that he could no longer automatically count on Russian support. Moreover, for the first time, Albright did not rule out the use of American ground troops as part of a peacekeeping mission in Kosova, saying: "We will consider that among other options."⁹⁷³

On a day when all the attention of the media and the public was focused on the historic meeting of the Contact Group, military and police forces committed a new crime in the village of Rogovë e Hasit in the early morning hours of January 29, 1999, killing 25 Albanians. In addition to the civilians, 3 members of the KLA were also killed. They were killed in the courtyards of houses. 8 of them were killed in the courtyard of the house, another 8 in a car, 4 in a garage and another 4 in a house 800 meters away, while another person was found dead in the evening hours of the same day.⁹⁷⁴ The deputy head of international OSCE monitors, British national Karol Drewienkiewicz, condemned what he called a “mass killing” in the village of Rogovë as “another serious blow to our efforts” to lay the groundwork for peace talks.⁹⁷⁵ Images of a new massacre, just two weeks after the one in Reçak, circulated in the world media along with those from the Contact Group meeting on January 29, 1999 in London, which was supposed to prepare a diplomatic procedure to stop the war in Kosova.⁹⁷⁶ Several days of Western diplomacy culminated when the Contact Group ministers, including Russia, presented a draft peace plan for Kosova from Lancaster House

⁹⁷¹ Albright, *Zonja sekretare*, 462; Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov Joint Press Conference January 26, 1999, Moscow, Russia.

⁹⁷¹ Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 241-242.

⁹⁷² Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 241-242.

⁹⁷³ Jane Perlez, “Russia and U.S. Urge Kosovo Talks; Albright Weighs Troops”, *The New York Times*, January 27, 1999.

⁹⁷⁴ KMDLNJ, *Buletin viti IX Nr. 10 janar – mars*, 86.

⁹⁷⁵ *The New York Times*, January 30, 1999.

⁹⁷⁶ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 212.

in London. The ministers agreed that: the warring parties, Serbs and Albanians, would ultimately convene an international conference to begin on 6 February 1999 at the Rambouillet Castle in France. The plan called for: the parties to reach an agreement within a maximum of two weeks and for the talks to be concluded within seven days with the possibility of continuing for another seven days, depending on whether progress justified an extension. The negotiations would be chaired by two foreign ministers, British and French, Robin Cook and Hubert Védrine. The Contact Group appointed three ambassadors as international mediators for the Conference: Chris Hill (USA), Wolfgang Petritsch (EU) and Boris Mayorski (Russia). The group stressed that the future of the people of Kosova was in the hands of leaders in Belgrade and Kosova. British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook is set to travel to Belgrade and Prishtina to present a draft of a new peace plan for Kosova to the warring parties. The Contact Group will hold both parties accountable if they do not take advantage of the opportunity now offered to them.⁹⁷⁷ The situation was assessed as the last chance to avoid an all-out war in Kosova. Jonathan S. Landay, editor at *The Christian Science Monitor* writes that for the US and its NATO allies, their credibility, the future of the Alliance and the stability of Southeast Europe were being questioned daily. The convening of the conference in Rambouillet was therefore also seen as a test of whether Britain and France, eager to assume greater responsibility for European security, could erase the stain of their inaction in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹⁷⁸ The following day, 29 January 1999, in a marathon meeting, the NATO Council gave its full support to the Contact Group's negotiating strategy for an interim political solution, to be completed within the given deadline. "If these demands are not met, NATO stands ready to take all necessary measures... to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe." France wanted the six-nation Contact Group to be given the authority to carry out air strikes, but the US insisted that NATO Secretary General Javier Solana be the rightful owner.⁹⁷⁹ As a result of these circumstances, the Council gives full authority to NATO Secretary General Javier Solano to order airstrikes against FRY targets.⁹⁸⁰

To convey the Contact Group's common message, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook met with S. Milošević in Belgrade. As a prerequisite for participation in the talks, the Contact Group

⁹⁷⁷ Statement by the Contact Group issued in London on January 29, 1999.

⁹⁷⁸ Jonathan S. Landay, "From war to words as Kosovo talks open", *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 8, 1999.

⁹⁷⁹ Joseph Fitchett, "Use of Force in Kosovo Splits NATO", *The New York Times*, February 8, 1999.

⁹⁸⁰ NATO, Press Release (99)12, January 30, 1999.

outlined in the invitation a core document consisting of ten non-negotiable principles to which each participant had to agree:

(1). The necessity of an immediate cessation of violence and respect for the ceasefire; (2). A peaceful solution through dialogue; (3). An interim agreement: a mechanism for a final settlement after a three-year transitional period; (4). No unilateral change of the interim status; (5). Territorial integrity of the FRY and its neighbors; (6). Protection of the rights of members of all national communities (preservation of identity, language and education: special protection of their religious institutions); (7). Free and fair elections in Kosova under OSCE supervision; (8). No prosecution of anyone for crimes related to the conflict in Kosova (except for crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international law); (9). Amnesty and release of political prisoners; (10). International participation and full cooperation of the parties in implementation.⁹⁸¹

The ultimatum was clear. Serbian diplomatic representatives must appear in France the following weekend (February 6, 1999) to negotiate effective self-government for Kosova or face NATO bombing and other military action that will force them to negotiate an agreement. Sources within the Serbian delegation confirmed that Milošević agreed to a quick response. He will not participate personally, but he will send the President of Serbia, Milan Milutinović.⁹⁸² However, even in such circumstances, the Serbs tried to create divisions in the international community. On 2 February 1999, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Živadin Jovanović requested an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council, arguing that NATO had made an "open and clear threat of aggression against the FRY as an independent and sovereign state, a member of the UN". The Russian ally Igor Ivanov himself reacted: "The Security Council supported the conclusions of the Contact Group, therefore there is no need for a new meeting".⁹⁸³

Meanwhile, from Belgrade, with specific demands, on 30 January 1999, Foreign Minister Cook came to meet the Albanian representatives. Although a meeting had been announced in Prishtina, weather conditions led to the talks being held in Skopje. He first met with President Rugova, who confirmed his participation in the meeting. He continued his talks with Adem Demaçi, the political

⁹⁸¹ Marc Weller, "The Rambouillet conference on Kosovo", *International Affairs*, 72. 2, 1999, 225; Edita Tahiri, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, (Prishtinë: Dukagjini, 2001), 56; Ramë Buja, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, (Prizren: Vertigo, 2006), 61.

⁹⁸² Steven Erlanger, "Briton Issues An Ultimatum To Both Sides Over Kosovo", *The New York Times*, January 31, 1999.

⁹⁸³ *Koha Ditore*, 3 shkurt, 1999, 3.

representative of the KLA, and with the president of the United Democratic Movement (LDM), Rexhep Qosja. They all stated that they would give Cook a response within a few days, after consulting with the other members.⁹⁸⁴ After the meetings, during a press conference, Cook stated: "I came to Belgrade and Skopje with the same and clear messages." According to him, this agreement "offers Belgrade an opportunity to leave the conflict... while offering the Kosova Albanians the basis for removing the fear that most of them are exposed to today".⁹⁸⁵

While the dilemma over Serbian participation persisted, Hill and Petritsch continued to meet with Albanian representatives.⁹⁸⁶ After these meetings, Hill noted: "I am in Prishtina at the request of Secretary Albright, to see if there will be a positive response from the Albanian side."⁹⁸⁷ Hill knew that the Albanians had until February 3, 1999, not only to demonstrate their willingness to participate, but also to appoint members of the Negotiating Team. What had not been done in months of dialogue was to be accomplished in five days.⁹⁸⁸ The participation in the meeting is confirmed by the LDK, LDB and independent intellectuals (Veton Surroi, Blerim Shala). Demaçi ruled out his own participation in the Rambouillet conference, but stated that the KLA would soon make a statement on the matter. His arguments were numerous. However, due to the circumstances in which Kosova found itself, a "realpolitik" stance was needed, which in many respects did not seem promising: "Going to talk, negotiating with a regime that has not fulfilled any of the demands, has not respected resolutions 1160, 1199, 1203, not even the agreement with the USA is a mistake." When asked whether the Albanian negotiating team could go (to France) without a KLA representative, Demaçi replied: "If the delegation goes without a KLA representative, what has happened so far will happen. The KLA is not there "their pretty eyes", but because it is the main force of resistance to the Serbian regime. If they want a real solution without the KLA, there is no solution."⁹⁸⁹ On February 3, 1999, Petritsch nevertheless received approval from KLA political director Hashim Thaçi to participate in the conference.⁹⁹⁰ The issue of the KLA's departure to Rambouillet was considered in all its dimensions by the KLA General Staff, with fierce debates

⁹⁸⁴ *Kosova Sot*, 31 janar, 1999, 2.

⁹⁸⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 31 janar, 1999, 3.

⁹⁸⁶ Hill and Petritsch were constantly active. Hill was the resident ambassador in Skopje at the time. While Hill was an Austrian representing the European Union.

⁹⁸⁷ *Kosova Sot*, 2 shkurt, 1999, 3.

⁹⁸⁸ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 215.

⁹⁸⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 3 shkurt, 1999, 2.

⁹⁹⁰ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 169.

pro and contra, both at the political and military levels.⁹⁹¹ The main challenge was that the KLA was using arms as a means to achieve independence, which the Rambouillet conference did not guarantee. However, the KLA's position was clear - if Rambouillet failed, the war would continue.⁹⁹²

Along with mentioning the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, the new negotiations were unclear regarding the implementation of future agreements reached.⁹⁹³ So the “elements of principle” did not mention who would be responsible for implementing the agreement. It was generally known that without the presence of NATO peacekeeping forces, peace in Kosova could not be built. This issue was rightly raised by NATO Secretary General Javier Solana during a discussion at the International Security Conference in Munich, Germany, on 6 February 1999, when he informed those present that: “Any agreement reached at the Conference on Kosova without the presence and implementation of NATO ground forces is doomed to failure and will not succeed.”⁹⁹⁴ The US has therefore already confirmed its participation with 5,000 soldiers, as have the British and French, who have announced that they will send troops to Kosova as part of NATO's peacekeeping efforts.⁹⁹⁵

On the other hand, despite the polarization that existed on the political and military scene of Kosova, the path and means by which these formations have gone so far, the goal united them all - the final liberation from Serbia and the achievement of Kosova's independence. The national duty was to unite the entire political and military spectrum that on February 3, 1999 said "YES" to participation in Rambouillet and presented the negotiating team. The delegation consisted of four key groups of participants: the KLA, represented by members of the General Staff: Hashim Thaçi, Jakup Krasniqi, Ramë Buja, Azem Sylja and Xhavit Haliti; the LDK represented by: Ibrahim Rugova, Fehmi Agani, Edita Tahiri, Bujar Bukoshi and Idriz Ajeti; the LBD represented by: Rexhep Qosja, Mehmet Hajrizi, Hydajet Hyseni and Bajram Kosumi; while the fourth group of participants was represented by independent publicists Veton Surroi and Blerim Shala.⁹⁹⁶ The next

⁹⁹¹ Krasniqi, *Kthesa e Madhe*, 159.

⁹⁹² Lama, *Kosova dhe Ushtria Çlirimtare*, 310.

⁹⁹³ Judah, *Kosova*, 253.

⁹⁹⁴ *Koha Ditore*, 7 shkurt, 1999, 5.

⁹⁹⁵ Elizabeth Becker, “U.S. Aides Pushing Plan to Use G.I.'S in Kosovo Truce”, *The New York Times*, January 30, 1999.

⁹⁹⁶ Kosova Sot, 4 shkurt, 1999, 3; Rexhep Qosja, *Paqja e Përgjakshme, Konferenca ndërkombëtare për Kosovën*, (Tiranë: Toena, 1999), 23; Buja, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, 65.

day, 4 February 1999, despite the reluctance of the KLA to attend, Serbia approved the participation of a Serbian delegation in the international conference. Vojislav Šešelj, the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, whose party had the largest number of representatives in the Serbian Parliament, announced his party's position that, despite going to Rambouillet, the Serbs should not give up: "Kosova and Metohija should remain in Serbia no matter the cost, even if they bomb us."⁹⁹⁷ However, the composition of the Serbian delegation remained a secret until the last moments. When their composition became public, even the organizers themselves were unpleasantly surprised.⁹⁹⁸ The difference between the delegations was considerable. While the Albanian delegation included the entire political, military and civil society decision-making elite of the entire previous decade,⁹⁹⁹ the composition of the Serbian delegation was completely contradictory. They were mostly individuals such as legal experts or lower-ranking politicians, but none of them had any real influence on decision-making. The members of the Serbian negotiating delegation were: Ratko Marković (Vice-President of the Government of Serbia), Vladan Kutlešić (Vice-President of the Government of Yugoslavia), Nikola Šainović¹⁰⁰⁰ (Yugoslav representative for Kosova), Vladimir Štambuk (representative of the Yugoslav Left, JUL), Vojislav Živković (leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia, SPS, in Kosova), and several members of other minorities in Kosova.¹⁰⁰¹ "If we didn't know that it had a political background," writes Austrian researcher Wolfgang Libal, "then it would seem to us that Milošević and his associates are mocking the international community and the Contact Group."¹⁰⁰²

9.3 Start of negotiations

In the meantime, official confirmations from both delegations had arrived. Hundreds of journalists and numerous international figures were waiting for the conference to begin.¹⁰⁰³ For a moment, the opening of the conference was "questioned" due to the ban on the travel of members

⁹⁹⁷ Bardh Rugova, "Serbia i tha po hyrjes në kështjellë", *Koha Ditore*, 5 shkurt, 1999, 2.

⁹⁹⁸ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 222.

⁹⁹⁹ Judah Kosova, 246-247.

¹⁰⁰⁰ The latest wiretaps revealed by The Washington Post directly implicate Šainović in commanding the security forces in the massacre in Reçak. Jeffrey Smith, "Serbs Tried to Cover up Massacre", *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1999.

¹⁰⁰¹ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 174-175.

¹⁰⁰² Wolfgang Libal, "Loja e Milosheviqit në kështjellë", *Kosova Sot*, 10 shkurt, 1999, 10.

¹⁰⁰³ *Koha Ditore*, 6 shkurt, 1999, *Kosova Sot*, 6 shkurt, 1999, 10.

of the Kosova Liberation Army by Yugoslav President Milošević. This encouraged the solidarity of the other members of the Albanian delegation who declared that "without the KLA there is no Rambouillet". "The delegation will travel as a whole, or it will not travel at all," confirmed the members of the Albanian delegation.¹⁰⁰⁴ Thanks to international pressure, the Serbian authorities were forced to change their decision. Three KLA representatives joined the rest of the Albanian delegation. Commenting on this action of the Serbian regime, British Minister R. Cook pointed out: "I don't believe that anyone should be surprised by what happened in the last 24 hours."¹⁰⁰⁵ 15 minutes before the official opening of the Conference, on February 6, 1999 at around 7 p.m., the Albanian representatives, tired of the long journey, arrived in full (with the exception of Hashim Thaçi) in the ceremonial hall where, apart from French President Jacques Chirac with the opening speech, the official heads of the conference, Robin Cook and Hubert Védrine, wished success to the delegations.¹⁰⁰⁶ In his speech, President Chirac called on both sides to follow the example of history, putting aside their differences: "There are rare cases when history is in the hands of only a few people. This is the fate of Kosova, but above all it is the fate of the women, men and children who live in the country, for which you must decide here. In the coming days, the eyes of the world will be on you, watching and waiting for you to sign the agreement proposed by the Contact Group. You represent two peoples who belong entirely to Europe and that is why the idea of a war in Kosova is unbearable for us". Finally, the French President stressed: "We will not accept that the continuation of violence increasingly threatens the stability of all of South-Eastern Europe. We want peace on our continent".¹⁰⁰⁷ Robin Cook, the British Foreign Secretary - co-chair of the Conference, continued the well-intentioned call for peace in his speech, recalling the difficult but overcome moments between France and England, now the organizers of the Rambouillet Conference. "This castle was not always so peaceful. The castle that once stood on this site was attacked by the English three times. Today, however, Britain and France are leading these talks together. A symbol of the strong partnership we have had. Like all countries of the European Union, we have learned that our peoples and their economies gain much more from peace and

¹⁰⁰⁴ Jane Perlez, "As Other Delegates Prepare for Kosovo Talks, Ploy by Milosevic Grounds Ethnic Albanians", *The New York Times*, February 6, 1999; Qosja, *Paqja e Përgjakshme*, 25.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 7 shkurt, 1999, 4; *Kosova Sot*, 7 shkurt, 1999, 3.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 222-223.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Jacques Chirac: Ouverture de la conférence de négociation sur l'avenir du Kosovo à Rambouillet, 6 février 1999; *Koha Ditore*, 7 shkurt, 1999, 3; Baudouin, *Lindja e një demokracie*, 158-159.

stability than they have ever gained from war or conflict."¹⁰⁰⁸ Since London and Paris were the main drivers of this event, many began to call the Conference “the European Dayton.” Critics pointed to the fact that European mediators “may get carried away by their need for success and accept a bad deal,” and so (the Albanians) insisted on the involvement of the United States in a leading role.¹⁰⁰⁹

However, the Rambouillet negotiations were qualitatively different from those in Dayton, Paul Williams writes, pointing out that the Tribunal for Yugoslavia created a clear pattern of war crimes and genocide against the civilian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while data from the OSCE Evaluation Mission in Kosova shows the continuation of the same crimes in Kosova.¹⁰¹⁰

The alliance between the rival Kosova Albanian political groups, particularly the KLA and the LDK, was known before the negotiations began. However, in order to bring the KLA to the negotiating table, it was essential to achieve a certain level of compromise between the LDK and the KLA. For years, the West had promoted Rugova as a leader who could lead the talks. However, the new reality indicated that peace talks could not take place without the presence of the KLA, which had been “dictating the pace” of events on the ground.¹⁰¹¹ There was a dilemma regarding negotiation participation, that is, the question of who will bear the main negotiating burden. The dilemma was “quickly overcome”. The representatives of the KLA had the support of the LBD, which prevailed in the position of the delegation.¹⁰¹² Further, in several hours of talks within the Albanian delegation, it was established the need to elect the presidency and the head of the negotiating delegation, which would be led by representatives of three groups, Hashim Thaçi (KLA), Ibrahim Rugova (LDK) and Rexhep Qosja (LBD), and Veton Surroi from the group of independents. Among the majority of Kosova delegates, there was a belief that the president of the delegation should be someone from the ranks of the KLA, so the group elected 30-year-old Hashim

¹⁰⁰⁸ Judah, *Kosova*, 249.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Joseph Fitchett, “Use of Force in Kosovo Splits NATO”, *The New York Times*, February 8, 1999; *Kosova Sot*, 8 shkurt, 1999, 2.

¹⁰¹⁰ Paul R. Williams, “The North of Justice and the Negotiation of the Rambouillet/Paris Peace Accords”, *Leiden Law School Research Paper No. 13*, January, 2000, 209.

¹⁰¹¹ Unifying the Kosovo Factions: The Way Forward, *ICG Balkans Report N°58*, Brussels - Tirana, 12 March, 1999.

¹⁰¹² Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 224.

Thaçi, political director of the KLA, as president, while Veton Surroi was the spokesperson of the Presidency and the Delegation.¹⁰¹³

The rules of the Conference were that the Contact Group's proposals would remain as such, unless a party convinced the negotiators that a change in the negotiating terms would be necessary to better implement the provision, or unless both parties agreed to such a change.¹⁰¹⁴ Also modeled after Dayton, the talks would be conducted in strict isolation from the outside world and with as little contact with the media as possible. Members of the delegation were not allowed to leave the castle. Unlike Dayton, the "contact blockade" could not be complete due to the use of mobile phones.¹⁰¹⁵ The delegations worked separately, with the mediation of international negotiators. All three international mediators had political experience and support behind them. The American Christopher Hill had the military and political support of the USA. Petritsch, who represented the EU, had negotiating experience with the KLA. Boris Mayorski's task was to keep the Serbian representatives in the talks.¹⁰¹⁶ The contact group decided that in the first phase of the talks, they will pay attention only to the political part, which is considered the most challenging and decisive point in the long-term perspective. In this context, in the first step, the leaders of the negotiations handed over the first chapter (Constitution), the third (Maintenance and supervision of elections) and the sixth (Ombudsman) to the delegations.¹⁰¹⁷ The delegations, together with their experts, were to submit the texts with relevant comments to the leaders of the talks (Cook and Vedrine) by 12 February 1999.¹⁰¹⁸ In the coming days, the delegations would receive an increasingly

¹⁰¹³ Qosja, Paqja e përgjakshme, 46-47; Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 176; Shala, Vitet e Kosovës, 224; Krasniqi, *Kthesa e Madhe*, 169; *Kosova Sot*, 8 shkurt, 1999, 2.

¹⁰¹⁴ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 213.

¹⁰¹⁵ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 173-174.

¹⁰¹⁶ Kurt Schork, "Cili është treshi i ndërmjetësuesve që i prin bisedimeve për Kosovën", *Kosova Sot*, 8 shkurt, 1999, 10.

¹⁰¹⁷ The proposal of the Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo by international mediators at the Rambouillet conference included two basic points: Principles and Confidence Building Measures. The agreement had a total of 8 chapters, which provided for the governance of Kosovo after the war, until the final status is resolved. Chapter 1. Constitution; Chapter 2. Police and civilian public security; Chapter 3. Conduct and supervision of elections; Chapter 4 Economic issues; Chapter 5. Implementation I; Chapter 6 Ombudsman; Chapter 7 Implementation II, Article I: General Obligations, Point b) The Parties agree that NATO will establish and deploy a KFOR force which may consist of ground, air and naval units from NATO and non-NATO countries, operating under the authority and subject to the direction and political control of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) through the chain of command; Amendments to Chapter 8, Comprehensive Assessment and Closing Clauses. Rambouillet Agreement Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo, Article XI: Entry into Force, S/1999/648.

¹⁰¹⁸ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 178-179.

demanding list of "difficult topics" for negotiations, such as: the demilitarization of the KLA and the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova, so much so that an unidentified member of the Serbian delegation called the draft text "terrible, because it would completely distance Serbia from Kosova."¹⁰¹⁹ In his first meeting with Albanian representatives on February 7, 1998, Hill reminded them that the texts of the agreement had been approved by the Contact Group. "We are ready to talk to you and the Serbian team, and if you want, we will change this text."¹⁰²⁰ As it was a matter of negotiations imposed by the international community, at a time when the disagreements between the parties were diametrically opposed, expectations of a difficult negotiation process were also realistic among the organizers. At meetings with both delegations on February 8, 1999, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his French counterpart, Hubert Védrine, strongly urged both sides to minimize bickering and seriously approach the talks. "I cannot be optimistic because the situation is very complicated and there are no easy questions in these discussions," said Védrine.¹⁰²¹ On the other hand, Hill appeared more restrained in his first appearance for the media on February 9, 1999, he announced that negotiators and experts were working to get the first comments from the negotiating parties. Petritsch mentioned as a mitigating circumstance the fact that negotiations are now being conducted in the manner of the so-called "shuttle diplomacy", from room to room, and no longer on the route from Prishtinë to Belgrade. Both reiterated the position that: "it is a three-year transitional temporary agreement that should guarantee a good life and better relations with neighbors for all people".¹⁰²² The conciliators were challenged by different proposals from both sides. The Albanians initially demanded the signing of a ceasefire aimed at stopping the killings, which the Serbian-Yugoslav delegation opposed, and in response they demanded the signing of a declaration of fundamental principles, which the Albanians opposed because the statement did not mention the possibility of holding a referendum.¹⁰²³

Although there were differences and rivalries among them, the goals of the Albanian delegation were the same. After intensive work, assisted by internationally engaged experts such as Morton Abramowitz, a former American diplomat, Paul Williams, Marc Weller, a prominent expert on

¹⁰¹⁹ Charles Trueheart, "Pressure Mounting for Kosovo Settlement", *The Washington Post*, February 9, 1999.

¹⁰²⁰ Qosja, *Paqja e përgjakshme*, 37-38.

¹⁰²¹ Bill Hoffmann, "Bickering Pushes Kosovo talks to Brink" *New York Post*, February 9, 1999.

¹⁰²² Beqë Cufaj, Augustin Palokaj, "Integriteti garantohet përkohësisht", *Koha Ditore*, 10 shkurt, 1999, 3.

¹⁰²³ *Koha Ditore*, 14 shkurt, 1999, 7.

international law, and Shinasi Rama, nominated by the KLA, a doctoral candidate at Columbia University, the Albanian delegation managed to submit substantive comments on all the documents they received in the first week. Weller writes that Kosova has always been reserved about its position on the entire package, which, according to him, should include a strong NATO-led implementation unit.¹⁰²⁴ The political platform, drawn up by the Albanian delegation, briefly aimed to:

Severance of all political, legal and economic ties between Kosova and Serbia and Yugoslavia, withdrawal of all Serbian troops from Kosova, deployment of NATO forces in Kosova and maintenance of the KLA's status as a defensive force, adoption of an interim constitution that would enable the creation of democratic institutions. After the end of the transitional period, the citizens of Kosova should vote on the final status through a referendum. They should also decide on the creation of conditions for economic development. Yugoslavia is obliged to cooperate with the Hague Tribunal, and Kosova has the right to participate in the division of Yugoslavia's legacy. These items should be established in the form of an interim agreement that has the status of an international treaty. The guarantors of the agreement should be the USA, the European Union, NATO and the Contact Group.¹⁰²⁵

Tim Judah, journalist and author of the book *Kosova: War and Revenge* writes that the tactic of the Albanian delegation was to say: "Yes, but..." their remarks always began with the note that they were "acceptable", but other points should be added by giving written comments for each point. So, the diplomatic mediators at this stage were somewhat satisfied with the constructiveness of the Albanians.¹⁰²⁶ The opposite opinion prevailed among the Serbian-Yugoslav delegation, which, apart from a few introductory words at the beginning, spoke almost nothing for the next ten days. They were accused of negligence and disinterest in the negotiation process, and it was argued that they had come only to fulfill a formality. They disrupted order in the fortress with organizations, parties, and the singing of Serbian songs, which irritated both the Albanians and the international mediators. Their tactic was to oppose everything. For example, they never submitted

¹⁰²⁴ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 220.

¹⁰²⁵ Tahiri, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, 57-58; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 227; Krasniqi, *Kthesa e Madhe*, 167-168; Buja, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, 81-83.

¹⁰²⁶ Judah, *Kosova*, 254. Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 181.

their comments on the draft text of the agreement in writing, as the international mediators requested.¹⁰²⁷

Cooperation with the Hague Tribunal was a particularly challenging issue because it also concerned some members of the delegation personally. Milan Milutinović and Nikola Šainović participated in organizing ethnic cleansing and crimes in Kosova. This fact will subsequently be proven by a lawsuit filed by the Hague Court.¹⁰²⁸

The negotiations, therefore, did not go according to plan and the first week ended without any results, and the international mediators Hill, Petritsch and Mayorski asked their authorities to increase the pressure on both sides. On those days, apart from the organizing ministers Cook and Védrine, the castle will also be visited by other ministers who are members of the Contact Group: Joschka Fischer, Lamberto Dini and Igor Ivanov. All three diplomats reminded the delegations of the advantages of signing the agreement. All problems must be resolved through negotiations, Ivanov asserted, warning that "the use of force - NATO would be dangerous in a region like Kosova".¹⁰²⁹ The Italian minister, among other things, noted that a "serious burden" for their failure will fall on those who refuse to sign the agreement.¹⁰³⁰ After these meetings, US Secretary of State Albright went a step further, first meeting with the delegations separately, and then for the first time bringing both delegations together at the same table on 14 February 1999. In her memoirs, she writes: "I began my efforts starting with Milan Milutinović, who came to Paris to support the Serbian-Yugoslav delegation. The political solution we offered you is good for your country. Accepting this agreement would disarm the KLA, keep Kosova within Yugoslavia, and allow the Yugoslav army to continue patrolling the border. However, this would only be achieved if you agreed to the presence of NATO peacekeeping forces," to which Milutinović categorically opposed.¹⁰³¹ When Albright warned him, "Do you understand that NATO will attack you if the Serbs do not accept the agreement?" "Yes, yes," Milutinović answered, to continue with a provocative question: "And why are you so worried about the Albanians? We can solve their

¹⁰²⁷ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 79; Judah, *Kosovo*, 253; Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 218.

¹⁰²⁸ Paul R. Williams, "The North of Justice and the Negotiation of the Rambouillet/Paris Peace Accords", *Leiden Law School Research Paper No. 13*, January, 2000, 212.

¹⁰²⁹ *Kosova Sot*, 15 shkurt, 1999, 3.

¹⁰³⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 15 shkurt, 1999, 4.

¹⁰³¹ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 464.

problem in just a few days".¹⁰³² For which there was already a developed plan (Operation Horseshoe). Albright continued the meeting with the Albanian delegation, where the demand was clear: the signing of a transitional agreement with the guarantee of NATO troops, otherwise the US would not be able to continue to help Kosova and resolve its issue. The demands of the Albanians were known, they were written and known to international mediators. On a number of controversial issues, such as the demilitarization of the KLA and the right to hold a referendum after the end of the transitional phase, Albright replied: "No one is trying to deprive you of your dreams of independence, now we must face this agreement, which will allow your people to live properly."¹⁰³³ The Americans wanted an Albanian "yes" so they could then continue to pressure the Serbs. To that end, Albright met separately with the head of the delegation, Hashim Thaçi, where she received the following response: "I believe an agreement can be reached, but it does not depend on me, or on the KLA, or even on the delegation."¹⁰³⁴

The Contact Group convened a meeting to assess the progress of the negotiations so far. A statement after the meeting said that, according to reports from the three mediators, progress had been slower than had been hoped after the London meeting, but that some important clarifications had nevertheless been achieved. On the basis of this information, they decided to continue the negotiations until noon on 20 February 1999, heralding an intensive week of dialogue.¹⁰³⁵ The conclusion was clear, the negotiations were not going well, the differences were so great that "only a gambler could bet that any agreement could be reached by noon on February 20." While the Albanians continued to maintain their long-term goal of independence through flexible diplomacy, Belgrade showed no signs of intending to give up on subjugating Kosova.¹⁰³⁶ The Serbian-Yugoslav delegation did not negotiate, and even held to the idea that there should be no foreign enforcement of the agreement. "If the agreement is good and fair... there is no need for foreign powers to enforce it."¹⁰³⁷ It was clear that such a strategy was dictated directly from Belgrade and that a change of direction was only possible there.¹⁰³⁸ In this context, in order to move things along,

¹⁰³² James Rubin, *Si e fituam luftën*, (Tiranë: Klan, 2000), 10-11.

¹⁰³³ Qosja, *Paqja e përgjakshme*, 160; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 253.

¹⁰³⁴ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 445-446; Rubin, *Si e fituam luftën*, 11; Hill, *Pararojë*, 186.

¹⁰³⁵ *Kosova Sot*, 15 shkurt, 1999, 3.

¹⁰³⁶ Tom Heneghan, "Beogradi nuk zbut qëndrimin – shqiptarët tregojnë aftësi diplomatike", *Koha Ditore*, 17, shkurt, 1999, 6.

¹⁰³⁷ Hill, *Pararojë*, 186.

¹⁰³⁸ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 184; Gllareva, *Diplomacia amerikane*, 147.

the Americans sent Ambassador Hill to Belgrade on February 16, 1999, to meet with Milošević. Ambassador Hill's task was clear, he had to inform him of the determination of America and the Western allies to reach an agreement that would be implemented by NATO troops: "This is the day of decision. Everyone has endured enough." So, the instruction was clear - to repeat to Milošević privately what the West had told him publicly: "Accept NATO-led ground forces in Kosova or NATO aircraft will bomb Serbia." During the three-hour meeting, Milošević loudly opposed the deployment of NATO peacekeeping forces in Kosova. In addition, the Yugoslav leader pointed out that not only politicians, but also people from the left and right political spectrum had a negative opinion of foreign soldiers.¹⁰³⁹ But almost immediately after Ambassador Hill's return from Belgrade, the Serbian-Yugoslav delegation, after eleven days of work at the Palace, began to comment on the draft agreement. As expected, the vast majority of these comments and proposals were contrary to the non-negotiable principles and structure of the agreement. But it was enough for the international mediators to begin an intensive dialogue with the Serbs, in the hope of being able to harmonize their positions with the demands of the Contact Group.¹⁰⁴⁰ Although the question of the military annex was the most critical for the Serbs, it was the most capital for the Albanians. This annex, which was first discussed by international mediators on February 13, and delivered to the negotiating parties on February 18, 1998, finally changed the status of the Kosova Albanians, who from an oppressed people become a free people protected by the largest military alliance in the world, NATO, where 25,000-30,000 of its soldiers will be stationed throughout Kosova, divided into 5 areas of operations.¹⁰⁴¹ The organizers of the peace conference also provided for a clear procedure for the implementation of this annex: two delegations (Serbian and Albanian) had to invite the NATO pact to come to Kosova as a guarantor of peace.¹⁰⁴² This annex also allowed NATO troops, their vehicles, ships, and aircraft free and unrestricted passage throughout the former Yugoslav republic.¹⁰⁴³ However, this proposal also had its flaws that worried the Albanians, two of which were very challenging: first, the proposal allows

¹⁰³⁹ Jane Perlez, "U.S. Negotiator at the Kosovo Talks Visits Milosevic", *The New York Times*, February 17, 1999; Charles Trueheart, "Ethnic Albanians Wary of Focus on Milosevic", *The Washington Post*, February 18, 1999; Hill, *Pararajë*, 187; *Koha Ditore*, 17 shkurt, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Weller, *The Rambouillet conference on Kosovo*, 229; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Agly*, 81.

¹⁰⁴¹ Qosja, *Paqja e përgjakshme*, 137-227; Tahiri, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, 65.

¹⁰⁴² Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 249.

¹⁰⁴³ Rambouillet Agreement Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo, Article XI: Entry into Force, S/1999/648, page 29; Judah, *Kosova*, 257.

for the remaining 2,500 Serbian soldiers to remain on the borders of Kosova, and second, the demilitarization of the KLA. Although the Albanian delegation strongly opposed this, the proposed legal models for the transformation of the KLA were discussed with American, British and other diplomats. The military transformation had to be accepted as such because it was non-negotiable.¹⁰⁴⁴ The Albanian delegation was surprised when, just 48 hours before the end of the Conference, the international mediator presented them with a draft of the final version of the agreement. The draft not only did not take into account the Albanians' demands, but also went beyond what they had discussed. According to the Albanian delegation, the new draft was changed as a result of negotiations outside the Palace, during Milošević's meeting with Hill in Belgrade on 17 February 1999.¹⁰⁴⁵ Indignant at this approach, the Albanian delegation protested that the international side was presenting them with a *fait accompli*, rewarding the side that had openly boycotted the conference. "From the beginning, we were a cooperative side, we worked honestly and fairly to reach a peaceful agreement," emphasized the head of the delegation, H. Thaçi. This variant "includes all the main points that the Serbian side insisted on." Therefore, the delegation unanimously opposed the draft agreement, as did the Serbian-Yugoslav delegation, putting the entire negotiation process into question just a few hours before the end of the second negotiation period.¹⁰⁴⁶ Faced with the Conference heading for failure, the Contact Group, particularly the US, intensified diplomatic activities. Both sides disagreed with parts of the proposed text and made their objections. There was a belief in diplomatic circles that progress towards an agreement would occur in the last 48 hours of the so-called "close negotiations".¹⁰⁴⁷ Presidents Clinton and Chirac expressed their faith in negotiations during a meeting in Washington. "We remain united in our determination to use force if Serbia does not accept a peace agreement that would end the conflict in Kosova," Clinton said. Chirac, meanwhile, urged Yugoslav President Milošević to "choose the path of wisdom, not the path of war," adding that France and the United States were "completely united on Kosova."¹⁰⁴⁸ With this negotiating capital, the American mediator Hill traveled to Belgrade for the second time in a week, in order to break the stagnation of negotiations. Milošević refused to meet this time. "We will not give up Kosova, even if they bomb us," Milošević declared

¹⁰⁴⁴ Buja, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, 110.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Weller, *The Rambouillet conference on Kosovo*, 230; Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 222.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Koha Ditore*, 19 shkurt, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ian Black, "Kosovo talks go to the wire", *The Guardian*, February 20, 1999.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Koha Ditore*, 19 shkurt, 1999, 1.

on the day he refused to meet with Hill. "I can't imagine that anything was more important to President Milošević than the meeting that would lead to the solution of the Rambouillet problem, personalities like Ambassador Hill cannot be ignored, said an unnamed diplomat close to Milošević during the negotiations in the castle.¹⁰⁴⁹ Through the mediation of the USA, the head of the Albanian delegation, Hashim Thaçi, traveled to Ljubljana on February 19, 1999 to meet with the political representative of the KLA, Adem Demaçi, who was openly opposed to participating in the peace conference in Rambouillet. Thaçi told American diplomats that a meeting with Demaçi was necessary before a final decision was made.¹⁰⁵⁰ All these events are taking place at a time when diplomatic pressure on both sides is increasing. On February 19, 1999, for the second time, Secretary of State Albright arrived in Rambouillet to take over the leadership of the US negotiating team.¹⁰⁵¹ In the following hours, efforts continued with great pressure on both negotiating sides, but the result was absent. Secretary Albright said the Serbian delegation bears "the bulk" of the responsibility for the difficulties in the negotiation process, but expressed optimism that the remaining issues could be resolved in the coming days. In the last negotiating effort, the FRY diplomatic team made enough moves to accept the political part of the draft agreement proposal, a move that prompted the Contact Group to extend the negotiations for a second time until February 23, 1999.¹⁰⁵² By then, international mediators had identified important issues that could be key to the agreement not being signed: the unwillingness to demilitarize the KLA, the Albanians' insistence on the right to hold a referendum after a three-year transitional period, and the Serbian negotiating side's rejection of the presence of NATO peacekeeping forces as a guarantor of peace in Kosova.¹⁰⁵³ Albright gave details of the difficult negotiation process in an interview with *CNN* on February 21, 1999. "I just spent a lot of time today with both sides. As for the parties: I think the Albanians are concentrating on how the transition period will work, what their future will look like. They are working as a team, I met with four of their representatives, where I saw a great deal of commitment to the text." On the other hand, Albright pointed out on that occasion that the Serbs were not included at all in the decisive part of the agreement, which was the de facto military annexation by NATO, for which it was clearly emphasized that there

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 20 shkurt, 1999, 2; *Kosova Sot*, 20 shkurt, 1999, 3.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 260-261.

¹⁰⁵¹ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 198.

¹⁰⁵² *Koha Ditore*, 21 shkurt, 1999, 2; *Kosova Sot*, 22 shkurt, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁵³ *Koha Ditore*, 23 shkurt, 1999, 3.

could be no half-hearted agreement.¹⁰⁵⁴ The Serbian delegation rejected any proposal that included military arbitration in Kosova, but on the other hand, representatives of the KLA, especially the head of the delegation H. Thaçi, were against the demilitarization of the KLA, insisting on the right to a referendum.¹⁰⁵⁵ Babak Bahador writes that the West put pressure on Thaçi and the Kosova Albanian delegation to sign the agreement. However, the Albanian representatives were still promised a final solution three years after the implementation of the temporary agreement.¹⁰⁵⁶ The Americans proposed a wording that "came close to a referendum", but which did not explicitly guarantee it: "Three years after the entry into force of this agreement, an international conference will be held at which a mechanism for the final settlement of Kosova will be established, based on the will of the people, the opinions of the relevant authorities, the efforts of all parties to implement this agreement and the final act from Helsinki, in which a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of this agreement will be given, as well as any party's proposals for additional measures will be considered."¹⁰⁵⁷ Albright's final offer was to sign a form of annex (side letter), which would recognize the right of the Kosovars to hold a referendum on the final status, the content of which was:¹⁰⁵⁸

"This letter refers to (attached) the proposed wording for Chapter 8, Article I (3) of the Interim Framework Agreement. We will consider this proposal or any other wording on which an agreement can be reached in Rambouillet as a confirmation of the right of the people of Kosova to hold a referendum on the final status of Kosova after three years". Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State, Rambouillet, February 22, 1999.¹⁰⁵⁹

However, Albright warned the Albanian delegation that she would sign the annex and maintain the commitment made only if the Kosovars signed the entire agreement by February 23, 1999.¹⁰⁶⁰ The KLA has promised to carry out the process of "transformation" from military to civilian forces.¹⁰⁶¹ Rexhep Qosja evokes the conversation that was aimed at persuading Thaci to sign the

¹⁰⁵⁴ Interview on CNN Late Edition, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, Rambouillet, France, February 21, 1999.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 227.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 159.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Rambouillet Accords, 85.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 206.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Tahiri, *Konferenca e Rambujesë*, 224.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 82; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 275.

¹⁰⁶¹ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 228-229.

Agreement. "Expressing the will of the people does not replace the term referendum, but we have nothing to do." We must not be alone. We must not oppose the US. The main thing is for NATO to come. I have written more than 2,600 pages about Kosova. It is not more difficult for anyone than me to sign an agreement in which Kosova is treated with essential autonomy or anything else within the framework of Yugoslavia".¹⁰⁶² Despite all this, Thaçi's hesitation continued. For Thaçi, this was a matter of life, T. Judah writes.¹⁰⁶³

The greatest pressure on Thaçi was exerted by the Albanian commission - Demaçi, who insisted on a popular referendum after a three-year transitional phase. After hearing Demaçi's arguments, numerous KLA commanders and patrons in the diaspora stepped up pressure against the signing of the peace agreement. It seems clear that this influenced Thaçi's hesitation.¹⁰⁶⁴ With that, all the pressure was directed at Thaçi and his supporters: hundreds of phone calls and dozens of meetings, one after the other. The result of all these efforts was the progress of negotiations a day before the deadline.¹⁰⁶⁵ Albright recalls a meeting with Thaçi, where she told him the importance of an Albanian "yes." "If you say yes and the Serbs say no, NATO will attack until the Serbian forces leave Kosova... that way you will have security and you will be able to govern yourself." While Thaçi replied that "the only goal of the KLA is to fight for independence, and it will be very difficult for them to give up on that." "I said," Albright recalls, "you don't have to give up on your dreams, but you have to be more realistic. This contract is only for three years... this is your chance. Grab it, because it will never come back!" Yet Thaçi's answer was not a "yes."¹⁰⁶⁶ In continuation of this pressure on Thaçi, Jakup Krasniqi remembers the conversation with Albright: "no one from our delegation is more obliged and responsible for the Kosova Liberation Army than Hashim Thaçi, who is one of its founders. If he insists more than us to know more about its future, it is his responsibility for the KLA".¹⁰⁶⁷

All who were unable to meet with Thaçi at the castle, met with members of the Kosova delegation outside the castle to give their full support to the signing of the agreement, which places Kosova

¹⁰⁶² Qosja, *Paqja e përgjakshme*, 310.

¹⁰⁶³ Judah, *Kosova*, 261.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Unifying the Kosovo Factions: The Way Forward, *ICG Balkans Report* N°58, Brussels - Tirana, 12 March, 1999; Rubin, *Si e fituam luftën*, 14; Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 228; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 281; Hill, *Pararojë*, 190.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Rubin *Si e fituam luftën*, 11-12; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 280-285.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Albright, *Zonja sekretare*, 470.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Krasniqi, *Kthesa e Madhe*, 176.

in a historic opportunity that should not be missed.¹⁰⁶⁸ The famous Albanian writer Ismail Kadare wrote in his letter of appeal:

"This is a great chance for the Albanian people of Kosova and the entire Albanian people. History has shown many times that not every war, no matter how heroic, brings such an opportunity. And chances do not come again so easily. I am convinced that this chance should never be missed. I understand your sense of responsibility not to make concessions that should not be made, but in this case, let me remind you that I, as a writer, would not dare to give you this advice, if I were less afraid..."¹⁰⁶⁹

Although the appeals had no direct effect, they became an affirmative factor for other Kosova representatives to accept the Agreement. But Thaçi hesitated until the last moment.¹⁰⁷⁰ The participants remember the last night in the castle as exhausting, full of discussions and tension. Full of accusations and counter-accusations. The responsibility was great and the next day awaited them with a historic decision for the future of the people of Kosova.¹⁰⁷¹ In the morning of February 23, 1999, international mediators delivered the latest version of the Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosova to the delegations. The parties were asked in a cover letter to state their official position by 1 p.m.¹⁰⁷² The marathon discussions within the delegation continued in the last hours, when Hill entered the hall with the Kosova representatives for final conclusions, there was a willingness to say "yes" to the agreement, but a clear formulation of the final answer was still missing. Hill eased the process by suggesting that no one currently needs to sign the Agreement.¹⁰⁷³ Paul Williams, who was an advisor to the Albanian delegation, stated that an agreement in principle was not reached until "the last seven minutes of the conference," when American mediator Hill "exercised effective diplomacy, convincing the Albanian delegation to change the form of 'We're not sure yet' to 'Yes.'¹⁰⁷⁴ Veton Surroi told the leaders of the Conference that he was speaking on behalf of the Albanian delegation, where all members without exception agreed to sign the Agreement, but that they needed time to discuss it with the political and military

¹⁰⁶⁸ Qosja, *Paqja e përgjakshme*, 325.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ismail Kadare, *Ra ky mort e u pamë*, (Tiranë: Onufri, 2003), 34-36.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Judah, *Kosova*, 263.

¹⁰⁷¹ Qosja, *Paqja e përgjakshme*, 317-323; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 288-292.

¹⁰⁷² Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 213.

¹⁰⁷³ Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 292.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Charles Trueheart & Dana Priest, "Peace Talks Adjourn in Disarray", *The Washington Post*, February 24, 1999.

institutions of Kosova.¹⁰⁷⁵ On the other hand, the Serbian delegation continued the game of political reckoning. It was clear that Belgrade would not sign the Agreement, but the manner and modalities of presenting this decision largely depended on Kosova's behavior, about which the Russian diplomats who participated in the talks were informed in detail. The position was as follows: in the event that Kosova refused to sign, Serbia would behave constructively in this case, setting new demands before the Agreement was even signed.¹⁰⁷⁶ When they realized that the Albanians had agreed in principle to sign the Agreement, they expressed their "readiness" to continue the talks. This position was announced on 23 February 1999 by the head of the delegation, Ratko Marković, in a letter to the international mediators, which stated, among other things: "The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia are fully prepared to continue the work, in accordance with the positive spirit of the meeting. For this reason, we believe that it would be useful to set a reasonable deadline for creating the necessary conditions and a different approach to resuming work for the successful resolution of these issues". Marković saw direct meetings between the two delegations as a solution that could succeed. In doing so, he deliberately overlooked the core of the problem, which was the presence of NATO forces in Kosova, as an implementing part of the Agreement, which the Serbs refused to discuss during the negotiations.¹⁰⁷⁷

The Albanians' acceptance of the agreement in principle saved not only the Kosovars but also the conference organizers from the consequences of failure. "We have moved beyond the deadlock that has existed in Kosova for so long," Albright said. "This settlement is the best agreement that any side could hope for." When the negotiations began, the Contact Group presented a "take it or leave it" peace plan based on threats. What they got was a partial agreement, because if the Serbs are to be believed, they will return to France and sign the Agreement.¹⁰⁷⁸ At the end of the conference, Ministers Cook and Védrine stressed: "What we have created during these talks is a process and today is not the end of that process, but only the end of the first phase." According to them, the parties agreed to meet again somewhere in France on 15 March 1999 with the clear aim of signing a final Agreement.¹⁰⁷⁹ The organizers, France and England, presented the results of the

¹⁰⁷⁵ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 83; Rubin, *Si e fituam luftën*, 14; Hill, *Pararojë*, 192.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 230.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 219.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Andy Soltis, "Just a Piece of Peace as Summit on Kosovo ends; Piece of Peace in Kosovo talks", *The York Post*, February 24, 1999.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Koha Ditore*, 24 shkurt, 1999, 3.

conference to the public in a positive way. "But we all clearly knew that everything again depended on Belgrade. What the Rambouillet Conference had failed to achieve, we should now try to achieve in direct meetings with Milošević."¹⁰⁸⁰

9.4 Paris Conference

The Albanian delegation's "yes" in principle and the final vague answer from the Serbian side intensified the diplomatic efforts of the international community to hold direct meetings with both sides. According to a declassified National Security Council document in Washington, the US plan for the next few weeks was: sending Senator Dole to Kosova to help the Albanians say "yes" to the Interim Agreement before March 15, 1999, continuing pressure on Belgrade, including sending high-level envoys, continuing threats of airstrikes if they did not comply with the "October Agreement" and Rambouillet.¹⁰⁸¹ In this context, after returning from Rambouillet, the representatives of the KLA convened a general meeting of the General Staff of the KLA in an expanded composition on February 27 and 28, 1999, where they informed the members about the discussions and the final results. As stated in press release no. 75 within the Headquarters, the spirit of unity and harmony dominated and prevailed in the fight for freedom and independence. At this meeting, the Headquarters announced the name of Hashim Thaçi as the representative for the formation of the interim government.¹⁰⁸²

On 1 March 1999, diplomatic mediators Hill and Petritsch arrived in Prishtina and met with part of the Albanian delegation. "Things are moving in a positive direction... the Kosova Albanians have started a period of consultations and so far there are good indications," they announced after the meeting.¹⁰⁸³ Senator Bob Dole spoke optimistically after meeting with Albanian political representatives: "I've read all eighty pages, I've looked at the summaries, I've talked to experts, it's not perfect... but if I thought the Agreement was not good, I wouldn't be here... for me the deployment of NATO troops is important, to protect the people," said the friend of Kosova.¹⁰⁸⁴ Thaçi, who was portrayed as the main "obstacle" to the Agreement, traveled

¹⁰⁸⁰ Fischer, *Vitet kuq - gjelbër*, 143.

¹⁰⁸¹ Declassified Documents concerning National Security Council, Situation Room: WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504, Summary of Conclusions of Princip s Committee Meeting on Kosovo, February 26, 1999.

¹⁰⁸² "Komunikatë nr. 75 e Shtabit të Përgjithshëm të UÇK-së", *Kosova Sot*, 1 mars, 1999, 3.

¹⁰⁸³ *Koha Ditore*, 2 mars, 1999, 5.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Kosova Sot*, 6 mars, 1999, 3.

throughout Kosova, visiting all the regional leaders of the KLA, defending the signing of the Agreement. "Believe me, just as Ambassador Hill elaborated and defended this agreement before us in Rambouillet, in the same way I spoke to the KLA commanders," Thaçi told delegation member Blerim Shala.¹⁰⁸⁵ Thus, the first positive signals for the signing of the Agreement arrived from Kosova.

In diplomatic meetings with the Serbian side, the opposite happened. On 1 March 1999, OSCE Chairman-in-Office Knut Vollebæk visited Belgrade, where he met with the Serbian-Yugoslav leadership, and after the meeting he said in a dejected tone: "I must say that Milošević flatly refused. As I thought, he sees no possibility of an international (military) presence in Yugoslavia."¹⁰⁸⁶

Furthermore, in the fifth point of the conclusions of the Contact Group held after the closing of the Rambouillet conference, it is clearly stated that: "the parties must refrain from any actions that would hinder the results achieved at Rambouillet..."¹⁰⁸⁷ Therefore, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana warned the Yugoslav president not to use the pause in peace talks for a new offensive in Kosova. The remaining three weeks until March 15, 1999, should serve to consolidate peace, not to worsen the situation.¹⁰⁸⁸ Despite all the demands, it seemed that Belgrade was choosing the path of reckoning with the international community. In addition to rejecting NATO troops, as an implementation part of the Agreement, sources indicated that Milošević was embarking on a new military offensive, and that for this purpose he had already sent three times the number of soldiers to Kosova than was foreseen in the October 1998 Agreement.¹⁰⁸⁹ This fact further activated international diplomacy to finally, in a last-ditch attempt, convince the Yugoslav leadership to choose peace over confrontation with the international community. On March 8, 1999, Joshua Fischer, in his role as EU President, visited Belgrade, and during talks with Milošević, Fischer warned "without the slightest hesitation" that if he refused the presence of NATO troops in Kosova, "the alternative means war" that Yugoslavia would never win, and that your Russian and Chinese friends would not break off relations with the West for Yugoslavia's sake. Despite all efforts, the

¹⁰⁸⁵ Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 255; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 317.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Kosova Sot*, 2 mars, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Kosova Sot*, 24 shkurt, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁸⁸ NATO Press Release (99)21, February 23, 1999.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Steven Erlanger, 'Serb View: A Victory', *The New York Times*, February 24, 1999.

talks were unsuccessful.¹⁰⁹⁰ Two days later, Slobodan Milošević reiterated his firm opposition to any deployment of foreign troops in Kosova, after a meeting with US diplomat Richard Holbrooke. Many believed that “Milošević’s meeting with Holbrooke was the best opportunity for a good deal,” but the opposite turned out to be the case. “Attempts to condition a political agreement on the acceptance of foreign troops in our country are unacceptable,” the statement said after the meeting.¹⁰⁹¹ When Holbrooke left Belgrade without an agreement, it was clear to Washington that the use of force was becoming inevitable. The Serbian “no” was final, as was proven when on March 12, 1999, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov visited Belgrade in the role of an ally, but as it was later said, he found “only idiots” there, ready for war.¹⁰⁹²

Regardless of Belgrade's official stance, international mediators continued preparations for the second round of negotiations. The rules were clearer this time. The Agreement required signature by both parties. On 14 March 1999, it was decided that the meeting in Paris, which envisaged new negotiations, would end within five days at the latest.¹⁰⁹³ Although on 15 March 1999 both sides agreed to go to the International Conference Centre in Paris, the chances of finding a compromise seemed to have faded. All diplomatic efforts to persuade Belgrade to change its position before the negotiations could resume had failed, and the Albanians had shown a willingness to sign the Agreement. Speaking on the issue on the eve of the opening of the second round of negotiations, R. Cook reminded the parties that this was not a conference for “big rhetoric”, but for serious work, for serious talks, which must end with quick decisions. On the other hand, his colleague H. Védrine stressed that the members of the Contact Group would do everything to reach an Agreement. Expressing surprise at the Serbian side’s refusal to cooperate with the international community, he reiterated the position that “the threat of air strikes remains open to Serbia if Belgrade blocks the Agreement”.¹⁰⁹⁴

When the international mediators opened the first session of negotiations, they already had the answer of the Albanians in front of them. The head of the Albanian delegation, Hashim Thaçi,

¹⁰⁹⁰ Fischer, *Vitet kuq - gjelbër*, 144; *Koha Ditore*, 15 mars, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁹¹ Emma Daly, “Holbrooke delivers ultimatum to Serbia”, *Independent*, March 10, 1999; *Koha Ditore*, 11 mars, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁹² Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 472-473.

¹⁰⁹³ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 235-236.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Koha Ditore*, 15 mars, 1999, 4; *Kosova Sot*, 16 mars, 1999, 2.

informed Conference co-chairs Cook and Védérine about the decision of the Kosova side in an official letter. "After the consultations of the Kosova delegation with political and military factors and the people of Kosova about the Rambouillet peace agreement of February 23, 1999, this delegation and I personally say "yes" to this agreement. It would be an honor for us to sign the Agreement in your presence at a place and time of your choosing," the letter states, among other things.¹⁰⁹⁵ The European mediators explained that they did not ask the Albanians to immediately sign the Agreement, because they wanted flexibility in their relations with the Serbs so that they too would accept the plan.¹⁰⁹⁶ However, when the negotiators met with the Serbian-Yugoslav delegation, instead of discussing the implementation of the Agreement, they (the Serbs) had already decided to act according to their own rules. They produced a draft document that was reduced to a wish list, surprising even their sympathizer Boris Mayorski, by deleting almost all the main parts of what they had agreed on at Rambouillet.¹⁰⁹⁷ According to the interpretation of Serbian President Milan Milutinović, the main points of the Serbs' objections related to: the Kosova Assembly, the Constitution, the Supreme Court and everything else. In a word, they did not agree with anything that had already been previously agreed upon.¹⁰⁹⁸ As Washington noted, instead of committing to peace, the Serbs turned to war, bringing 30,000 troops and additional weaponry to Kosova, including never-before-seen M-84 tanks.¹⁰⁹⁹ It was clear that the Serbian delegation was just buying time. There was no serious interest in discussing anything.

On March 18, 1999, the day set by the Contact Group as the deadline for signing the Agreement, three international mediators sent a letter to the head of the Serbian negotiating delegation, Ratko Marković, in which they expressed their readiness to start talks on the implementation of the Agreement at any time. But even that attempt was fruitless, it seemed that the Serbs had decided to reject the Rambouillet agreement.¹¹⁰⁰ This was proven when the Albanian delegation signed the agreement in a simple ceremony in the presence of mediators Hill and Petritsch. Mayorski refused to sign it because he was informed of the final rejection of the Agreement by the Serbian-Yugoslav

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Kosova Sot*, 16 mars, 1999, 2.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Craig R. Whitney, "Ethnic Albanians Move to Accept Kosovo Pact", *The New York Times*, March 16, 1999.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 239; Judah, *Kosova*, 270.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Koha Ditore*, 17 mars, 1999, 3.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Craig R. Whitney, "Serbs Reinforce Kosovo Forces, Clouding Talks" *The New York Times*, March 17, 1999.

¹¹⁰⁰ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 243.

delegation.¹¹⁰¹ At the very end of this peace conference, the organizers issued a statement thanking the Albanian delegation for signing the Agreement in its entirety. While they informed the Serbian side that “negotiations can only continue if the Serbs agree to sign the Agreement”. The statement, signed by Cook and Védrine, warns: “We will immediately engage in consultations with our partners and allies to be ready to act. We will be in contact with the NATO Secretary General, with the OSCE, to take immediate measures for the security of the Evaluation Mission in Kosova”.¹¹⁰²

Faced with the simultaneous dangerous situation in Kosova, OSCE Chairman Knut Vollebæk announced that the staff of the Evaluation Mission had no choice but to withdraw from Kosova.¹¹⁰³ Many of the remaining international NGOs on the ground withdrew their staff at the same time. The departure of the OSCE Monitoring Mission and international humanitarian workers enabled the commission of crimes over the next 12 weeks by Serbian military and police units.¹¹⁰⁴

10. NATO BEGIN BOMBING - THREAT OF FORCE BECOMES A REALITY

10.1 The day before the bombing

According to Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema, Belgrade was faced with the premise that if they signed the agreement from Rambouillet, they lose Kosova forever. The negotiating resistance in Rambouillet and Paris also pointed to the political premise that their capabilities could withstand a military attack from the largest military alliance in the world – NATO.¹¹⁰⁵ Petritsch recalled that, in his last visit to Belgrade, he did not see the slightest willingness to compromise, making it clear that the mediators had run out of any possibility of a political solution.¹¹⁰⁶ This is best evidenced by a letter from Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević to British and French Foreign Ministers Robin Cook and Hubert Védrine: "You say that the large movements of our security forces are worrying, if you think that these forces are worrying Albanian separatists, who want to take part of the territory of Serbia and Yugoslavia... some

¹¹⁰¹ *Koha Ditore*, 19 mars, 1999, 3.

¹¹⁰² *Koha Ditore*, 20 mars, 1999, 4.

¹¹⁰³ *Rilindja*, 20 mars, 1999, 1.

¹¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 117.

¹¹⁰⁵ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 473; Fischer, *Vitet kuq - gjelbër*, 144-145.

¹¹⁰⁶ Petritsch & Pichler, *Rruga e gjatë në luftë*, 248.

possible aggressors outside Yugoslavia should also think about this, it should worry them too."¹¹⁰⁷ Faced with a challenging situation, the Clinton administration, in agreement with its European allies, sent Holbrooke on March 22, 1999 as a "last chance" to convince Belgrade to accept the Rambouillet agreement. The expectations from this meeting were crucial. Although the information coming from Belgrade was not optimistic. At the press conference, NATO Secretary Solana simultaneously announced that this is Holbrooke's last visit to Belgrade in order to bring peace to Kosova without the use of military force. Namely, the NATO Council has already given full authorization to Solana to start airstrikes on Yugoslavia.¹¹⁰⁸ Holbrooke and Hill recall a several-hour meeting to convince Milošević to sign the Agreement that would avoid confrontation with NATO. However, on March 22 and 23, it was impossible to convince Milošević about foreign troops in Kosova.¹¹⁰⁹

For six hours on March 22, 1999, and four hours the next day, Holbrooke used every diplomatic trick to convince the Yugoslav leader. He tried to push for recognition of Serbia at the United Nations, immunity from prosecution for war crimes, proposed an adjustment to the Paris Peace Accords, telling Milošević that he could accept a NATO peacekeeping force, and rejected some other details of the plan. They were even able to influence a change in the name of the peacekeeping operation that would not include the "NATO" acronym.¹¹¹⁰ Holbrooke recalls: "I went back to a private meeting with the Yugoslav leader, to avoid any misunderstandings. I said to him, 'You understand that if I leave here today without an agreement, the bombing will begin almost immediately.' He said quietly, 'Yes. You will bomb us.' So we left, confident that there was no misunderstanding in his mind. He knew that the bombing would begin shortly after we left."¹¹¹¹ Serbia was now only hours away from the start of the bombing. The decision was made shortly after Holbrooke's return to Brussels, where he reported the failure of the negotiations. At a press conference on 23 March 1999, NATO Secretary General Solana announced that he had just ordered General Wesley Clark to begin air operations against the FRY. "We have reached this decision in full consultation with all NATO Allies. In recent months, the international community

¹¹⁰⁷ Jeffrey Smith, "Belgrade Rebuffs Final U.S. Warning", *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1999.

¹¹⁰⁸ NATO, Press Release (1999)038, March 22, 1999; *Koha Ditore*, 23 mars, 1999, 3.

¹¹⁰⁹ Hill, *Pararajë*, 194; *PBS - Frontline*: Interview with Richard Holbrooke, 1999.

¹¹¹⁰ Niles Lathem, "Prez's Ploys Couldn't Stop this Faceoff", *The New York Post*, March 28, 1999.

¹¹¹¹ *PBS - Frontline*: Interview with Richard Holbrooke, 1999.

has spared no effort to reach a negotiated solution to Kosova. But it has been impossible. Milošević has left the Alliance with no other option than to launch military operations.¹¹¹²

10.2 The beginning of the bombing and the first opposing reactions

The NATO decision to launch air strikes on Yugoslavia for Kosova, in March 1999, was made with the following justifications: preventing a humanitarian catastrophe, prohibiting killings, expelling Kosova Albanians, maintaining regional security, the international community's sense of guilt for inaction in the Bosnian war, and NATO's credibility.¹¹¹³ "When I say we must act in Kosova, I do not say we must act everywhere," reminds Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel. "But we must remember that the crimes in Kosova are taking place on the doorstep of NATO. The crimes are taking place contrary to the promises that President Milošević made to the entire world. They are taking place against a people who have accepted peace and laid down their arms, against a people we have pledged to stand by."¹¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, Milošević was not alone. The so-called democratic opposition in Serbia unconditionally supported Milošević's nationalist anti-Albanian program in Kosova.¹¹¹⁵ This was proven when Vuk Drašković and Vojislav Šešelj stood by Milošević, offering solutions to defend Kosova. Šešelj saw the solution to the Kosova problem as very simple: "a million Albanians should be killed, another million expelled from Kosova."¹¹¹⁶ Drašković, in his role as Deputy Prime Minister of the Yugoslav government just a day after the bombing began, emphasized in an interview with American journalist Lally Weymouth: "Kosova was and will always be a part of Serbia... our religion, our language, our national myth were born there, our pride is in Kosova," and continued: "We must defend Kosova even if everyone dies... The Serbian people elected Milošević, so do not issue ultimatums against the Serbs."¹¹¹⁷

With the first NATO attacks on March 24th, any public argument against the Serbian leadership would be classified as treasonous.¹¹¹⁸ The Belgrade propaganda did not stop. Serbia's Minister of

¹¹¹² NATO, Press Release (1999)040, March 23, 1999; NATO, Press Release (1999)041 March 24, 1999.

¹¹¹³ Adam Roberts, "NATO's 'Humanitarian War' over Kosovo", *Survival* Global Politics and Strategy, Volume 41, Issue 3, 1999, 108.

¹¹¹⁴ Documents, Clinton Presidential Library Wiesel, Elie "Millennium Evening Honoring" Case Number: 2006-0471-F, April 12, 1999.

¹¹¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *Ese të zgjedhura*, (Prishtinë: Departamenti për kulturë sociale, 2009), 21.

¹¹¹⁶ Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 202.

¹¹¹⁷ Lally Weymouth, "A Line in the Sand", *The Washington Post*, March 28, 1999.

¹¹¹⁸ Blaine Harden, "Milosevic Might Win From the Loss of Kosovo", *The New York Times*, March 27, 1999.

Information, Aleksandar Vučić, informed media editors with a list of regulations that included a requirement to call NATO a "criminal organization" and an order not to demoralize the population. In a televised appearance, Milošević called on his people to defend their country "by all possible means". Explaining Belgrade's position, he said that the decision not to allow foreign troops to enter Kosova was correct, for the purpose of protecting the sovereignty of Yugoslavia. He stated that NATO wants to occupy the whole of Yugoslavia, pointing out: "The freedom of the entire country is at stake here, and Kosova is just a door intended for foreign troops to enter and steal our freedom."¹¹¹⁹ Serbian state television has begun showing patriotic music ("We love you, our homeland...") and the feature film *Kozara*, which commemorates a World War II battle between ethnic Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Partisans, and Germans.¹¹²⁰ On the same day, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac, Gerhard Schröder, and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana addressed the citizens with the explanation that the attack occurred due to the failure of all diplomatic efforts to achieve peace, the climax of which was the Rambouillet agreement that the Serbian side refused to sign. "At the threshold of the 21st century, Europe cannot tolerate a humanitarian disaster in its midst. It cannot be allowed that, in the middle of Europe, the dominant population of Kosova is collectively deprived of their rights and subjected to serious human rights violations. We, the countries of the European Union, have a moral obligation to ensure that the indiscriminate behavior and violence, which became visible in the massacre in Rečak in January 1999, are not repeated," the EU statement said.¹¹²¹ In his address to the American people, President Clinton declared: "Today, we and our 18 NATO allies have agreed to do what we said we would do, to restore peace. We are acting to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosova from a growing military offensive. We are taking these actions to prevent a wider war; to destroy the powder keg in the heart of Europe that has exploded twice before this century with catastrophic consequences."¹¹²² "After World War II, Americans may have withdrawn from Europe, but we have come to understand that our security is deeply connected to the stability of Europe. We helped found the UN, launched the Marshall Plan, joined NATO, and agreed to a system of international respect and obligation that has brought us decades of relative peace. How we end this century will

¹¹¹⁹ Steven Erlanger, "Televised Defiance Lost Amid Sirens, Blasts and Fireballs", *The New York Times*, March 25, 1999.

¹¹²⁰ Judah, *Kosova*, 288.

¹¹²¹ "Official text of EU declaration on Kosovo", *The Guardian*, March 24, 1999.

¹¹²² President Clinton's Address to the Nation on Kosovo, March 24, 1999.

define the new. We have seen triumph and unrest in the last hundred years. I believe we will see much less unrest in the years to come, but only if we are vigilant about new threats to our collective security. Milošević is such a threat. Our future begins in Kosova. Let us seize this opportunity to define what all Americans stand for, regardless of our background.”¹¹²³ “No one can say that we did not try to find a peaceful solution to this conflict or that Milošević was not warned of the consequences of the continued oppression of the civilian population in Kosova,” British Prime Minister Blair told the British people, justifying the involvement of English forces, as well as the danger they might face. He stressed: “I would not have taken such a decision if I did not believe it was the right thing to do. We are taking this action for a very simple reason: to damage the Serbian forces enough to prevent Milošević from continuing to oppress the Albanian people in Kosova.”¹¹²⁴ The Allies were convinced that military intervention was the only solution to ensure peace in the troubled region. In a televised address to the French public, President Chirac explained the reasons and objectives of the intervention: “We have taken the decision to put an end to the barbaric practices of the Serbian regime, ethnic cleansing, massacres and mass expulsions of Kosova Albanians.” He went on to say: “We have taken this decision to oppose the Serbian regime's methodical will to exterminate an entire nation. If we were to accept these practices that we are witnessing, it would mean losing our soul, allowing the gangrene of the unspeakable (L'innommable) to re-establish itself on our continent.”¹¹²⁵ This was not easy for the German government, as it was the first time since the end of World War II that German soldiers had participated in such a military intervention. This was concrete evidence of the new European order in which Germany had “taken over” the leadership in the European Union. Addressing the German people, Chancellor Schröder emphasized: “We are not waging war, but we are forced to achieve a peaceful solution to Kosova by military means.”¹¹²⁶ NATO Secretary General Solana, in his address on the day he ordered General Clark to begin the bombing, listed a series of diplomatic efforts that had failed through Milošević’s fault. He pointed out: “NATO is not fighting Yugoslavia. We are not at war with the Yugoslav people who have long been isolated in Europe

¹¹²³ Documents, Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs: Detroit speech [UNCLASSIFIED], Presidential Records Act d44 U.S.C. 2204(a)] April 14, 1999.

¹¹²⁴ UK Blair's statement: The fight for peace, *BBC*, March 25, 1999.

¹¹²⁵ Muhamedin Kullashi, *Çështja e Kosovës në hapësirën publike të Francës – Analiza dhe refleksione*, (Prishtinë: Akademia e Shkencave dhe Arteve të Kosovës, 2021), 155.

¹¹²⁶ *Rilindja*, 26 mars, 1999, 2.

because of the policies of their government. Our action is directed against the repressive policies of the Yugoslav leadership. We must stop the violence in order to end the humanitarian catastrophe that is now unfolding in Kosova. It is our moral duty to do so.”¹¹²⁷

On the other hand, it was to be expected that the Russian reaction to NATO's attacks on Yugoslavia over Kosova would be somewhat different. The first step was taken by Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who traveled on an official visit to the United States on March 23, 1999.¹¹²⁸ Al Gore informed Primakov that Holbrooke was returning from Belgrade without an agreement and that there was no reason to further delay military action. NATO had no choice but to act and would take military action within hours, even while Primakov was in the United States. “I think you are making a big mistake,” the Russian prime minister replied. “This action will not bring anyone a positive result. We would still have to look for a political solution to the problem. I hope you have calculated all the consequences of this attack well...”¹¹²⁹ Due to NATO's decision to launch airstrikes on Yugoslavia, Russia suspended cooperation with NATO, the EU, and the US, calling this attack "aggression".¹¹³⁰ Russian historian Aleksei G. Arbatov notes that Russian reactions to NATO's intervention were divided into three groups: the first group consisted of nationalists and radical communists, supported by a large part of public opinion, who wanted to provide Yugoslavia with all kinds of military assistance, including the well-known S-300 (SA-10 and SA-12) air defense missiles. The second group consisted of an even larger part of public opinion, who took the position of refraining from any Russian interference, but giving full moral and political support to Yugoslavia, hoping that the war would turn into NATO's European Vietnam, especially in the event of a ground invasion of Kosova. The third group was represented by Russian realpolitikers, whose goal was to initiate a diplomatic solution to the problem between NATO and Yugoslavia.¹¹³¹ Russian President Yeltsin, in his statement on March 25, 1999, publicly opposed the intervention, stating that "NATO is trying to enter the 21st century with the

¹¹²⁷ NATO, Press Release (1999)041 March 24, 1999.

¹¹²⁸ Thomas W. Lippman, “Russian Leader Cancels Trip in Protest”, *The Washington Post*, March 24, 1999; John Norris, *Collision course: NATO, Russia, and Kosovo*, (London: Preager, 2005), 1-2. Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, pp. 267-268.

¹¹²⁹ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 304-305; Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, pp. 268-269.

¹¹³⁰ Michael R. Gordon, “Conflict in the Balkans: In Moscow Russian Anger at U.S. Tempered by Need for Cash”, *The New York Times*, March 25, 1999.

¹¹³¹ Alexei G. Arbatov, “The Kosovo Crisis: The End of the Post-Cold War Era”, *The Atlantic Council of the United States*, March, 2000, 20-23.

uniform of the world's gendarmerie, which Russia will not agree to."¹¹³² Yeltsin expressed Russian opposition to the airstrikes in a letter sent to President Clinton on the day the bombing began, in which, among other things, it was stated: "It is no secret that if a fire breaks out in Kosova, it can spread throughout the region."¹¹³³ Russian efforts did not stop there. Through their UN ambassador, Sergei Lavrov, they insisted on an urgent meeting of the Security Council to adopt a draft resolution aimed at immediately halting airstrikes on Yugoslavia. Although the draft resolution was not voted on, with 12 out of 15 members voting against it and only 3 in favor, a lively debate ensued.¹¹³⁴ In his speech, Sergei Lavrov repeated Moscow's position that Russia is deeply outraged by NATO's military action against sovereign Yugoslavia. He called the military action "an act of open aggression". China, India and several other satellite states came out in support of Russia, which mainly focused on Article 53 of the UN Charter, according to them, "this act represents an open violation of international law."¹¹³⁵ The arguments that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan listed one by one during his speech on the occasion of the start of the bombing of Serbian targets were as follows: "I must note with regret that despite all the efforts of the international community, the Yugoslav authorities have rejected political solutions that would stop the bloodshed in Kosova... Of course, it is tragic when diplomacy fails, but there are times when the use of force can be crucial to securing peace."¹¹³⁶

10.3 Operation "Allied Force"

From June 1998 until the start of the bombing in March 1999, NATO's plans for the air campaign went through a series of changes and iterations, which ultimately boiled down to three operational phases. With the operation called "Allied Force" (CONOPLAN 10601), on 24 March 1999 at 8 pm local time, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) under the leadership of

¹¹³² Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 258.

¹¹³³ Norris, *Collision Course*, 3-4.

¹¹³⁴ China, Namibia and the Russian Federation voted for the resolution. While Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, France, Gabon, Gambia, Malaysia, Netherlands, Slovenia, Great Britain and USA voted against the resolution. United Nations, Security Council 3988th Meeting Wednesday, 24 March 1999, 5.35 p.m. New York.

¹¹³⁵ Chapter VIII — Regional arrangements, Article 53.

¹¹³⁶ Statement by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan regarding NATO airstrikes of Serbian Military Targets, March 24, 1999.

NATO's Commander in Europe, US General Wesley Clark, began a military air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, involving 13¹¹³⁷ of the 19 members of the alliance.¹¹³⁸

10.3.1 First phase

The first phase of the air campaign began on 24 March 1999. At the start of the war, most aircraft flew from nearby air bases, mainly in Italy and the Adriatic Sea. Some flew from bases in the United Kingdom and even the United States.¹¹³⁹ Stealth B-2 bombers participated in the campaign¹¹⁴⁰, F-117 fighter jets and two additional waves of attack aircraft with American F-16s and F-18s, English Jaguars, French Mirages, German Tornados, and Spanish and Canadian F-16s.¹¹⁴¹ On that day, the US first used B-2 stealth long-range stealth bombers on a 30-hour flight mission from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, USA, to drop bombs from an altitude of 40,000 feet (12,129 meters). The strikes were also accompanied by conventional AGM-86C air-launched cruise missiles (CALCMs) as well as Tomahawk land-attack missiles¹¹⁴² launched from ships based on HMS Splendid (England), guided and directed from the center - the air base in Vicenza, Italy. Other attacks were carried out by RAF Harrier GR-7s, from Aviano Air Base, Italy. During the first night of bombing, there were four separate attack waves, with a total of 214 American and 130 Allied aircraft.¹¹⁴³ Air defenses, radars, and military communication centers throughout Yugoslavia were targeted by the attack. Some of the targets of the attacks were on the outskirts of Belgrade in the cities of Niš and Novi Sad. In Kosova, the main target was Prishtina, Slatina airport and anti-aircraft batteries stationed on top of Golesh mountain.¹¹⁴⁴

¹¹³⁷ USA England, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Portugal and Hungary.

¹¹³⁸ NATO, The conduct of the air campaign, October 30, 2000.

¹¹³⁹ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 117.

¹¹⁴⁰ The B-2 was the only operational aircraft used during the bombing campaign to deliver munitions for the Joint Direct Attack, its precision and all-weather capabilities. Department of Defense, Report to Congress: "Kosovo/Operation Allied Forces After Action Report", (Washington, Department of Defense, January 31, 2000), 91.

¹¹⁴¹ William M. Arkin, Operation Allied Force: "The Most Precise Application of Air Power in History". in *War Over Kosovo Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, Edit by: Andrew J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 8-9; Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, (Arlington: RAND, 2001), 20.

¹¹⁴² The Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) is a conventionally armed, long-range land attack cruise missile that can be launched from surface ships or submarines. Department of Defense, Report to Congress: "Kosovo/Operation Allied Forces After Action Report" 92.

¹¹⁴³ Bruce R. Nardulli ... [et al.]. *Disjointed War Military Operations in Kosovo, 1999*. (Santa Monica: Rand Arroyo Center), 24.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Rilindja*, 25 mars 1999, 1-3.

On the other hand, according to the estimates of the US Department of Defense at the beginning of the air attack on Yugoslavia, its military power consisted of 240 combat aircraft, including MiG-21 and MiG-29, and 48 attack helicopters. Other Serbian air defense forces included 100 surface-to-air missiles: a mixture of SA-2, SA-3, SA-6, SA-7, SA-9, SA-13, SA-14 and SA-16 aircraft. Yugoslavia also had 1,850 air defense artillery. Although not as effective as NATO missiles, Alliance strategists estimated that these systems could still pose a threat to its aircraft. On the other hand, according to NATO estimates, Serbian ground forces numbered a total of 114,000 active troops. Other mechanized forces had 1,270 tanks, including T72, T-74, T-55 and M-84, and 825 armored fighting vehicles. In Kosova, according to OSCE data, there were 15,000-20,000 regular forces of the Yugoslav army and about 30,000 members of the police and irregular forces (volunteers and paramilitaries). Serbian forces around the border with Kosova were divided into deployed forces, garrison forces and reserve forces. The deployed force had about 96 tanks and the garrison force had about 30 tanks in garrison. There was a concentration of Serbian troops along the border between Kosova and Macedonia. These forces were created a few weeks before the start of the bombing.¹¹⁴⁵

NATO's initial plan called for several days of air operations against a select group of carefully selected targets. Target categories included air defense sites, communications facilities, and barracks. Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, was not on the list for initial attacks. For selected target categories—for example, targets in the center of Belgrade, in Montenegro, or targets that could involve significant collateral damage—NATO assumed the approval of the highest political authority (at the level of president/prime minister).¹¹⁴⁶ Air planners had data on more than 50 targets, but the consensus in NATO was for limited strikes.¹¹⁴⁷ On March 25, 1999, NATO reported that it had hit 50 targets across Serbia, Kosova and Montenegro. Some of the most important operations were the air base near Batajnica, the aircraft factory in Žarkovo near Belgrade, Golubovci airport in Montenegro, ammunition depots in Danilovgrad and other targets in the cities of Kuršumljaja, Novi Sad and Pančevo. In Kosova, the barracks of the Army of Yugoslavia in Prishtinë, Slatinë airport, the anti-aircraft base in Maja e Goleshit, the ammunition

¹¹⁴⁵ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 50; Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons of the Air and Missile Campaign in Kosovo*, (Center for Strategic and International Studies: 2003), 178.

¹¹⁴⁶ Report to Congress: *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After - Action Report* (US Department of Defense, 2000), xx

¹¹⁴⁷ Rebeca Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign, Aerospace Power Made It Work* (Arlington: Air Force Association October, 1999), 8.

factory in Skenderaj and the rocket batteries stationed in Çabrat in Gjakovë were attacked.¹¹⁴⁸ Most of these targets were the integrated air defense system, the control command, Yugoslav Army forces, the Ministry of the Interior, and several other military support facilities. "We are targeting military and security forces and associated facilities here," NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana and Commander Wesley Clark said during a conference call from NATO headquarters on March 25, 1999. "We are taking all possible measures to minimize collateral damage," the two senior officials announced.¹¹⁴⁹

NATO airstrikes on March 25 were described as "significantly heavier" than those of the first night. The goals were to shoot 50 targets at the Batajnica airport complex, just a few kilometers from the center of Belgrade, at the "Zastava" munitions factory in Kragujevac, at the anti-aircraft missile system at Avala, at the aircraft factory in Pančevo, at the missile system near Novi Sad, at the Niš military airfields in southern Serbia and Golubovci in Montenegro. In Kosova, the main targets were the central headquarters of the police and the Serbian army in the barracks of the Yugoslav Army in the cities of Ferizaj and Prizren.¹¹⁵⁰ On the same day, two US Air Force F-15 fighter jets based in Italy shot down two Yugoslav MIG-29s. According to NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, the incident occurred "...when two Yugoslav MIGs violated Bosnian airspace with hostile intent, taking up a threatening position for our aircraft. Our F-15s launched a corresponding counterattack, shooting down other Yugoslav MIGs". On 26 March, NATO intensified attacks on the FRY's integrated air defense system, and on several command and logistics facilities associated with the army and units of the Ministry of the Interior (MUP). During that night, Allied forces conducted 249 sorties, with the main targets being the Belgrade area towards Niš and Kosova.¹¹⁵¹

As the third day of NATO bombing of Yugoslav targets passed, Serbian military-police forces in Kosova continued with their plan of ethnic cleansing of Albanians.¹¹⁵² The initial results clearly

¹¹⁴⁸ Steven Lee Myers, „CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS: THE ATTACK; Early Attacks Focus on Web Of Air Defense”, *The New York Times*, March 25, 1999; *Rilindja*, 25 mars 1999, 1; *Rilindja*, 26 mars 1999, 1; Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 234; Lambeth, *NATO's Air*, 21.

¹¹⁴⁹ NATO, Transcript Press Conference by Secretary General, Dr. Javier Solana and SACEUR, Gen. Wesley Clark, March 25, 1999.

¹¹⁵⁰ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 245; Lambeth, *NATO's Air*, 23; *Rilindja*, 26 mars 1999, 2.

¹¹⁵¹ NATO, Transcript Press Conference of NATO Spokesman Jamie Shea and Air Commodore David Wilby, SHAPE, March 27, 1999.

¹¹⁵² For more on this view, read: American Association for the Advancement Science, *Politikë apo Panikë? Largimi i shqiptarëve etnik nga Kosova, mars – maj 1999*, (Washington: Shoqata Amerikane për Përparimin e Shkencës, 2000).

showed that with limited bombing, official Belgrade was not backing down. The issue of target selection was reviewed at multiple levels of command to ensure that everything was in accordance with international law, that it was militarily justified, and that the risk to civilian life and property was minimized.¹¹⁵³ Much of this reluctance to bomb had political roots: public opinion in NATO countries was lukewarm at best and might change if the evening news began showing images of dead innocents.¹¹⁵⁴ Another challenge that affected this stage was the bad weather which forced them to slow down the pace of their attack. NATO commanders made plans to destroy Yugoslavia's anti-aircraft defense. However, the Serbian forces did not activate their radar installations at all, which made it difficult to target them.¹¹⁵⁵ It was assumed that the Milošević regime would "fall to its knees" after a few days of bombing, just as it happened in August 1995, when NATO, with the help of bombing and a joint operation by Croats and Bosniaks, forced the Serbs to withdraw from the occupation of the city of Sarajevo, and then, under the leadership of the Americans, sign the Dayton Agreement to solve the problem of Bosnia.¹¹⁵⁶ NATO commander Wesley Clark, who knew Milošević closely, expressed his pessimism that the operation could be completed in a few days. On the second day, he began urging diplomats and senior NATO officials in Washington to reassess their initial forecast of a very short conflict. Clark asked the Pentagon for 48 of the world's most advanced Apache attack helicopters,¹¹⁵⁷ with the aim of, in the worst-case scenario, beginning preparations for a ground war in Kosova.¹¹⁵⁸ Clark recalls a conversation with the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Henry Shelton: "The helicopters and training in Germany are in their final stages, and the Army's deep attack team has proven to be the most capable team that has ever existed." At the end of the conversation, he recalled the necessity of the

¹¹⁵³ NATO, Kosovo Air Campaign (March-June 1999).

¹¹⁵⁴ Bruce W. Nelan, "Into the fire" *CNN – Time*, March 29, 1999.

¹¹⁵⁵ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 476; Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 277.

¹¹⁵⁶ Martti Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, (Helsinki: Fili, 2000), 17.

¹¹⁵⁷ The Apache helicopter – officially known as the AH-6HA – was designed during the Cold War to counter attacks by Soviet tanks, other armored vehicles and artillery batteries. Apache is known for its superior performance and includes a flexible, easily configurable mission equipment to efficiently execute a wide range of precision missions within 24 hours, including: security and escort, troop insertion and extraction, and combat search and rescue. Its speed can reach 320 km per hour. Steven Lee Myers, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: GUNSHIPS; Apaches Will Face High Risk Over Kosova; Final Approval Yet to Come" *The New York Times*, May 1, 1999.

¹¹⁵⁸ Dana Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within", *The Washington Post*, September 21, 1999

Apaches being part of the air campaign: “Sir, helicopters can go there and do what no one else can.”¹¹⁵⁹

10.3.2 Second phase

Based on data from the first three days of the bombing campaign, which failed to convince Slobodan Milošević to stop the campaign of ethnic cleansing of Kosova Albanians, [North Atlantic Council](#) (NAC), on 27 March 1999, decided to proceed to the second phase of the bombing. After the meeting, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana issued a press release stating that he had ordered NATO Commander Clark to launch a wider range of air operations against the FRY. "I have taken this decision with the support of all Allied governments, who are determined to stop the violence in Kosova and prevent a further humanitarian catastrophe."¹¹⁶⁰ The second phase involved a much wider perimeter, from the 44th parallel that bisected Yugoslavia with Belgrade and Novi Sad above, and Niš, Montenegro, and Kosova below. In a sense, the transition to Phase 2 at this point departed from traditional air force doctrine, as the latter had initially called for disabling the Yugoslav Army's integrated air defense system in order to proceed. But basic logic, as well as the demands on the ground, argued for proceeding at a faster pace than the initial plan drawn up by NATO.¹¹⁶¹ The fact that each new phase, each specific goal had to go through the military headquarters for approval by the 19 NATO members, often created tension among the allies. The disappointment of the USA began to grow, especially when there was no agreement on a plan to intensify the bombing campaign, against opponents like Milošević, who did not stop at all in the forced expulsion of Kosova Albanians.¹¹⁶² The problem of maintaining support for a military operation among some allies is largely determined as a result of historical ties with Serbia, economic interests, insufficient public support, or specific internal political situations – elections.¹¹⁶³

However, on 27 March 1999, NATO announced the continuation of the bombing campaign with a total of 253 sorties, with 66 aircraft, carried out in two waves, attacking a total of 17 key targets

¹¹⁵⁹ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 267.

¹¹⁶⁰ NATO, Press Release (1999)044, March 27, 1999.

¹¹⁶¹ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 117.

¹¹⁶² Bradley Graham & William Drozdiak, "Allied Action Fails to Stop Serb Brutality", *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1999.

¹¹⁶³ Malnar, *SHBA-ja dhe Kosova*, 241.

throughout the FRY. The main operations were conducted on the integrated air defense system, on logistical and military facilities. Actions also took place in Kosova against the headquarters of the FRY forces and the Ministry of the Interior.¹¹⁶⁴ In the late hours of that day, Serbian forces shot down a NATO F-117 aircraft near the town of Bujanovac, causing the first allied loss in the four-day conflict. An F-117 pilot was rescued by a US military search and rescue team six hours after his plane crashed.¹¹⁶⁵ NATO warplanes continued their attacks on Yugoslav targets on 28 and 29 March. In the early morning hours of 29 March, more than 40 aircraft took off from Aviano and Piacenza air bases. F-15s, F-16s, F-177s, E A6-B Prowlers and other German "Tornado" aircraft participated in this operation.¹¹⁶⁶ Although significant damage was reported in the suburbs of Belgrade and Podgorica, operations were significantly hampered by poor weather conditions. On 29 March, all six RAF Harrier GR7s taking part in the bombing of Prishtina were forced to return without dropping bombs due to poor weather conditions with heavy cloud cover and continuous rain. Similar problems affected Harrier operations on 31 March, 1 and 2 April 1999. In response to such problems, the US Department of Defense announced on 29 March 1999 the deployment of five B-1B Lancer bombers (along with fifteen additional aircraft) capable of operating in more severe weather conditions.¹¹⁶⁷

In the first week, NATO attacked more than 50 Serbian targets, destroying - damaging 93 tanks, 153 armored personnel carriers, 339 military vehicles and 389 pieces of artillery and mortars. However, these figures represented only one third of the total weapons and vehicles that the Yugoslav army had in Kosova. Two thirds remained untouched.¹¹⁶⁸ Despite some results in the first week, frustration over the course of the conflict was not without tension between the US and some of its European allies over whether Clark should be given a broader mandate to attack command centers and military infrastructure throughout Yugoslavia, including downtown Belgrade.¹¹⁶⁹ According to Clark, NATO should hit "as many targets as we can, every night... I

¹¹⁶⁴ NATO, Press Conference of NATO Spokesman, Jamie Shea and Air Commodore, David Wilby, SHAPE, March 28, 1999.

¹¹⁶⁵ John M. Broder, "U.S. Stealth Fighter Is Downed in Yugoslavia as NATO Orders Attack on Serb Army Units", *The New York Times*, March 28, 1999.

¹¹⁶⁶ *Rilindja*, 31 mars 1999, 6.

¹¹⁶⁷ Tim Youngs... [et al.]. Kosovo: Operation "Allied Force", RESEARCH PAPER 99/48, April 29, 1999, 12.

¹¹⁶⁸ Dana Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within", *The Washington Post*, September 21, 1999; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 117; Bruce W. Nelan, "Into the fire" *CNN – Time*, March 29, 1999.

¹¹⁶⁹ Bradley Graham & William Drozdiak, "Allied Action Fails to Stop Serb Brutality", *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1999.

don't want to give the perception that we're not doing much so we can rest."¹¹⁷⁰ On the sixth day (March 29, 1999) of the air campaign, General Clark requested NATO approval to increase pressure on Milošević to attack the headquarters of the Ministries of Defense and Interior in Belgrade. The list of targets was increased by 20%, but the request to attack targets in the center of Belgrade was not approved, with the explanation that such attacks were still "premature".¹¹⁷¹ US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in her book *Madam Secretary*, writes that she began: "working day and night to do my best to ensure that the use of force was supported by the entire Alliance... NATO had 19 members and since I could not call the other eighteen members every day, I began to call some of them, but I was wasting my time... In such conditions the only alternative was the telephone conference, which was obviously a novelty in international diplomacy. I began to organize many telephone conferences known as the "Five" in which the Foreign Ministers Robin Cook (England), Hubert Védrine (France), Lamberto Dini (Italy) and Joschka Fischer (Germany) participated. These conferences proved to be an indispensable tool for coordinating the political strategy of the Alliance".¹¹⁷²

The diplomatic effort was quite successful. On 30 March 1999, after more than eight hours of discussion, 19 NATO ambassadors discussed expanding the list of targets. The US proposed that the Alliance open a new phase, which would allow NATO warplanes to attack military and industrial sites throughout Yugoslavia, including the government and ministries in central Belgrade. The main hesitation came from the ambassadors of the governments of Germany, Greece, Italy and France, who were not yet ready for such a step. The Italians¹¹⁷³ and the Greeks wanted a break to give the Yugoslav government a chance to think things over. The other members, especially the US, instead of a long discussion that could have resulted in divisions, chose a compromise: they agreed on a broader range of objectives across Yugoslavia, but not all of the objectives proposed by the US. General Klaus Naumann, head of NATO's military committee, and US ambassador to NATO Alexander Vershbow, assisted by other ambassadors at 2 am on 31 March, managed to convince the Italians and Greeks that their proposals for a break would only

¹¹⁷⁰ Dana Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within", *The Washington Post*, September 21, 1999.

¹¹⁷¹ Lambeth, *NATO's Air*, 29.

¹¹⁷² Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 478- 481.

¹¹⁷³ Italy entered the war with a much more fragile political framework, which was immediately apparent. One hundred and thirty deputies signed an appeal against the NATO attack on 25 March. D'Alema, *Kosova, Italianët dhe lufta*, 38.

worsen what had already become Europe's biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II.¹¹⁷⁴ Milošević, as before, would have appreciated this break as an opportunity to continue what he had been doing until then: lying and killing. There was also a belief that "Christians cannot rest for Easter while the killing of Albanians continues."¹¹⁷⁵

At the end of this long meeting, the ambassadors of the NATO member states agreed to give the authority to Secretary General Javier Solana to decide whether or not to authorize certain categories of targets such as planned attacks on the electricity grid, the telephone system, state institutions in the center of Belgrade, targets that technically belonged to phase 3.¹¹⁷⁶ Thanks to this development, Clark later wrote in his book *Waging Modern War*: "I was encouraged when I received two telephone calls, one confirming the opposition of the US State Department to any pause in the bombing; and the second confirming the agreement of NATO ambassadors to approve attacks on targets of higher value."¹¹⁷⁷

On March 31, 1999, a disturbing incident occurred when Yugoslav forces arrested three American soldiers (Andrew A. Ramirez, Christopher J. Stone, and Steven M. Gonzales) while they were conducting a routine patrol near the Kosova-Macedonian border, about 16 km northeast of Kumanovo in an area populated mainly by ethnic Serbs.¹¹⁷⁸ In the absence of contact, the soldiers were listed as missing until the following day when Serbian state television RTS aired a recording of them, stating that three American soldiers had been arrested on Yugoslav territory.¹¹⁷⁹ The soldiers would be released on May 2, 1999, but the incident raised questions about whether Milošević would use NATO soldiers as hostages, similar to what the Serbs did in Bosnia when threatened with air strikes in 1995.¹¹⁸⁰ The Serbian regime went even further when, on April 1, 1999, Serbian special police forces forcibly kidnapped Kosova's political leader, LDK President Ibrahim Rugova. Renate Flottau, a journalist for the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, in a diary

¹¹⁷⁴ William Drozdiak, "NATO Leaders Struggle to Find a Winning Strategy", *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1999; Michael R. Gordon, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: THE OVERVIEW; NATO PLANS WEEKS OF BOMBING TO BREAK GRIP OF SERB LEADER", *The New York Times*, April 1, 1999.

¹¹⁷⁵ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 478; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 307.

¹¹⁷⁶ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 118.

¹¹⁷⁷ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 268.

¹¹⁷⁸ Carlotta Gall, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: THE CAPTURE; G.I.'s in Macedonia Believe 3 Were Seized by Armed Serb Villagers", *The New York Times*, April 2, 1999.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Rilindja*, 2 prill, 1999, 2.

¹¹⁸⁰ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 119.

published on April 12, 1999, as a witness to the arrest, reflects the circumstances of Rugova's hostage-taking. On March 31, at noon, the Serbian police occupied his house, where 17 family members were. Within a few hours, a police order arrived to divide the house into zones: "the police are located in the lower rooms and on the second floor. "At 8 p.m., the police call Rugova to inform him that he is traveling to Belgrade tomorrow morning. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević will talk to him (Rugova, [AN]) to consult on a solution to the crisis." The scenario of the leader Milošević was obviously to build a narrative in the international opinion that the bombings should stop immediately, that he is ready to talk with the Kosova Albanians, and that "Ibrahim Rugova agreed to that as well".¹¹⁸¹

On the other hand, on 1 April 1999, Alliance leaders went a step further during a joint conference, with Secretary General Javier Solana and NATO Commander Wesley Clark announcing NATO's political objectives:

- "First and foremost, we must stop the killings in Kosova and the brutal destruction of human lives and property,
- Secondly, we must put an end to the terrible humanitarian situation that is now unfolding in Kosova and create conditions for refugees to return,
- Third, we must create a political solution to the crisis in Kosova, based on the Rambouillet agreement."

Two senior officials at a press conference reiterated that NATO has embarked on a difficult operation. "But we believe it is the right thing to do and it is our duty to do everything we can to stop the killings in Kosova. That is why every ally has pledged full support...".¹¹⁸²

10.3.3. Third phase

As NATO began its second week of bombing Yugoslavia, it was clear that the previous rocket and bombardment attacks had failed to stop the campaign of ethnic cleansing of Kosova Albanians. NATO strategists already had new clear targets for bombing. On one side of Kneza

¹¹⁸¹ Veç pavarësi, asgjë më pak Ibrahim Rugova në shtypin gjermanofon (1989-2006), Përzgjedhur dhe përkthyer nga Enver Robelli, (Prishtinë: Koha 2015),81-93.

¹¹⁸² NATO, Press Release (1999)045, April 1, 1999.

Miloša Street in the center of Belgrade was the Yugoslav Ministry of the Interior, a massive seven-story white stone building. On the other side of the street was the headquarters of the Serbian special police, an even larger steel complex with dark brown glass. NATO commanders hoped that this airstrike - the first on the Yugoslav capital - would have a psychological impact: "as long as crimes are committed in Kosova, Belgrade will not be safe."¹¹⁸³

Thanks to this plan, Phase 3 began on 1 April 1999, when NATO aircraft began attacking a wider range of targets in and around Belgrade. The operation targeted lines of communication, major transport routes, to isolate the advance of Yugoslav forces towards Kosova. The Yugoslav news agency Tanjug reported that a bridge over the Danube near Novi Sad had been destroyed. Meanwhile, US Department of Defense spokesman Kenneth Bacon reported that NATO aircraft had hit the headquarters of the Yugoslav Special Forces Corps in Belgrade. The attack on the Special Forces Corps was the closest to the center of Belgrade since the bombing began on 24 March 1999.¹¹⁸⁴

In justifying the increased bombing campaign, US President Bill Clinton told a group of sailors at the Norfolk Naval Base in Virginia on April 2, 1999: "Had we not acted, the Serbian offensive would have been carried out with impunity." "...Kosova is a very small country. But it is located right on the dividing line between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, on the dividing line between Islam and Christianity, close to our Turkish and Greek allies to the south and our new allies Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to the north...", Clinton said, "it is surrounded by Albania and Macedonia, which are already threatened by the influx of refugees caused by Milošević". "If we do nothing," he said, "eventually our allies, and then the United States, would be involved in a larger conflict, with much greater risks to our people and at a much greater cost."¹¹⁸⁵

Despite the agreement of NATO ambassadors on 1 April 1999 to attack a wide range of targets, including the center of Belgrade, many discussions were first held within the National Security Council in Washington. While the final decision to "go downtown" came only after intensive discussions between President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President

¹¹⁸³ Dana Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within", *The Washington Post*, September 21, 1999.

¹¹⁸⁴ *Rilindja*, 2 prill, 1999, 9-10.

¹¹⁸⁵ "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS; Clinton's Speech on Kosovo: 'We Also Act to Prevent a Wider War'", *The New York Times*, April 2, 1999.

Jacques Chirac, the latter had explicitly requested to be informed about offensive targets in Montenegro due to the neutrality of the republic and its leader, Milo Đukanović. In this context, ten days after the start of the bombing, NATO attacked its first targets in the center of Belgrade, destroying the headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The attack took place in the middle of the night on 3 April 1999, at a time when the buildings had already been evacuated.¹¹⁸⁶ Some of the missiles targeted were Tomahawk (TLAM), launched from US Navy ships in the Adriatic. On the same day, the US deployed B-1 aircraft to RAF Fairford (England), where they were equipped with conventional air-launched cruise missiles (CALCM). This allowed for a demonstration of the devastating accuracy offered by this latest generation American weapon.¹¹⁸⁷ Militarily and psychologically, the attacks were the first solid evidence that NATO had heeded the warning of its commander, General Clark, that "there would be no sanctuary" for Yugoslavia's political and military leaders.¹¹⁸⁸

Just one day after the cruise missiles struck government buildings in Belgrade, the United States announced two important decisions. On April 3, 1999, Secretary of Defense William Cohen announced that one of the most modern American aircraft carriers, the USS Theodore Roosevelt, would be deployed to the Mediterranean in support of Operation Allied Force. The following day, April 4, the Pentagon confirmed General Clark's request to deploy 24 Apache AH-64 helicopters and 18 multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) to Albania under the name "Task Force Hawk." According to the Department of Defense, Task Force Hawk would "enhance NATO's ability to conduct tactical operations against specific FRY units in Kosova, particularly during periods of limited visibility and adverse weather."¹¹⁸⁹ On April 4, 1999, allied forces continued their air campaign operation in Belgrade by bombing the Police Academy, a power plant that served to heat part of the Yugoslav capital, and the Pančevo Oil Refinery. The news agency Tanjug also announced that two bridges in northern Serbia had collapsed. One in Novi Sad, the other in Bačka Palanka, and the latter connects Serbia with Croatia.¹¹⁹⁰

¹¹⁸⁶ Norris, *Collision course*, 21.

¹¹⁸⁷ Daniel L. Haulman "The U.S. Air Force in the Air War Over Serbia, 1999", *Air Power History*/ Summer 2015, 3.

¹¹⁸⁸ Steven Lee Myers, "NATO hits Belgrade center for first time, Razing Command sites for Kosovo Fighting", *The New York Times*, April 3, 1999.

¹¹⁸⁹ Tim Youngs... [et al.]. *Kosovo: Operation "Allied Force"*, 16

¹¹⁹⁰ *Rilindja*, 6 prill, 1999, 7.

Thus, NATO, with the goal of destroying Serbian forces through air strikes, engaged its troops in ground operations, including military defense around Kosova.¹¹⁹¹ To this end, at its meeting on 3 April 1999, the North Atlantic Council authorized the Commander of NATO Forces in Skopje, General Sir Michael Jackson, to assume responsibility for coordinating NATO's humanitarian efforts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, using the more than 12,000 NATO troops at its disposal to assist in humanitarian efforts with Albanian refugees from Kosova.¹¹⁹² This happened for two reasons: first, to keep the war isolated, second, to stabilize the alarming refugee situation in these two countries. According to UNHCR data, from 24 March to 5 April 1999, the number of Albanians who left Kosova exceeded 400,000, most of whom settled in two neighboring countries: 226,000 in Albania, 120,000 in Macedonia, 35,700 in Montenegro, 7,900 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 6,000 in Turkey.¹¹⁹³

Despite being the cause of one of the greatest humanitarian disasters since World War II, official Belgrade continued to fiercely reject NATO's demands. The balance sheet of the bombing in Serbia made much clear: Milošević's system was still functioning: "official anti-NATO propaganda managed to convince people that it was aggression and that it was a national duty to defend the country." To make matters worse, Milošević was once again seen as the bravest savior of the Serbian people. The bombing effectively silenced most of his opponents, and he silenced or intimidated anyone who had the intention of speaking out.¹¹⁹⁴ On April 4, 1999, Serbs danced en masse in protest, the day after NATO airstrikes lit up the skies over Belgrade. Serbian state television RTS showed footage of a crowd of Serbian protesters against NATO.¹¹⁹⁵ The atmosphere in Belgrade was reminiscent of a mock carnival - Serbs who were not in shelters danced in the streets to rock or folk music with the motto: "With music against bombs!", playing heroes who ignore the fear of bombing (since it was known that NATO did not bomb civilian targets), offering their bodies as human shields to prevent the bombing of bridges. "While in Belgrade they were nonchalantly dancing in the streets, three hundred kilometers to the south a

¹¹⁹¹ Joseph Fitchett, "Allies Step Up Action In Kosovo and Strive To Cope With Exodus: Aid Trickles In as NATO Hits Belgrade", *The New York Times*, April 5, 1999.

¹¹⁹² NATO, Press Release (1999)056, April 9, 1999.

¹¹⁹³ UNHCR Kosovo Crisis Update - 5 April 1999.

¹¹⁹⁴ The few voices that dared to oppose the supreme leader faced dire consequences, such as the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija, a former friend of his wife Mira Marković, but who opposed Milošević's policies. Johanna McGeary, "The Road To Hell", *Time*, April 12, 1999; *Rilindja*, 14 prill, 1999, 6; Judah, *Kosova*, 288.

¹¹⁹⁵ "Serbs dance as NATO bombs hit Belgrade", *CBC News*, April 4, 1999.

genocide of African proportions was taking place." The best response to this hypocritical and pathetic gesture was described by Slavoj Žižek: "why don't you go to Kosova and have a rock carnival in the Albanian parts of Prishtina."¹¹⁹⁶ In this context, it was not surprising that the Serbs presented themselves as victims. But it is grotesque to equate "the victims of NATO bombing" with the chaos and massacres of hundreds of thousands of people in the last eight years of Serbian programs of ethnic cleansing against Croats, Bosniaks, and Albanians, American writer Susan Sontag wrote.¹¹⁹⁷

As the air campaign increased day by day, discussions began about a possible ground military invasion of Kosova, in case the air campaign proved unsuccessful. When NATO started bombing because of the necessary consensus that the Alliance needed, this topic was left out of the discussion among the Allies. In his speech on March 24, 1999, President Clinton told the American people, "...I have no intention of sending our troops to Kosova to fight on the ground."¹¹⁹⁸ On March 29, during a meeting in the Oval Office in Washington, President Clinton's top foreign policy advisors concluded the following: The war in Kosova is becoming brutal, and by no means short.¹¹⁹⁹ General Michael E. Ryan, the chief of staff of the United States Air Force, told the New York Times on March 29, 1999, that he did not know for sure whether the air war against Yugoslavia would end Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević's campaign of terror against ethnic Albanians in Kosova. "I don't know if we can do this without ground troops."¹²⁰⁰ NATO overestimated the power of bombs, Josef Joffe writes in the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on April 5, 1999. Continuing, Joffe reminds us that, judging by history, wars were not won with bombs from the air alone. "The Allied forces dropped more than 2 million tons of bombs on Germany during World War II, but in the end it took infantry and tanks on the ground to defeat Hitler."¹²⁰¹ Reacting to these signals, the Chief of General Staff of the US Army, Henry Shelton, pointed out the military reality that between 20,000 and 200,000 soldiers on the ground will be needed to implement NATO's military action in Kosova.¹²⁰² Despite the large numbers, on April

¹¹⁹⁶ Žižek, *Ese të zgjedhura*, 20-21.

¹¹⁹⁷ Susan Sontag, "Why Are We In Kosovo?", *The New York Times*, May 2, 1999.

¹¹⁹⁸ President Clinton's Address to the Nation on Kosovo, March 24, 1999.

¹¹⁹⁹ Blaine Harden, "A Long Struggle That Led Serb Leader to Back Down", *The New York Times*, June 6, 1999.

¹²⁰⁰ Elizabeth Becker, "CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS: THE AIR COMMANDER; A Leader Who Climbed the Ranks, as His Father Did, to Become the Chief of Staff", *The New York Times*, March 29, 1999.

¹²⁰¹ Josef Joffe, "Sulmet ajrore të NATO-s ose përgjegjësia dyfishe në Ballkan", *Rilindja*, 7 prill, 1999, 10.

¹²⁰² Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 14.

6, 1999, Senator John McCain urged President Clinton to reconsider the airstrike strategy, suggesting that only "boots on the ground" could save the faltering campaign. On the same day, Frank Carlucci, former Secretary of Defense in the administration of US President Ronald Reagan, expressed his view: "We are at war and we must allow our military to do what is necessary to dominate". "If that means ground troops, so be it".¹²⁰³ Even among top advisers in the White House, there was internal debate about how to proceed to ultimate victory. Through a national security memorandum on April 12, adviser Sandy Berger briefed US President Clinton on various scenarios for intervention with ground troops. "We can go with ground troops only after a long-term air campaign, which is able to create a "subordinate" environment where the military forces of the FRY would withdraw, before resisting the ground forces of NATO." "According to one view," writes Berger, "preparation for this strategy would increase the pressure on Milošević to accept our terms rather than face NATO forces. This may also give our allies more motivation to support the current air campaign to avoid this option." Another view says that open preparations for an intervention with ground troops would unite the Serbian people around Milošević even more. "We don't need to decide now whether to launch NATO ground forces in Kosova." "However," Berger reminds us, "we need to decide soon whether to plan for this option."¹²⁰⁴ On April 14, 1999, President Clinton announced during a meeting with a US congressman that "even the question of sending ground troops is an option on the table."¹²⁰⁵

In the third week, NATO intensified its air campaign. On 6 April 1999, Belgrade, in an attempt to test the unity of NATO allies, declared a unilateral ceasefire as a "gesture of goodwill" during the Orthodox Easter weekend. NATO immediately rejected this request, announcing that it would continue the air campaign until the Yugoslav government met its objectives, declared on 1 April 1999.¹²⁰⁶ On 7 April, NATO aircraft flew around 400 combat missions against the FRY. The targets that day were Belgrade, Niš, and other centers in Kosova where Yugoslav military forces were stationed. In Niš, the headquarters of the Third Yugoslav Army, which was covering Kosova, was attacked. This offensive was described by General Wesley Clark as an operation on two

¹²⁰³ Johanna Mcgeary, "The Road To Hell", *Time*, April 12, 1999; "A Crucial Debate on Kosovo", *The New York Times*, April 13, 1999.

¹²⁰⁴ Declassified Documents from Samuel Berger, Memorandum for the President: Kosovo - Further Thoughts Looking Ahead, The White House Washington, April 12, 1999.

¹²⁰⁵ *Rilindja*, 15 prill, 1999, 2.

¹²⁰⁶ NATO, Press Release (1999)045, April 1, 1999.

distinct fronts: one with NATO forces conducting strategic attacks on the command and infrastructure of the Yugoslav army and special police forces in and around Belgrade, and on the other, simultaneously, with tactical attacks on Yugoslav ground forces in Kosova.¹²⁰⁷

The point of view of NATO strategists was that by intensifying the attack, Milošević would be forced to withdraw his forces from Kosova and that a temporary political agreement would be reached to ensure security for all citizens of Kosova. Of course, NATO looked at the political solution beyond the Rambouillet agreement. After violence, massacres, ethnic cleansing, it was utopian to expect Albanians to accept sovereignty from a man whom NATO itself described as "the butcher of the Balkans," *BBC* military analyst Jonathan Marcus writes on April 8, 1999.¹²⁰⁸ Supporting the Alliance's decision, the four neutral foreign ministers of Ireland, Sweden, Finland and Austria joined other EU members in signing a statement on 8 April stating that: "the bombing was necessary and that responsibility lies entirely with Milošević and his regime". This was the first reaction where the EU officially endorsed all of NATO's war aims, including the complete withdrawal of all Serbian military and police troops from Kosova and the deployment of international forces in Kosova.¹²⁰⁹

NATO resumed its attacks with even greater intensity on 8 April 1999, carrying out 439 bombing missions, a record number of sorties since the start of the air campaign on 24 March. The aircraft targeted Yugoslav military command posts, fuel depots, and air defenses, marking the first major "breakthrough" against Serbian forces on the ground. Some of the main strategic targets were the Zastava car factory in Kragujevac, the oil refinery in Smederevo, and the former headquarters of Yugoslav military industrialists, which had recently been used by the Ministry of Justice. NATO also warned the media in Belgrade to report objectively, to stop being "instruments of hate," and to start broadcasting Western news, or they would be targeted by NATO bombing.¹²¹⁰

¹²⁰⁷ NATO, Press Conference by NATO Spokesman, Jamie Shea Air Commodore, David Wilby and Commander Fabrizio Maltinti, SHAPE, April 8, 1999; Tim Youngs... [et al.]. *Kosovo: Operation "Allied Force"*, 18-19.

¹²⁰⁸ Jonathan Marcus, "Nato's air campaign moves up a gear", *BBC*, April 8, 1999.

¹²⁰⁹ Martin Walker, Martin Kettle and Richard Norton-Taylor, "Nato targets Serb propaganda", *The Guardian*, April 9, 1999.

¹²¹⁰ Steven Lee Myers & Michael R. Gordon, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: NATO; Lacking Ground Troops, General Seeks More in Air", *The New York Times*, April 8, 1999; Martin Walker, Martin Kettle and Richard Norton-Taylor, "Nato targets Serb propaganda", *The Guardian*, April 9, 1999; *Rilindja*, 9 prill, 1999, 6-15.

The heavy damage inflicted by the allied forces on the Yugoslav army allowed NATO aircraft to begin bombing in low flight on April 9, 1999, attacking armored vehicles, artillery in various areas of concentration of the Yugoslav army in the southwest of Kosova. The targets were targets in Istog, Deçan, Gjakovë, Ferizaj, Prishtinë, in the military and television complex in Slatinë and Golesh, in the railway complex in Fushë Kosovë, in the secret base in Graçanicë.¹²¹¹ The Alliance intensified attacks on Serbian forces stationed in Kosova on 9, 10 and 11 April 1999, but many tanks remained undamaged, located in forests or abandoned buildings. The Yugoslav army also began hiding helicopters and fighter jets in bunkers at an air base near Podgorica. This tactic was deliberately used by Milošević as a shield in the name of Montenegro's neutrality, calculating that this would bring internal problems to NATO.¹²¹²

On 12 April 1999, NATO announced its objectives regarding the conflict in Kosova, during an extraordinary meeting of the North Atlantic Council, represented by foreign ministers. The nineteen NATO members stressed in a statement that the main responsibility for the fate of the thousands of Kosova Albanians who were forced to flee their homes lay with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević. “The crimes committed against the people of Kosova by the army, police and paramilitary forces of the FRY violate international law. Those responsible for the systematic campaign of violence and destruction against innocent Kosova civilians and the forcible deportation of hundreds of thousands of refugees will be held accountable for their actions. The indictees should be brought before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague...” The ministers concluded that: “The crisis in Kosova represents a fundamental challenge to the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which NATO has stood for since its founding.” The foreign ministers warned the Yugoslav leadership that “NATO action will continue until President Milošević meets the demands of the international community.” And these are:

- Ensure a credible cessation of all military actions and an immediate end to violence and repression,
- Ensure the withdrawal of military, police and paramilitary forces from Kosova,

¹²¹¹ *Rilindja*, 10 prill, 1999, 15; *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), Vëllimi III, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 42.

¹²¹² Dana Priest, “France Played Skeptic on Kosovo Attacks”, *Washington Post*, September 20, 1999.

- Agree to the deployment of an international military presence in Kosova,
- Agree to the unconditional and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons and offer unhindered access to international humanitarian organizations,
- Offer credible guarantees and offer your willingness to work on the basis of the Rambouillet Agreement to create a political framework agreement for Kosova in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.¹²¹³

In the fourth week, NATO intensified its bombing of all of Yugoslavia. By flying at medium altitudes, NATO was able to reduce the risks to its pilots, but it remained powerless to disrupt the Serbian military and police forces that were terrorizing the Albanian people in Kosova. In general, NATO conducted a very careful campaign throughout the operation, choosing targets with military bases, factories, and other resources that directly served the regime of Slobodan Milošević. In mid-April 1999, the Alliance was faced with two incidents. On 12 April, NATO bombed a bridge near the town of Leskovac, while a passenger train was passing through the area, killing mostly Serb civilians. The second incident occurred on 14 April with two mixed columns of military and civilian vehicles, one moving from Gjakovë towards Prizren, and the other from Gjakovë towards Deçan. It seems that due to the interference by the Serbian forces, the military forces with the Albanian civilian population, the NATO pilots mistook a convoy that was carrying refugees, in which dozens of Albanian civilians were killed.¹²¹⁴ According to Albanian sources, the cause of this incident was the forces of the Serbian military police who used the convoy of Albanian refugees as a shield, in order to blame NATO.¹²¹⁵

NATO continued its ground offensive. At a press conference, General Clark announced, "We are using almost all precision strike weapons to attack individual targets on the ground with laser guidance." He also announced that by April 13, NATO had managed to destroy up to 70% of all oil reserves.¹²¹⁶ On April 14, NATO announced that since the beginning of the air campaign, 6,000 flights have been carried out on 44 targets. In the first 20 days of the campaign, NATO had about 500 aircraft at its disposal. Other information coming from the Alliance was that 300 additional

¹²¹³ NATO, Press Release M-NAC-1(99)51 April 12, 1999.

¹²¹⁴ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 122; Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 297.

¹²¹⁵ *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), Vëllimi III, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 77.

¹²¹⁶ NATO, Press Conference by Jamie Shea and General Wesley Clark, April 13, 1999.

aircraft were joining Operation Allied Force: three aircraft carriers in the Adriatic, 24 Apaches and more than 2,000 US forces in Albania, to be joined by 6,000 other forces, bringing the total to 8,000.¹²¹⁷ General Clark recalls the Pentagon's request to mobilize 33,000 U.S. Air Force reservists to intensify the war. He expressed his concerns on April 15, 1999, as Apaches were arriving in Albania. "We had been asking high-level political officials for days to attack these forces, but each time we were stopped by concerns, particularly from France, that we would undermine the fragile hold of power held by the pro-Western President Milo Đukanovic."¹²¹⁸

As the NATO air campaign continued to exert international pressure on Milošević to halt his offensive of ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosova, on 20 April 1999, British Prime Minister Tony Blair visited NATO headquarters in Brussels during a press conference determined to stop the cleansing in Kosova and said: "My generation never thought they would see scenes like this in Europe... it is our duty to defeat the ambitions of Milošević who promoted ethnic cleansing in Kosova." Speaking about the bombing campaign, Blair made it clear that he was proud of the role of England and all other allies involved in the bombing campaign. "It is a legitimate goal and it is a goal that we will achieve and win."¹²¹⁹ As a result of this comprehensive strategy, on 20 April 1999, NATO received permission from Bulgaria and Romania to use their airspace for an expanded bombing campaign. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, the three newest members of the alliance, also agreed to allow their territory to be used for the transport of NATO military equipment. Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina made their airspace available to NATO. This move came after Alliance officials acknowledged that Serbian police and military forces in Kosova had been increased after four weeks of bombing.¹²²⁰

On April 20, 1999, NATO aircraft bombed a total of 30 targets, 8 in Kosova and 22 in Serbia. In Kosova, mobile police and army units were targeted. The military garrison in Ferizaj and the military facility at Prishtinë airport were also hit. In Serbia, some of the main targets were in the center of Belgrade, starting with the former building of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which

¹²¹⁷ NATO, Press Conference by Jamie Shea and Brigadier General Giuseppe Marani, April 13, 1999.

¹²¹⁸ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 298.

¹²¹⁹ NATO, Press Conference Given by the NATO Secretary General, Mr. Javier Solana, and the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, April 20, 1999.

¹²²⁰ Joseph Fitchett, "Romania and Bulgaria Approval Will Allow Campaign to Expand: NATO Gets Right To Use Airspace Bordering Serbia", *The New York Times*, April 21, 1999; Paul Beaver, "Ground troops: How it could be done", *BBC*, April 22, 1999; *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), 171.

housed the offices of the Socialist Party of Yugoslav President Milošević and his wife Mirjana Marković's Yugoslav Left Party. The next attack was on a 23-story building used for communications and television stations. As a result of this attack, three private channels, TV Pink, TV Košava owned by Marija Milošević, daughter of President Milošević, and BKTv owned by entrepreneurs Karić brothers were destroyed. Bogoljub Karić represented the Yugoslav Left in the role of minister without portfolio in the Government of Serbia. All three channels stopped broadcasting due to the damage. According to NATO, these three television stations were vital elements and served as a control apparatus for the Yugoslav president's regime. Another attack occurred in Novi Sad, which hit television stations, leaving the city of 400,000 without any TV network, including the state-run RTS TV channels.¹²²¹ The night after the attack on the media building on April 22, NATO bombed one of President Milošević's luxury houses in Dedinje neighborhood. According to NATO, the house was a "command and control facility" for the military. The bombing occurred when no one was home.¹²²²

In an effort to keep Yugoslavia isolated, on 22 April 1999, ambassadors from 15 EU countries, 11 of which were also NATO members, agreed to ban the direct or indirect sale, supply or export of all petroleum products from the FRY. The embargo included a long list of petroleum and related products, from petroleum jelly to crude oil and gas. This decision was to apply to all EU-based companies, including subsidiaries of US companies, involved in the transport, financing and insurance of oil supplies. The decision became final on 29 April 1999.¹²²³

10.3.4. NATO Alliance Unity for Victory

On 22 April 1999, it was 30 days since NATO began its bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. The results so far showed heavy damage to Yugoslav military equipment, damage to command-and-control facilities, and the destruction of bridges, oil reserves, and means of

¹²²¹ NATO, Transcript of Press Conference, April 21, 1999; Steven Erlanger, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: IN BELGRADE; NATO Missiles Strike a Center Of State-Linked TV and Radio", *The New York Times*, April 21, 1999; Steven Erlanger, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: BELGRADE; NATO Raids Send Notice To Milosevic: Businesses He Holds Are Fair Game", *The New York Times*, April 22, 1999.

¹²²² "Europe Nato hits Milosevic's house", *BBC*, April 22, 1999.

¹²²³ Barry James, "Embargo Near on Oil to Yugoslavia", *The New York Times*, April 23, 1999; ENEUR-Lex - 31999R0900 Council Regulation (EC) No 900/1999 of 29 April 1999 prohibiting the sale and supply of petroleum and certain petroleum products to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

transport. Despite all these efforts, NATO failed to convince Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milošević to abandon the idea of ethnic cleansing in Kosova.

The Kosova issue dominated every political gathering ahead of NATO's 50th anniversary celebrations. NATO needed unity on the anniversary over how to proceed in the war against Yugoslavia at a time when pressure for ground intervention was growing.¹²²⁴ Supporters of the option with ground troops appealed that, according to them, at least four months of preparation were needed to begin preparations for an invasion with ground troops. It took many NATO member states a long time to prepare: collecting weapons, infrastructure (it needed to be repaired - build roads and infrastructure that Albania lacked at the time), sensitizing Macedonian politics whose Parliament refused to use its territory for a ground war.¹²²⁵ NATO should have taken a unified approach, but that was not the case. In the words of US Secretary of State Albright: "The British were in favor of a land option, Germany and Italy were against it, while the French would only support it if the UN Security Council confirmed it."¹²²⁶

On April 21, two days before the start of the NATO 50th anniversary summit in Washington, British Prime Minister Tony Blair raised the issue of ground forces in a meeting with US President Bill Clinton, arguing that "air strikes continued, but with each passing day the absurdity of excluding ground forces became more apparent."¹²²⁷ At this meeting, considered the most important of the Kosova war, Blair insisted that the NATO summit be used as an opportunity for Washington and London to try to convince other allies to intervene with ground troops, but this was opposed by the US president, on the grounds that opening up the discussion of ground warfare could be divisive and prevent the NATO summit from sending a clear message of determination and unity that a prolonged air campaign could be successful in forcing Milošević back to the negotiating table on NATO terms.¹²²⁸ Despite what was said in public, the Clinton-Blair meeting proved to be a great success. According to a document declassified by the White House on April 21, 1999, the two leaders agreed on a common approach to achieving the goals of the war in Kosova. In their one-on-one meetings with NATO leaders, Clinton and Blair agreed to seek:

¹²²⁴ Norris, *Collision course*, 46.

¹²²⁵ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 311; Judah, *Kosova*, 326.

¹²²⁶ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 483.

¹²²⁷ Blair, *Një Rrugëtim*, 287.

¹²²⁸ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 137; Fischer, *Vitet kuq - gjelbër*, 198.

support for further airstrikes; support for NATO to continue to update and assess its ground forces, avoiding a divisive debate; support for increasing economic pressure on Belgrade; and assistance to Albania and Macedonia in their refugee crisis. The document also sets out detailed talking points that demonstrate NATO's determination to continue airstrikes until its objectives are achieved. At the end of this summit, the Allies must agree to meet Commander Clark's requests for additional forces. To be prepared to continue the air campaign for months if necessary. The Yugoslav leadership was asked to commit to fulfilling these principles and to begin the withdrawal of military and police forces in accordance with a precise and rapid timetable, prior to any cessation of NATO air strikes.¹²²⁹

Between 23 and 25 April 1999, nineteen leaders of the Alliance met at a summit in Washington to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The central theme of the summit was undoubtedly Kosova. Standing in the hall where the NATO Treaty was signed on 4 April 1949, President Clinton addressed the gathering at the opening of the summit: "We want Southeastern Europe to follow the same path as Western Europe half a century ago and Central Europe ten years ago. We are in Kosova because we want to replace ethnic cleansing with tolerance and decency, violence with security, disintegration with reconstruction, isolation with integration into the rest of the region and the continent."¹²³⁰ Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General, described the creation of NATO as a "visionary project" that not only embraced the values of freedom and democracy, but also acted on them. Fifty years later, he said, "the founders of this alliance would be proud of what we have done and are doing in Kosova."¹²³¹ "The German people owe a lot to NATO, for the guarantee and security it has given Germany over the past 50 years," Chancellor Gerhard Schröder began his speech. Speaking about Germany's presence in the Kosova war, he stressed: "We have an obligation to do this. We must stand up for our values of enlightenment and democracy. That is the real lesson that our history has taught us."¹²³² At the summit, the leaders of the NATO member states stated that the ongoing crisis in and around Kosova threatens to destabilize areas outside the FRY.¹²³³ Senior NATO leaders

¹²²⁹ Declassified Documents from Samuel Berger, Informal working meeting with British Prime Minister Blair, The White House Washington, April 21, 1999.

¹²³⁰ "From 19 Nations, Messages of Thanks, Hope and Determination", *The New York Times*, April 24, 1999.

¹²³¹ R. W. Apple Jr. "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: THE SUMMIT; Kosovo Overshadows Subdued NATO Event", *The New York Times*, April 24, 1999.

¹²³² "From 19 Nations, Messages of Thanks, Hope and Determination", *The New York Times*, April 24, 1999.

¹²³³ NATO, Press Release NAC-S(99)64, April 24, 1999.

confirmed the goals of the aforementioned document by stating that "The crisis in Kosova represents a fundamental challenge to the values on which NATO has stood since its foundation: democracy, human rights and the rule of law." It is the pinnacle of the calculated policy of repression, ethnic cleansing and violence carried out by the Belgrade regime under the leadership of President Milošević. We will not allow this campaign of terror to succeed. NATO is determined to triumph."¹²³⁴

The war in Kosova showed that the US and its allies can act collectively against aggression and act with compassion to help hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees. In order to prevent this unacceptable international act, NATO leaders agreed to take several more big steps in intensifying the air campaign, targeting personal properties and businesses of Milošević and his friends, as well as targets that directly affected the daily life of civilians, by cutting off transport, water and electricity as well as television shows, which openly propagated and encouraged ethnic cleansing in Kosova.¹²³⁵ In addition, an agreement was reached not to ask the NATO Council for a new decision, but to select objectives to be developed by General Clark and to be in line with the plans developed for the third phase.¹²³⁶ No one insisted on a quick end to the conflict or a radical change in strategy. Implicitly, NATO left the meeting with the impression that the war had to be won, no matter how long it lasted. In fact, many NATO officials who attended the summit, including President Clinton's national security adviser Sandy Berger, express their belief that enough cohesion was created that from that point on they never doubted the outcome of the war again, even if they had doubted it before.¹²³⁷

At the summit, NATO leaders, in addition to reaffirming their determination to escalate the bombing campaign, left the path open for the allies to encourage Russian efforts to mediate a quick resolution to the conflict over Kosova.¹²³⁸ This was best seen in the 17-point declaration of 23 April 1999, in which NATO announced that it was "ready to cease its air strikes" only when the Yugoslav government and president met the demands set out at the extraordinary meeting of the

¹²³⁴ NATO, Press Release S-1(99)62, April 23, 1999.

¹²³⁵ Dana Priest, "France Played Skeptic on Kosovo Attacks", *Washington Post*, September 20, 1999;

¹²³⁶ Fischer, *Vitet kuq - gjelbër*, 198.

¹²³⁷ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 138.

¹²³⁸ Thomas W. Lippman & William Drozdiak, "NATO Softens Conditions on Kosovo", *The Washington Post*, April 24, 1999

North Atlantic Council held at NATO on 12 April 1999, which were reaffirmed by the heads of state and government in Washington on 23 April 1999.¹²³⁹

The determination and cohesion shown by the Western allies on NATO's 50th birthday to continue bombing until the Yugoslav president fully met NATO's demands, summed up by White House spokesman Joe Lockhart in few words: "Serbs leaving - Albanian refugees returning", extinguished any hope Milošević had for a breakup within the Alliance.¹²⁴⁰ Shortly after returning from Washington, Wesley Clark announced NATO's plans while the bombing continued for the second month. He told reporters, "We are trying to continue our air campaign in two lines of operations: one against strategic facilities and the other against forces on the ground. For this purpose, the Allies doubled the total number of aircraft and tripled the number of attack aircraft."¹²⁴¹

10.3.5. Intensification of the air campaign

While NATO leaders continued their work at the Washington summit, the bombing campaign continued with even greater intensity. On 23 April 1999, NATO announced that 30 Yugoslav vehicles had been hit in Kosova within 24 hours. Of these, 23 trucks, 6 tanks and an artillery battery were destroyed or completely disabled. In Serbia, they hit a barracks in Čuprija, as well as a bridge in Novi Sad.¹²⁴² The leaders of 19 NATO countries, concluding summit talks on April 25, pledged to militarily isolate Belgrade and prevent any regional expansion, and to respond to any Serbian attack on neighboring countries where NATO is building up its auxiliary forces.¹²⁴³ As a result, NATO member governments tripled the number of aircraft to more than 1,000. Hungary, as the only NATO member bordering Yugoslavia, was asked to make at least two air bases available to accommodate about 50 aircraft. Turkey was also asked to accept some of the additional aircraft at its military bases.¹²⁴⁴

¹²³⁹ NATO Press Release S-1(99)62 April 23, 1999.

¹²⁴⁰ Blaine Harden, "A Long Struggle That Led Serb Leader to Back Down", *The New York Times*, June 6, 1999.

¹²⁴¹ NATO, Press Conference by Jamie Shea and General Wesley Clark, April 27, 1999.

¹²⁴² *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), Vëllimi III, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 169.

¹²⁴³ Joseph Fitchett, "Leaders Agree to Protect Frontline States: NATO Summit Charts a Kosovo Policy:Patience", *The New York Times*, April 26, 1999.

¹²⁴⁴ William Drozdiak & Thomas W. Lippman, "NATO Summit Ends With Restoration Vow", *The Washington Post*, April 26, 1999.

On April 26, 1999, the Pentagon announced that over the previous 24 hours, NATO forces had struck a third bridge over the Danube River, intensified attacks on Yugoslav ground forces with fighter jets, and destroyed several tanks, trucks, and armored personnel carriers in Kosova.¹²⁴⁵ With airstrikes intensifying on April 28, 1999, US President Clinton demonstrated US resolve by authorizing the Pentagon to call 30,102 reservists to active duty in support of expanding NATO operations.¹²⁴⁶ On the same day, NATO Secretary General Solana, at a press conference, assessed the meeting of the 7 neighboring countries of Yugoslavia at the summit in Washington as very important.¹²⁴⁷

"They gave us full support. Living in the neighborhood of Milošević, they understand better than anyone how important it is for NATO to resist the policies of the Milošević government. They know that our success is crucial to their future, their security and stability. They give us good practical support, as you know, for example overflight rights, transit rights and consent to deploy our forces in their territories."¹²⁴⁸

On 28 April 1999, Allied aircraft carried out numerous attacks on Podgorica Airport in Montenegro. NATO assessed the attacks as highly accurate and necessary. The main targets were military hangars, oil depots, air defense radars and several Super Seagull aircraft known by the official Yugoslav Air Force designation as N-62. Two more Super Seagulls were targeted in Sutomore. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, justifying the attack, pointed out that "Podgorica Airport is only a short distance from our operations in Albania - the aircraft based there pose a direct threat to our forces in Albania". On the same day, NATO reported that it had also attacked Serbian military forces in Kosova, including helicopters, armored forces, troops and other military equipment. The military headquarters in Belgrade, barracks in Ruma and Požarevac, oil depots in Smederevo and Požega, several bridges and elements of the military radio system were also attacked.¹²⁴⁹ As a result of these attacks, on 29 April 1999, Belgrade officials reported the destruction and deactivation of some major factories, such as the Zastava factory in Kragujevac,

¹²⁴⁵ Elizabeth Becker, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: STRATEGY; As More Aircraft Are Sent, Reserve Call-Up Is Imminent", *The New York Times*, April 27, 1999.

¹²⁴⁶ *Rilindja*, 29 prill, 1999, 1-2.

¹²⁴⁷ NATO heads of state and governments met with their counterparts from Albania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Romania and Macedonia, as well as with the foreign ministers of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. [AN].

¹²⁴⁸ NATO, Transcript of the Press Conference by the Secretary General of NATO, Javier Solana, April 28, 1999.

¹²⁴⁹ NATO, Morning Briefing by Mr Jamie Shea, April 29, 1999.

which produced cars and trucks, as well as ammunition. The Sloboda factory in Čačak produced vacuum cleaners and ovens, as well as ammunition, and the 14. oktobar factory in Kruševac, which produced heavy construction equipment and bulldozers, and rebuilt tank engines.¹²⁵⁰ On April 30, 1999, the Pentagon announced that NATO aircraft had destroyed or severely damaged 20 highways, eight railway lines, and two railway/highway bridges. These bridges connected a wide area and touched supply routes and communication lines throughout Serbia, the Serbia-Montenegro border area, and near Serbian centers in Kosova.¹²⁵¹ Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon stated on May 1, 1999, that NATO planned to use B-52s to attack troop concentrations hidden in dense forests. "The scene is large areas, airfields and artillery positioned along the Macedonian and Albanian borders."¹²⁵² On the other side of the day, NATO officials announced that the recent bombing of Yugoslav targets was the most aggressive since the beginning of the bombing. In those days, the weather was on the Alliance's side, warning of an even bigger offensive in the coming days.¹²⁵³ On May 1, 1999, NATO announced the launch of 600 aircraft from the Aviano base, along with 200 bombing runs. In Serbia, communication centers, military centers in Belgrade, radio networks in the cities: Belgrade, Šabac, Subotica, Sremčica, Ivanjica were affected. 4 oil fields and a refinery in Novi Sad. A total of 14 targets were hit in Kosova, including tanks, cannons, anti-aircraft artillery and other motorized vehicles.¹²⁵⁴

NATO commanders and American political leaders wanted to strike Yugoslavia's power system in the first week of the war, but the French were against it. Five weeks later, the Americans proposed strikes on power lines that would not completely destroy the system but would take days or even weeks to repair. They offered a top-secret weapon, the CBU-94, which would knock out power for just a few hours, which the French accepted.¹²⁵⁵ As a result of these efforts, on the night of May 2, 1999, NATO aircraft hit the electrical command and control system, including 5 power distribution centers in Serbia, among the most important in the air war up to that point, F-USAF 11 which dropped CBU-104 on the transformer Obrenovac (power distributor in western Serbia),

¹²⁵⁰ Steven Erlanger, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: THE SERBS; Bombing Unites Serb Army As It Debilitates Economy -- Production Cut in Half, Experts Say", *The New York Times*, April 30, 1999.

¹²⁵¹ Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons*, 169-170.

¹²⁵² Richard Norton-Taylor, "Nato to use unguided bombs", *The Guardian*, May 1, 1999.

¹²⁵³ Elizabeth Becker, "NATO Says New Bombing Is the Strongest Effort Yet", *The New York Times*, May 1, 1999.

¹²⁵⁴ *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), Vëllimi III, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 279.

¹²⁵⁵ Dana Priest, "France Played Skeptic on Kosovo Attacks", *Washington Post*, September 20, 1999.

on the transformer Niš (power distributor in southern Serbia), in the transformer Bajina Bašta and transformers in Drmno and Novi Sad. Because of these attacks, about 70% of the territory of Serbia remained without electricity. The purpose of this extended attack was to shut down installations that supplied electricity to the Third Army of the Serbian Army in Kosova, disrupt military communications and confuse Serbian air defenses. NATO announced that it had conducted over 1,800 flights in the last 72 hours. He increased the number of targets in Kosova, not only against ammunition depots, military air bases, communication centers, but also against ground forces.¹²⁵⁶

In the first week of May 1999, Slobodan Milošević began a political-diplomatic campaign, aimed at crippling NATO and halting its activities. First, on 2 May 1999, he released three American soldiers who had been held captive for over a month. Then, on 5 May, he released President Ibrahim Rugova after weeks of being held in compulsory isolation along with his family.¹²⁵⁷ On May 4, 1999, President Clinton stated in a press statement: "We are very grateful for their release, the three Americans are home. Their families, their friends, and the American people they served so faithfully should be grateful. But nearly a million and a half Kosovars are not home. In fact, two days ago, while our prayers for our soldiers were being answered, Serbian soldiers were entering Prizren, going door to door, ordering everyone to leave or they would be killed. As a result of this situation," Clinton emphasized, "military operations must continue."¹²⁵⁸ The same position came from the Alliance, which welcomed these actions but refused to stop the bombing. According to NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, the Alliance's message is:

"Our strategy is clear - to contain these forces, cut them off from their chain of command, cut off their supply routes and gradually and purposefully drive them away. You have already seen the effect of our strategic campaign against the Yugoslav defense. You can now also see that we can turn the lights on and off in Belgrade, and we hope that in this way we will be able to turn the lights on in the heads and minds of the Belgrade leadership."¹²⁵⁹

Despite ongoing concern, in commemorating the bombings, the main public relations challenge remains the unintentional targeting of civilians. In this context, the most challenging political and

¹²⁵⁶ NATO, Morning Briefing By Jamie Shea, NATO Spokesman, May 3, 1999; Lambeth, NATO's Air, 41.

¹²⁵⁷ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 337.

¹²⁵⁸ "In Clinton's Words: Why Raids Go On", *The New York Times*, May 4, 1999.

¹²⁵⁹ NATO, Press Conference Given by Mr Jamie Shea and Major General Walter Jertz, May 4, 1999.

strategic mistake of the bombing was the accidental attack on 7 May 1999, when NATO, using a list of targets provided by the CIA, struck the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, believing it to be the Yugoslav Federal Administration for Supply and Procurement, killing three Chinese.¹²⁶⁰ "According to our information, it was not possible to hit the embassy. It was located in the northern part of Belgrade while we attacked the southern part. Two hours later we confirmed and discovered the unfortunate truth. Target 493 was chosen incorrectly. The object we bombed was actually the new building of the Chinese embassy."¹²⁶¹ Although the Alliance's apology came immediately, on 8 May 1999 the North Atlantic Council met and issued a joint statement:

"The North Atlantic Council expresses its deep regret for the tragic mistake of bombing the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. The deepest condolences of all Allies are extended to the victims, their families and the Chinese Government. NATO has never and will never deliberately target civilians. NATO will continue to pursue its objectives: to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosova and to ensure that Kosovars return to their homes in peace and security."¹²⁶²

However, the Chinese wanted to use the event as a basis for stopping the bombing. Since the embassy was hit several times, Beijing accused NATO of premeditated attacks.¹²⁶³ In this context, criticism and pressure on General Clark from the political leaders of the Alliance intensified. The paradox was that they wanted the final result and minimal risk from him, so he was repeatedly put in an often-impossible position during the campaign: he was asked to wage a war that was clean but deadly, simple but effective, moral but ruthless. The German general Carl von Clausewitz would call this military strategy for Kosova "Cabinet war".¹²⁶⁴

The campaign briefly died down, especially after the convergence of positions at the G-8 meeting, at which Russia and its allies almost agreed to pass a UN Resolution on sending defense forces to Kosova, where the voice of China and Russia as permanent members could become an obstacle.¹²⁶⁵

¹²⁶⁰ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 147. Peter Beaumont & Patrick Wintour, "Kosovo: the untold story (part two)", *The Guardian*, July 18, 1999.

¹²⁶¹ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 340-341.

¹²⁶² NATO, Press Release (1999)076, May 8, 1999.

¹²⁶³ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 485.

¹²⁶⁴ Ignatieff, *Virtual War*, 111.

¹²⁶⁵ *Rilindja*, 12 maj, 1999, 11.

However, there was a belief among Allied decision-makers that the bombings must continue.¹²⁶⁶ Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General, in a statement to the media on May 9, 1999, insisted that "air strikes will continue until President Milošević stops attacking Albanians and agrees to NATO's conditions."¹²⁶⁷ Jamie Shea announced at a press conference on May 10 that it was not just NATO that was isolating President Milošević, but the European Union and the entire international community. "Rarely has a country in history been so isolated politically, militarily, economically and geographically. This isolation is not the result of what the Yugoslav peoples chose to need, but is a direct consequence of the counterproductive policies of their leadership."¹²⁶⁸

NATO continued to attack Yugoslav targets with increased intensity now that weather conditions were favorable. Allied forces conducted 600 sorties. Multiple, successive waves of large forces began in the early morning of 12 May 1999 with the launch of 36 aircraft, including USAF F-16s and A-10s, RAF Harriers, French Jaguars and Super Etendards, Italian AMXs and CF-18 Canadians. The attacks continued late in the morning with 32 aircraft, including RAF Tornado GR. Mk 1s, French Jaguars and USAF F-16s, followed by 30 F-15Es, and another 16 later. B-1Bs and B-52s joined the attacks late in the day.¹²⁶⁹ On May 13 (day 50), NATO aircraft bombed Serbia's power system for the third time, along with a large number of other targets. Belgrade was left in the dark due to the use of "soft blackout bombs." Serbian sources claimed that NATO used special bombs, which allow it to cut off power without destroying its system. That was not all of the bombing. NATO, taking advantage of the good weather, warned of an increase in the number of flights in the coming weeks, said Major General Charles Wald. In support of this, the Pentagon announced its decision to send the last 176 aircraft requested by NATO.¹²⁷⁰

On May 19, 1999, NATO officials, speaking of the continuation of air strikes, the great damage they inflicted on the Yugoslav army, announced that 31% of the total military forces, 312 tanks and other armored vehicles, 69% of MIG-29 aircraft, as well as many bridges, command posts and

¹²⁶⁶ Blaine Harden, "A Long Struggle That Led Serb Leader to Back Down", *The New York Times*, June 6, 1999; Peter Beaumont & Patrick Wintour, "Kosovo: the untold story (part two)", *The Guardian*, July 18, 1999.

¹²⁶⁷ Michael R. Gordon, "NATO Says It Thought Embassy Was Arms Agency", *The New York Times*, May 9, 1999.

¹²⁶⁸ NATO, Press Conference given by NATO Spokesman, Jamie Shea and SHAPE Spokesman, Major General Walter Jertz, May 10, 1999.

¹²⁶⁹ Lambeth, *NATO's Air*, 49-50.

¹²⁷⁰ Elizabeth Becker, "Belgrade Blacked Out as NATO Planes Continue Assault", *The New York Times*, May 14, 1999.

other military facilities had been destroyed.¹²⁷¹ On May 19 (day 56), the US Department of Defense assessed the damage to the airports, singling out the runways in Batajnica, Sjenica, Prishtinë, Obrva and Ponikve, the infrastructures in Batajnica, Prishtina and Ponikve were significantly damaged, while those in Sjenica and Obrva were completely destroyed.¹²⁷²

In parallel with the intensification of the air campaign, on 20 May 1999, US President Bill Clinton held a meeting with his top advisers, including NATO commander Wesley Clark, to discuss the timeline for a ground invasion. General Clark writes: "I briefed him on various scenarios. A maximum force of 175,000 troops was required, with a US contribution of 100,000, although none of the advisers were willing to accept this option, including the President, they were aware that it could not be delayed too long." Clark insisted that a decision be made by 1 June 1999, while the advisers requested that the decision be postponed until 15 June.¹²⁷³

During the last ten days of May, NATO set a new record for the number of airstrikes every day. On May 22, NATO announced that it had carried out a total of 684 attacks, 90 of which were aimed at eliminating air defense. As reported by the Serbian media Studio B and the news agency Beta, as a result of the bombing, the cities of Užice, Požega, Čačak, Kraljevo, Valjevo, Šabac, Sremska Mitrovica, Pančevo and Požarevac were left without electricity.¹²⁷⁴ Clark recalls: "On May 23, 1999, we added 50 new targets to the master target file, and on May 24, we added another 100. NATO's aircraft fleet now numbers more than 1,000, including 723 U.S. aircraft and 281 from other allies. A base in Turkey was also being prepared, and NATO was putting the finishing touches on using Bulgarian and Romanian airspace."¹²⁷⁵

On 25 and 26 May 1999, the North Atlantic Council ambassadors made two important decisions: 1) they approved a plan to send an additional 20,000 troops to Macedonia and Albania, bringing the total to 50,000 as part of a peacekeeping force that would receive orders from the agreement to move into Kosova and help Albanian refugees return to their homes, and 2) to intensify the air campaign. In his presentation, General Clark briefed the ambassadors with detailed updates on

¹²⁷¹ *Arkivi i Luftës* (16 maj – 17 qershor 1999), Vëllimi IV, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 89.

¹²⁷² Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons*, 170.

¹²⁷³ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 354-358; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 137.

¹²⁷⁴ *Rilindja*, 23 maj, 1999, 6.

¹²⁷⁵ Elizabeth Becker, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: PENTAGON; NATO Calls Transformers A Key Target In War Plan", *The New York Times*, May 25, 1999; Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 359-360.

how Operation Allied Force was increasingly successful in striking Serbian ground forces in Kosova, command and control and communications systems throughout Yugoslavia, radio transmission sites, supply routes, ammunition depots, oil reserves and the power system. Clark also noted that the weather would be good in the next two weeks and that more than 1,000 combat aircraft would be able to carry out bombing raids. "The alliance must apply even greater pressure to targets with even greater visibility (telephone networks, electricity and railways) in the urban center of Belgrade to force Milošević to accept NATO's terms."¹²⁷⁶ According to this view, Serbian military leaders would find it difficult to maintain communication with their forces in Kosova, Serbian popular pressure against Milošević would increase, his propaganda machine and the banking industry's computer connections would be seriously damaged.¹²⁷⁷ On 27 May 1999, NATO began an air campaign, carrying out 750 sorties, 400 missions and 308 strikes targeting various targets across Yugoslavia. The following day, NATO reported that it had carried out 800 sorties with a large number of targets. In the following days, the number of targets increased significantly. On 1 June, the number of targets hit reached 455. The main targets were barracks, fuel reserves, television transmitters, ammunition depots, bridges, as well as Serbian army border posts on the Albanian border.¹²⁷⁸

In late May and early June 1999, NATO's air campaign strategy developed in three directions: one against Belgrade, one against Serbian military forces in Kosova, and one against the rest of Yugoslavia. Accompanied by pressure from ground troops to intervene, combined with diplomatic considerations, this strategy proved successful when, on 3 June 1999, the Serbian Parliament, at the suggestion of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, approved an agreement proposed by NATO, the US, the EU and Russia, placing Kosova under the auspices of the UN with an international civilian and security presence led by NATO. The full agreement, known as the Military-Technical Agreement, was ratified in Kumanovo on 9 June 1999, when KFOR

¹²⁷⁶ NATO, Press Conference by Mr Jamie Shea, NATO Spokesman and Major General Walter Jertz, SHAPE, May 26, 1999; William Drozdiak, "NATO Adding Troops in Balkans", The Washington Post, May 26, 1999; Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 360-363

¹²⁷⁷ Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 21.

¹²⁷⁸ *Arkivi i Luftës* (16 maj – 17 qershor 1999), Vëllimi IV, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 223-275.

Commander Mike Jackson and representatives of the FRY government signed a document in which Serbia agreed to withdraw all Serbian police and military forces from Kosova.¹²⁷⁹

10.4. Ethnic cleansing of Kosova

Since the Kosova War began on February 28, 1998, military-police forces, accompanied by Serbian paramilitaries, have undertaken successive "cleansing" offensives during March and October 1998. As was later proven during these campaigns, Serbian forces killed and massacred hundreds of Albanian civilians of all ages, burned dozens of villages, drowned livestock, etc. The clear goal was to extinguish any hope of a peaceful life in their homes through fear, causing tens of thousands of Albanians to flee their homes.

When the Holbrooke - Milošević agreement was reached on October 13, 1998, the international community and the diplomatic line "believed that they had reached a cease-fire agreement" that would ensure peace in Kosova. The military side, as well as the intelligence side, warned of a "tense" spring. It turned out that they were right - on November 25, 1998, Milošević, in coordination with the newly elected generals - Chief of General Staff VJ Dragoljub Ojdanić and Nebojša Pavković, commander of the Third Army of Yugoslavia in Kosova, began to draw up a plan called "Operation Horseshoe".¹²⁸⁰ According to the CIA, the plan was to ethnically cleanse Kosova as soon as the first snow melted in 1999. The Serbian army would move in with its tanks and military artillery to destroy the Kosova Liberation Army and expel most of the Albanian population towards Albania and Macedonia. "Operation Horseshoe" was planned to be implemented in three phases: the first phase was planned to be implemented during January 1999, and aimed to ethnically cleanse the Albanian population in the northern part of Kosova. The second phase was planned for February 1999. It was to cover the central part of Kosova, namely Drenica and the surrounding areas, where in addition to the killings and deportations of the Albanian population, it was also intended to destroy the KLA units. The third phase of the operation was planned to take place during the negotiations in Paris (March 18, 1999) and to continue throughout April 1999. Ultimately, the plan called for the destruction of one village per day—a rate that

¹²⁷⁹ Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force ("KFOR") and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, June 9, 1999.

¹²⁸⁰ Jeffrey Smith & William Drozdiak, "Serbs' Offensive Was Meticulously Planned", The Washington Post, April 10, 1999.

Milošević believed the West would tolerate, so that Serbia could methodically carry out ethnic cleansing of Albanians within six months.¹²⁸¹ German intelligence claimed to have evidence of such an operation. Joshka Fischer recalls his participation on March 31, 1999 at a humanitarian conference in Petersberg, near Bonn, when Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nadezhda Mihaylova announced that the Bulgarian intelligence service had knowledge of the existence of a Serbian military plan to expel Kosova Albanians.¹²⁸²

While the October 1998 Agreement provided for the withdrawal of Serbian military units from Kosova, during January 1999 OSCE observers monitored the deployment of 14,000 Yugoslav Army soldiers in Kosova and the infiltration of additional infantry units from Serbia. During January and February 1999, Serbian police and military, with the aim of erasing traces of Albanian identity, began a campaign to collect documents and key data in various villages in Kosova. This campaign continued with the collection of valuable religious icons, paintings, and historical manuscripts from museums, archives, and libraries in Prishtina, which were then shipped by truck to Belgrade.¹²⁸³ In connection with these developments, OSCE observers reported that between 6 and 23 February 1999, as talks continued at the Rambouillet Conference in France, large numbers of Serbian military forces were observed throughout Kosova. During this period, the arming of the Kosova Serb civilian population, the training of reservists, the arrival of anti-aircraft forces, the construction of large fuel depots, the preparation of explosive devices along major roads in the south, and an increase in air military activity were observed.¹²⁸⁴ Albanian sources have confirmed that the Serbian leadership has begun moving a large number of troops and armored vehicles south of Niš, Kraljevo, Kragujevac and Leskovac towards Kosova. "There are so many Serbian tanks and forces that something bad will happen."¹²⁸⁵ Alarmed by the intensified offensive by Serbian military forces, on 22 February 1999 the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, announced that 9,000 Albanians had been forced to flee their homes as a result of the recent fighting. In the first two months of 1999, the situation of the displaced in Kosova was as follows: more than

¹²⁸¹ Johanna Mcgeary, "The Road To Hell", *Time*, April 12, 1999; "Europe Did Nato miscalculate?", *BBC*, April 23, 1999; Lambeth, *NATO's Air*, 24.

¹²⁸² Fischer, *tet kuq - gjelbër*, 168.

¹²⁸³ Jeffrey Smith & William Drozdiak, "Serbs' Offensive Was Meticulously Planned", *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1999.

¹²⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 119.

¹²⁸⁵ *Koha Ditore*, 27 shkurt, 1999, 2.

200,000 were displaced within Kosova, about 70,000 others left Kosova for neighboring countries, and over 100,000 others with Yugoslav citizenship, most of whom were Kosova Albanians, sought asylum in Western European countries.¹²⁸⁶

While the Contact Group waited for the Serbian leadership to agree to the agreement proposed in Rambouillet and Paris, Slobodan Milošević had already decided to launch his plan to ethnically cleanse Kosova. On 16 March 1999, the CIA sent a warning to the US leadership: “Kosova – Serbian offensive is imminent”. Two days later, after the Kosova Albanians agreed to sign the proposed agreement, the OSCE Verification Mission and all international diplomats departed. Freed and without any supervision, the Serbian regime immediately began implementing “Operation Horseshoe”.¹²⁸⁷ In those days, Vojislav Šešelj, a furious nationalist, announced at a rally with his supporters in Belgrade: “not a single Albanian will remain if NATO bombs Serbia.” On March 20, 1999, General Nebojša Pavković, commander of the Third Yugoslav Army in Kosova, appeared with such a threatening note, warning that if we were attacked: “Yugoslavia will deal with the remaining terrorists in Kosova.”¹²⁸⁸

International organizations, such as OSCE, Human Rights Watch, UNHCR, American Association for the Advancement Science, KMDLNI, media such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Kosovapress*, etc., which wrote reports/articles about crimes and murders, rapes, burnings, abductions in Kosova in the years 1998-1999, based on interviews with eyewitnesses, highlight a series of human rights violations that resulted: (1) murders and mass murders, (2) violent expulsion of the Albanian civilian population, (3) sexual violence and (4) burning of houses and looting of family farms. This entire plan acted on the orders of the leadership in Belgrade, led by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, Milan Milutinović, President of Serbia, Dragoljub Ojdanić, Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, Nikola Šainović, Vice-President of the Government of the FRY, and Vlado Stojiljković, Minister of Internal Affairs of Serbia. The aforementioned

¹²⁸⁶ “Europe New wave of Kosovo refugees”, *BBC*, February 23, 1999; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 142.

¹²⁸⁷ Barton Gellman, “Slaughter in Racak Changed Kosovo Policy”, *Washington Post*, April 18, 1999.

¹²⁸⁸ Peter Beaumont & Patrick Wintour “Milosevic and Operation Horseshoe” *The Guardian*, July 19, 1999.

officials, using all state, military, police and paramilitary mechanisms, coordinated the murders, expulsions, rapes, destruction, looting and burning of Albanian houses and villages in Kosova.¹²⁸⁹

10.4.1. Mass murders and massacres

On March 21, 1999, proceedings against the newspapers *Koha Ditore*, *Gazeta Shqiptare* and *Kosova Sot* began at the Misdemeanor Court in Pristina, fining their publishers with thousands of dollars, on the charge that they had written articles justifying the arrival of NATO.¹²⁹⁰ At noon on March 25, the Serbian government ordered foreign journalists and any other international presence from NATO countries to leave Serbia. In the Grand Hotel in Prishtinë, where most of the international journalists were accommodated, dozens of people dressed in the military uniforms of the Serbian paramilitary formation, which became known in Bosnia for crimes of ethnic cleansing, entered the hotel rooms threatening the journalists: "that they will kill all those who do not leave Kosova". In the statement signed by the Minister of Propaganda Aleksandar Vučić, it is stated that the journalists: "With their reports from the territory of the Republic of Serbia, they strengthened the aggressive action of NATO forces aimed at the violent destruction of the territorial integrity of Serbia and Yugoslavia."¹²⁹¹ The Serbian regime wanted complete control over information in order to implement its ethnic cleansing plan. When the international journalists left, Albanians began to fear that the Serbian regime would direct all its anger at Albanian civilians in retaliation.¹²⁹²

Free to act, immediately after the start of NATO bombing of Yugoslav targets, military-police forces, accompanied by paramilitary units and local Serbian armed forces, killed and massacred thousands of Albanian civilians, including women, children and the elderly. They began the offensive with individual eliminations, only to continue with successive massacres. Initially, they

¹²⁸⁹ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 10; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 4-147; KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999 – Monografi*, (Prishtinë: KMDLNJ, 2010), 29-65; *The New York Times*, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS; The Charges: 'An Unknown Number of Kosovo Albanians Have Been Killed'" May 28, 1999. American Association for the Advancement Science, *Politikë apo Panikë? Largimi i shqiptarëve etnik nga Kosova, mars – maj 1999*, (Washington: Shoqata Amerikane për Përparimin e Shkencës, 2000).

¹²⁹⁰ *Koha Ditore*, 22 mars, 1999, 5; *Koha Ditore*, 24 mars, 1999, 8.

¹²⁹¹ Carlotta Gall, "Kosovo, Ethnic Albanians Now Fear Wrath of Serbs", *The New York Times*, March 26, 1999; William Neuman, "'NATO' Reporters get the Have -Ho", *The New York Post*, March 26, 1999; Sullivan, *Mos kij frikë se i ke djemtë në Amerikë*, 274.

¹²⁹² Carlotta Gall, "Kosovo, Ethnic Albanians Now Fear Wrath of Serbs", *The New York Times*, March 26, 1999.

targeted: politicians, prominent academic figures, journalists, students, doctors, advocates of human rights and freedoms, whom the Serbian regime accused of being enemies of Serbia.

On March 24, 1999, the first night of the NATO attack, Serbian police kidnapped the well-known Albanian lawyer Bajram Kelmendi along with his two sons, Kushtrim and Kastriot. Lawyer Kelmendi was highly respected in Kosova for his defense skills in numerous political trials during the 90s. Finally, he defended the Albanian-language newspaper *Koha Ditore*, which was accused in court of publishing a statement by KLA political representative Hashim Thaçi and other articles in support of the NATO intervention in Kosova. When his wife, Nekibe Kelmendi, went to the police the next day to get information about the fate of her husband and sons, she got the answer from the police: "Go and ask NATO." Later that day, their murdered bodies were found in one of the streets of Prishtinë. Almost at the same time, other prominent people were killed in different parts of Kosova. In Mitrovica, military-police forces killed two local leaders, Latif Berisha from LDK and Agim Hajrizi from BSPK, as well as writer Ymer Elshani, actor Agim Zhuniqi and member of the KMDLNJ leadership, Prishtinë branch, Xhevdet Leci. KMDLNJ worker Xhavit Haziri and another humanitarian worker Dr. Hafir Shala disappeared without a trace. In Gjakovë, police forces forcibly entered the house of the distinguished doctor Izet Hima, who was killed in the presence of his wife.

The Serbian regime would continue to persecute the Albanian political elite throughout the entire NATO bombing phase. One of the most sensational murders was that of Professor Fehmi Agani, who, together with his family, tried to escape by train to Macedonia. The train was stopped by Serbian forces near the Macedonian border and forced to turn back. Near Fushë Kosovë, the train stopped and all passengers were forced to disembark. After checking all passengers one by one, Serbian military police forces took Professor Agani hostage, whose lifeless body was found near the Lipjan municipality on 6 May 1999. Agani was one of the main leaders of the LDK, who enjoyed special respect from the KLA and international mediators. On 10 May 1999, military police forces kidnapped human rights activist university professor Bardhyl Çausi in the village of Çabrat in Gjakovë. Professor Çausi was considered missing for years, until his remains were

returned to Kosova in late September 2005.¹²⁹³ On May 16, 1999, a political prisoner, the famous intellectual Ukshin Hoti, was about to be released from prison. It was a Sunday, when Serbian guards took him out of Dubrava prison according to the rules to release him. Unfortunately, the opposite happened, he was kidnapped, and since that day, despite the efforts of his family members and human rights organizations, nothing has been learned about his fate.¹²⁹⁴

Mass killings began immediately after the first NATO bombs were dropped on Yugoslav targets. The massacres were so numerous that a detailed description is beyond the scope of this doctoral thesis. Therefore, we will highlight only some of those massacres that resulted in a large number of victims.

On March 24, 1999, military-police forces accompanied by Serbian paramilitary units massacred 22 Albanian civilians in the village of Kotlinë, Kaçanik municipality, throwing them into two wells in order to cover up the crime. On March 25, 1999, the military-police forces, after burning the old bazaar in Gjakovë, continued their attacks on the village of Goden, which was located in the border area with Albania. In addition to the complete destruction of the village, they massacred 20 men from the villages of Goden and Zylfaj. On the same day, Serbian military forces killed and massacred 46 Albanian civilians, 22 of whom were members of the Gashi family, in the village of Tërñje in Therandë (Suharekë). Some of those killed were residents of the villages of Studençan and Randobravë who took refuge in houses in the village of Tërñje. The following day, in Therandë, military and police forces, accompanied by Serbian paramilitary units, killed and massacred 6 families with the surname Berisha, with 48 members, most of whom were women and children. On the same day, in the village of Padalishtë in the Istog municipality, the 19-member Imeraj family was massacred. The victims were between 2 and 72 years old. Serbian forces took them out of their basement where they were hiding and then massacred them.¹²⁹⁵

¹²⁹³ *Rilindja*, 27 mars, 1999, 1; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 184; Shala, *Vitet e Kosovës*, 133-352; KMDLNJ, Prezantim special i KMDLNJ për viktimat e luftës dhe masakrat në Kosovë (1998-1999), Pjesa I, (Prishtinë, 2001), 14; Rade Radovanović, *Qeshja nën trekëmbëshin e varjes*, (Prishtinë: Koha, 2021), 226.

¹²⁹⁴ KMDLNJ, Buletin viti IX Nr. 11-12, mars - shtator (Prishtinë, 1999), 176.

¹²⁹⁵ *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, Monografi I, 446-447-717; KMDLNJ, Prezantim special i KMDLNJ për viktimat e luftës dhe masakrat në Kosovë, 10; *Arkivi i Luftës* (1 mars – 10 prill 1999), 441; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 401-406 dhe 423-46.

One of the regions that suffered many civilian casualties was the section of the Gjakovë - Prizren road. Between March 25 and 27, 1999, military-police forces accompanied by paramilitary units and armed local Serbs began an offensive on the villages around Rahovec and Prizren. From the early morning hours of March 25, the bombings began, which resulted in the looting and burning of houses. Some of the locals managed to escape. But not 442 Albanian civilians, among whom there were women, children and the elderly. Of those massacred, 241 were from the village of Krushë e Madhe, 19 from the village of Krushë e Vogël, 75 from Celinë, 49 from Brestovcë and 58 from the village of Fortesë (Bellacërkë).¹²⁹⁶

A survivor of the Fortesë massacre, Isuf Zhuniqi, who was brought by his relatives with great difficulty to the border with Albania, told *The New York Times*:

"...the crime lasted no more than three minutes, the Serbian killers opened fire without a word, and I was hit in the shoulder... but I was lucky because all the dead bodies fell on me."¹²⁹⁷

The killings continued in other parts of Kosova. On 28 March 1999, Serb forces concentrated in large numbers in Podujevë massacred 19 members of the Bogujevci, Duriqi, Tahiri and Gashi families. On the same day, 28 March, in the village of Izbicë in Skenderaj, Serbian military and police forces committed one of the worst atrocities in Kosova, massacring 147 Albanian civilians. After the massacre, Serbian forces attempted to cover up and deny the crime.¹²⁹⁸ Journalist Liri Loshi, in his testimony submitted to the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on the topic "Survivors of the Kosova War: The Search for Justice" on April 30, 2019, recalls the event:

"After seeing the terrible pictures of the massacred bodies, I immediately asked for a camera to record them and tell the world what happened in Izbicë on March 28, 1999. I found a man named Sefedin Thaçi who hid the camera underground. I asked him to come with me and take pictures of the bodies together. He agreed and we started filming. There were three groups of bodies, several hundred meters apart. Each group had between 30 and 50 people. So, even at first glance, it could

¹²⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 223; KOSOVO/KOSOVA *As Seen, As Told*, 480; *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, Monografi I (Prishtinë: KMDLNJ, 2010), 49 – 50, 464, 755; *Arkivi i Luftës* (1 mars – 10 prill 1999), Vëllimi II, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 489-512.

¹²⁹⁷ Anthony Depalma, "The Atrocities; Survivor Tells of Massacre at Kosovo Village", *The New York Times*, May 3, 1999.

¹²⁹⁸ KMDLNJ, *Prezantim special i KMDLNJ për viktimat e luftës dhe masakrat në Kosovë*, 10.

be said that more than 100 people were killed there. While we were burying them with a group of locals who were relatives of the massacred, Serbian forces were located a little more than one kilometer away. It took me about a month and several attempts to get out of Kosova and take the recording to Albania. From Tirana, I managed to send the video to the White House in Washington, the NATO headquarters in Brussels, the Hague Court and the international media."¹²⁹⁹

On May 19, 1999, US State Department spokesman James Rubin documented the atrocity in Izbicë through two photographs taken at different times. The first was on March 9, 1999, which clearly showed an untouched field, and a photograph taken on April 15, 1999, which showed three neat rows of graves in the same field.¹³⁰⁰ The massacre in Izbicë is evidenced by the indictment with which the Hague War Crimes Tribunal on May 27, 1999 accused Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, Serbian President Milan Milutinović, Dragoljub Ojdanić, Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, Nikola Šainović, Deputy Prime Minister of the FRY, and Vljeko Stojiljković, Minister of the Interior of Serbia, of having planned and ordered the execution of murders in Kosova.¹³⁰¹ After this announcement, Serbian specialized teams for hiding crimes exhumed the corpses and sent them to different locations in Kosova and Serbia. Sadik Xhemajli, in his testimony before the Hague Court on September 3, 2002, recalls that after June 1, 1999, Serbian forces exhumed the corpses with bulldozers and razed the graves with trucks, trying to hide their tracks, and the bodies of the massacred were sent to Petrovo Selo, Belgrade, Zvečan and Novorlan.¹³⁰²

Massacres continued on a wide geographical scale, on March 29, 1999, 14 Albanians were executed in Potërç near Klinë. Meanwhile, on March 29 and 30, 27 other Albanians were killed in Beleg near Deçan. The murderous offensive continued in the village of Pastaselle, municipality of Rahovec, which was targeted by Serbian forces on March 31, 1999. Not knowing where to run, the locals surrendered to the Serbian forces, who then separated the men from the women and children, searched them, robbed them and took away all their valuables. All men were over fifty

¹²⁹⁹ Written Testimony of Mr. Liri Loshi submitted before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs on "Kosovo's Wartime Victims: The Quest for Justice" April 30th, 2019.

¹³⁰⁰ James P. Rubin, Department of State Spokesman Press Briefing on Massacre of Kosovar Albanians May 19, 1999, Washington, D.C.

¹³⁰¹ THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA CASE No. IT-99-37, May 27, 1999

¹³⁰² "U.S.: Massacre video matches mass grave evidence", *CNN*, May 19, 1999; Daniel Williams, "Residents Say Serbs Dug Up Site of Kosovo Massacre", *The Washington Post*, June 20, 1999; ICTY, Slobodan Milosevic Case: 020903IT, September 3, 2002.

years old. That afternoon, the women were driven out of the village under the command "go to Albania!", while 106 of their men were executed at once. Only from the Krasniqi family, 36 members were killed, of which 14 were completely burned.¹³⁰³ Persecution, robbery, separation of men from women, sexual violence against girls and young women was a practice that the Serbian regime developed in every part of Kosova. On April 1, 1999, in the village of Lybeniç near Pejë, Serbian military and police forces separated the men from the women, robbed them, stripped them of their clothes, and then executed 63 Albanians in the most inhumane ways.¹³⁰⁴ On the same day, on the night of April 1, 1999, military and police forces, accompanied by Serbian paramilitaries, launched an offensive on Gjakovë. The next day, April 2, 1999, they killed and massacred 50 Albanian civilians. In the Vejsa family alone, 20 members were killed, and their bodies were then burned. 7 women, 12 children and 1 man were killed. On April 2, Serbian military forces surrounded the village of Kralan and began to mistreat the locals, where thousands of residents who had been expelled from the villages of the surrounding municipalities were staying. After two days of torture, on April 4, they began to pressure them for deportation. The women and children were deported to Albania, while 700-800 men were kept in the village. The women prayed in vain for the release of their loved ones. The Serbian officers told them that 5,000-15,000 German marks must be paid for the release of a man over 40 years old, an amount that most of them paid. After several hours of torture, this entire action ended with the massacre of 97 young Albanians, most of whom were from the municipalities of Klinë and Gjakovë.¹³⁰⁵

The next day was a bad day for the village of Rezallë in the municipality of Skenderaj. In the early morning hours of April 5, 1999, military and police forces, shooting from all directions, entered the houses of the villagers, robbed them, drove them out of their homes, took them out into a courtyard, and shot 98 Albanian civilians. Witnesses who survived told Human Rights Watch that "the Serbian forces ordered us to go to the hill, telling us that we could go to (Hashim) Thaçi or (Bill) Clinton. Then they took us to the courtyard of the (HD) and held us from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. They separated the men, aged 14 to 50, and after tying our hands behind our backs, they beat us." Survivor MD recalls that after hours of torture, they were heard at one point saying, "We have

¹³⁰³ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 506; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 302-303; KMDLNJ, Prezantim special i KMDLNJ për viktimat e luftës dhe masakrat në Kosovë, 12; KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 50.

¹³⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 356; KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 50.

¹³⁰⁵ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 302; KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 448-451.

asked them enough, now we can execute them.” About thirty police officers participated in the massacre, recalls MD, “The first one to shoot was a police officer standing on the roof. Others followed him. I was wounded by three bullets. A police officer came up to me and fired non-stop from a machine gun. When he approached me, he had no bullets. When he returned with a loaded weapon, fortunately he did not reach me, and I was saved,” but not many members of his family who were massacred in the most brutal way.¹³⁰⁶ After the end of the offensive, the bodies of the massacred were buried in the village of Rezallë by the villagers where they remained until April 13, 1999, when Serbian soldiers returned to the village, exhumed the bodies and sent them by truck to the unknown. After the war, the Humanitarian Law Fund documented that their bodies were sent to a mass grave in Rudnica, Raška region.¹³⁰⁷

On April 9, 1999, military-police forces, accompanied by local Serbs, began a raid in Fshati i Vjetër in the municipality of Ferizaj. After torturing and robbing the villagers, they took some young people hostage, forcing them to work as prisoners of war for four days in a row, to open canals and bunkers in some fields between the villages of Komoglavë - Fshati i Vjetër in Ferizaj. 7 members of the Zeka family and 2 members of the Hoxha family were killed.¹³⁰⁸

From 15 to 16 April 1999, another massacre took place in the village of Sllovi, Lipjan municipality. The majority of the village population was Albanian, but there were also Serbs. In the past, relations between them had been good, they shopped together in shops, their children played together. When the war began, the Serbs in the village told their Albanian neighbors that they had no reason to fear the army or Serbian paramilitaries, promising to “protect” them. On 14 April 1999, the police and local Serb residents informed their Albanian neighbors that Yugoslav military forces would be deployed to the village the next day, telling the residents not to worry, that the troops would stay for a day or two.¹³⁰⁹ On April 15, the situation changed completely when military and police forces were deployed to the village. The first to go on the offensive were the Serbs from the village themselves. “They knew the situation of each family well, they knew who had money,”

¹³⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 174-176.

¹³⁰⁷ Fondi për të Drejtën Humanitare Kosovë, *Një proces i papërfunduar: Sfidat në gjetjen e personave të zhdukur*, (Prishtinë: 2022), 24.

¹³⁰⁸ KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 200.

¹³⁰⁹ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 443.

survivors told *The New York Times*.¹³¹⁰ Entering house after house, they mercilessly robbed all the inhabitants and killed 24 Albanian civilians. The next day, the same people killed and massacred 17 more people in Lugu i Dëmës. The corpses were scattered in different places. Despite the fear of Serbian forces, the locals managed to bury the bodies of the massacred. However, as in other cases, in order to cover up the crime, Serbian forces exhumed the murdered, a large part of which was found in mass graves in Serbia a few years after the war.¹³¹¹

A harrowing massacre took place in the village of Poklek i Vjetër in the Drenas municipality. According to witnesses, Serbian military and police forces began shelling the village in the early morning hours of 17 April 1999. The Muqolli, Caraku and Elshani families set out from Poklek towards Drenas, where thousands of residents of the surrounding villages who were being held hostage by the Serbian/Yugoslav army gathered. On the way, they were stopped by Serbian forces, who told them to stay in Poklek because “nothing would happen to them”. Survivor Elheme Muqolli recounts the horrors of the crime:

"When the family returned to the house, two policemen came with black bands on their heads. They killed the dog in the yard and then called Sinan Muqolli. In that state of anxiety and terror, the family members were kept all day until around 5:30 p.m., and then one of those policemen came to the room of Sinan's house, where all the families, children, women and old people were gathered, and threw a bomb that did not explode. After that, the police threw a second bomb, which fell and exploded in Miradije Rifat Muqolli's lap. Immediately after that, the police opened fire on everyone in the room with seven machine guns, killing 53 civilians. Three hours after the massacre, the military-police forces returned and burned the room with all the corpses in it."

The witness herself was also injured, having managed to escape the massacre by jumping from the window of her room. In the Poklek massacre, children, young men, girls, men and elderly people were killed and massacred, including 23 children, 12 girls, 14 women, 2 men and 2 boys.¹³¹² On the same day, in a village on the opposite side of the Drenas in Çikatovë e Vjetër, Serbian forces, after separating the men from the women, killed and massacred 24 Albanians in different groups.

¹³¹⁰ Barry Bearak, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: THE ATROCITIES; Kosovo Town's Tale of Betrayal and Massacre", *The New York Times*, May 6, 1999.

¹³¹¹ KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 51.

¹³¹² KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 327; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 176-180; *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), 232-233.

Locals buried the corpses near the place where they were killed. Three days later, as in many other cases, Serbian forces came with an excavator to dig up the corpses and send them in a direction unknown to the locals.¹³¹³

One of the biggest massacres during the war in Kosova took place on April 27, 1999, when military-police forces accompanied by Serbian paramilitary formations surrounded the villages of Reka e Keqe and Lugu i Carragojës near Gjakovë. The crime began in the early hours of the morning with a carefully analyzed strategy. Initially, the inhabitants of these villages were forced to leave their homes, forming a long column of about 5 km with tractors, cars, carts and pedestrians, to move them in the direction of Albania. On the way, Serbian military forces ordered the convoy to stop at a checkpoint between the villages of Mejë and Korenicë. As in other crimes, men between the ages of 15 and 70 were singled out, while the others were harassed, robbed, and all their money and other valuables taken before being deported to Albania.¹³¹⁴ Witnesses who survived told the OSCE how military forces separated the men into groups of 20 and forced them to chant “Long live Serbia” and then “Slobodan is master.” After hours of torture, military police and Serbian paramilitary forces killed 377 Albanian civilians. Thirty-six of the victims were under the age of 18, and 13 people are still missing.¹³¹⁵

The massacre of the Albanian civilian population continued during the month of May 1999. According to the now well-known model, on May 2, 1999, in the plain area between the villages of Studime e Epërme and Studime e Poshtme, the military-police forces, accompanied by paramilitary units, committed the most serious crimes in the municipality of Vushtrri. Three consecutive days passed when villages in the municipality of Vushtrri, Kovaçicë, Bajgorë, Ceceli, Bare, Sllakoc, Samadrexhë, Oshlan, Gumnisht and Studime e Epërme were brutally attacked by Serbian military forces.¹³¹⁶ In the early morning hours of 2 May, Serbian military forces began shelling villages where thousands of Albanian civilians were forced to seek shelter in the direction of the two villages of Studime. According to witnesses, the column consisted of several hundred vehicles – tractors, the number of which exceeded 5,000 civilians. The convoy was accompanied

¹³¹³ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 297.

¹³¹⁴ KMDLNI, Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999, I, 451-452.

¹³¹⁵ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 326; KMDLNI, Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999, I, 451-452.

¹³¹⁶ *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), 301.

by Serbian military forces the entire time.¹³¹⁷ One survivor recalls how Serbian forces began to stop the tractors and torture the residents. “At one point they went up to the driver (38 years old), beat him and asked him for 500 German marks to save himself. But when he took the money out of his pocket, they shot him in the chest and killed him.” By 8:30–9:00 p.m., soldiers, accompanied by police and Serbian paramilitary units, “went from tractor to tractor along the entire column, took them out of the convoy, robbed and shot 116 Albanians,” including dozens of small children, the elderly, and pregnant women. From the Gërxaliu family alone, 37 members of various ages were killed and massacred.¹³¹⁸

The geographical scope of Serbian crimes in Kosova covered the entire country. The next crime occurred in the early morning of 14 May 1999, when military and police forces, accompanied by Serbian paramilitary units, surrounded the village of Qyshke, in the Pejë municipality. Some of the villagers managed to escape towards the hills near the village, while the rest were forcibly gathered by Serbian forces in the center of the village. They first threatened and systematically robbed more than 200 villagers, taking everything they had: money, gold and other valuables. The crime occurred when Serbian military forces divided the villagers into three groups, placing them in three different houses, where they were forced to stand in a line while the Serbian forces fired volleys of bullets at them.¹³¹⁹ According to OSCE data, 42 men were killed in this action, 38 of whom were burned. Most of those massacred belonged to the age group of 69 to 90.¹³²⁰

One of the most serious incidents occurred at Dubrava Prison, the largest detention centre in Kosova. As of 19 May, it is estimated that there were 950 prisoners in the prison, most of whom were Albanians who had been detained there since the start of the NATO bombing. The prison was divided into four sections: C1, C2, B2 and the reception section. On 19 May 1999, NATO aircraft bombed the prison as a military target of Yugoslav forces. The targets of this attack were Section C1 and the prison administration. As soon as the bombing began, the guards fled, leaving the prisoners locked up. Only the prisoners in Section C2 were treated differently, as they were mostly ordinary prisoners, and the door to this section was left open all day. After numerous

¹³¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 429-431.

¹³¹⁸ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 697-698; KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 55; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 429-437 *Arkivi i Luftës* (16 maj – 17 qershor 1999), Vëllimi IV, (Prishtinë: Kosovapress, 2016), 99.

¹³¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 325.

¹³²⁰ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 509-510.

attempts with pickaxes, the remaining prisoners managed to escape into the prison yard. As a result of the bombing, 3 prisoners were killed and 19 were injured.¹³²¹ On May 21, NATO bombed again. The boiler room was hit first, followed by the administration, kitchen and reception hall. Most of the prisoners were outside the prison buildings, but the bombing killed 19 prisoners and injured many others. The worst crime occurred the next day, May 22, when Serbian police and soldiers who had already occupied the prison ordered the Albanian prisoners to line up four by four, leaning against the wall. As the prisoners lined up, Serbs dressed in police and military uniforms, supported by guard towers, opened fire with machine guns, killing over 100 prisoners.¹³²² Bajrush Xhemaili, a former political prisoner who survived the massacre, remembers the difficult moments when “on the night of May 23, a group dressed in various uniforms, including those of the army, police, paramilitary units and prisoners, entered the prison and executed 30 prisoners at close range.” In the 5 days of the crime, around 200 prisoners lost their lives, around 200 were wounded, 24 as a result of NATO bombing, another 150 by Serbian military and police forces.¹³²³ As in other cases, the Serbian regime tried to deny the crime. On 25 May 1999, the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug reported that “about 100 prisoners were killed and 200 were wounded in the bombing of the Dubrava prison that lasted several days.” *Washington Post* journalist Daniel Williams was one of the journalists invited by Serbian authorities to visit the prison after the NATO bombing. Convinced that the images of the dead were completely different from what Serbian representatives had claimed, he visited Dubrava prison again, and on 25 June 1999 he wrote:

"When we got inside, it didn't take us long to realize that serious things had happened. Things that had nothing to do with the bombing. There was no damage to the interior of the prison from the bombs. None of the dead were crushed or hit by the concrete dust, which could be seen on the floor and in the food hall. In the clinic, where 25 bodies lay, mattresses and pillows were lined up, taking up half the room, which I hadn't noticed on my first visit. Some had bullet holes and dried blood in the pillows, where the head normally rests. In one cell block, bullet holes had damaged the interior walls, and blood stains were visible on the mattresses. At the end of the fenced area,

¹³²¹ Masakra në burgun e Dubravës 19-24 maj 1999, Sesion shkencorë i mbajtur më 23 maj 2004, (Prishtinë: 2005), 72-74.

¹³²² KMDLNJ, Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999, I, 721-722.

¹³²³ Masakra në burgun e Dubravës 19-24 maj 1999, 80-82.

piles of straw were seen piled on top of the manure. And again, walls with bullet marks. Mattresses and sheets had been thrown into the pits of open wells."¹³²⁴

In an attempt to cover up the evidence, the Serbian regime buried 97 bodies of prisoners in a mass grave in the village of Rakosh. In search of these traces, a few weeks after the end of the war on 13 August 1999, a team of exhumation experts from Spain began exhuming bodies from graves in the village of Rakosh, not far from Dubrava prison. The legal advisor for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Karl Koenig, stated that it appeared that the bodies "had been there since 26 or 27 May 1999."¹³²⁵

The last massacre by Serbian forces occurred on June 12, 1999, the day NATO troops had already begun entering Kosova. As they were leaving, Serbian military forces, accompanied by paramilitary forces and local Serbs, massacred 7 members of the Bala family in Dardania, a neighborhood of Pejë.¹³²⁶

Since February 28, 1998, when the Kosova War officially began, the military-police forces of the Yugoslav Army, accompanied by Serbian paramilitary units, according to research by the KMDLNJ, have committed 274 mass murders (massacres) in which 3,721 Albanian civilians were massacred throughout the territory of Kosova. Witnesses who managed to escape these crimes testify that women and children were massacred and killed by Serbian forces just as much as men. Children were even targeted by Serbian forces with the motivation that they were "future enemies of Serbia".¹³²⁷ Evidence suggests that the target of the attack was the nucleus of the Albanian family, where the victims in most cases were all family members. KMDLNJ, recorded 178 families with 989 members (an average of 6 members per family) - all were executed, massacred and burned in their homes, yards, on the street or taken out of the columns of exiles. Such a fate befell the families of Jashari, Ahmeti, Deliu, Berisha, Hoti, Popaj, Zhuniqi, Bogujevci, Krasniqi, Vejsa, Muqolli, Gerxhaliu, etc.¹³²⁸

¹³²⁴ Daniel Williams, "Kosovo Revisited At War's End, Old Places Seen in New Light", *The Washington Post*, June 25, 1999.

¹³²⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 273.

¹³²⁶ KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 53-54.

¹³²⁷ KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 50-57.

¹³²⁸ KMDLNJ, *Prezantim special i KMDLNJ për viktimat e luftës dhe masakrat në Kosovë*, 8-11.

Although a quarter of a century has passed since the end of the Kosova War on 12 June 1999, the exact number of victims is still unknown. The number of missing persons, the burning of bodies, the disappearance of traces, and Serbia's unwillingness to cooperate in finding traces of mass graves have made this process difficult. Out of the 6,057 registered by the International Committee of the Red Cross as missing persons due to the Kosova War, the fate of most of them has been revealed, but the fate of 1,047 persons has not been revealed (as of December 2024).¹³²⁹

In 2010, KMDLNJ published *Monography 1 War Crimes in Kosova 1998-1999*, according to which 8,214 civilians were killed (massacres and other murders) in the war in Kosova from January 1, 1998 to June 12, 1999, of which 7,900 were Albanians, 281 were Serbs, and 33 were civilians of other nationalities. In that period, 2,803 uniformed persons, 1,950 members of the KLA, 853 members of the military and police forces of Serbia and the FRY were killed in the fighting between the forces of the Serbian military and police and the Kosova Liberation Army.¹³³⁰

10.4.2. Forcible expulsion of the Albanian civilian population

With the beginning of the NATO bombing, the Serbian regime immediately intensified the campaign of ethnic cleansing of the Kosova Albanians. The settlements, villages and towns included here systematically began to empty, where the columns of exiles were directed towards the nearest border point. The inhabitants of the district - the cities of Gjakovë, Deçan, Prizren, Suharekë, Rahovec, Malishevë, Mitrovicë and Vushtrri have largely penetrated to the southeastern border of Albania. While the majority of residents of the cities and districts of Prishtinë, Ferizaj, Gjiilan, Fushë Kosovë, Lipjan, Kaçanik penetrated to the border point of Macedonia. But there were also cases when groups of citizens of these regions were forcibly sent in the direction of Albania, while part of the inhabitants of Pejë, Klinë and Istog districts were deported to Montenegro. As there were cases where residents of the municipalities of Gjiilan and Kamenicë were first deported to Preševo and then further to Macedonia.¹³³¹

Since March 24, 1999, ethnic cleansing campaigns have been openly carried out in village after village and town after town as a result of a meticulous and carefully organized campaign by the

¹³²⁹ Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës, *Regjistrimi i popullsisë, ekonomive familjare dhe banesave në Kosovë*, (Prishtinë: ASK, 2024), 53; Fondi për të Drejtën Humanitare Kosovë, *Një proces i papërfunduar*, 129.

¹³³⁰ KMDLNJ, *Krimet e Luftës në Kosovë 1998-1999*, I, 41-44.

¹³³¹ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 142-143.

Serbian army and police, accompanied by paramilitary units, to order the civilian population to leave their homes at short notice before they burned everything. In a large number of cases, families and individuals were exterminated, with the aim of creating panic in order to more easily implement the plan to evacuate Kosova. It was a rule that every Albanian was robbed before deportation, all his property was taken: money, gold and all valuables. Those who resisted were brutally beaten, threatened with death or their children were taken hostage. In all this torture, many girls and young women were raped.¹³³² Displaced persons also faced the seizure of their personal documents. Thousands of deportees who left Kosova reported being forced to surrender their ID cards, passports, and birth certificates, which were often torn in front of them, before being allowed to cross the border.¹³³³

There were days when columns of people could be seen from all four corners of Kosova, on foot and by tractors, cars and trains, being followed and pursued by Serbian military and police forces. Among the displaced were the sick, the elderly and the disabled, there were those who had walked for kilometers in difficult weather conditions and had traumatic experiences and memories of people they had lost or witnessed murders, the burning of their homes.¹³³⁴

The way in which the Albanians were forced to leave Kosova clearly shows that it is a matter of detailed planning and organization. The mass expulsion is evidenced by the fact that before March 1999 there was only a regular train line twice a day between Prishtinë and Hani Elezit on the border with Macedonia, with trains that usually had only three carriages. During the deportation, two to three trains were added per day, all of which had between 13 and 20 wagons. By emptying the urban centers immediately after the beginning of the NATO bombing, the army and the police, accompanied by the Serbian paramilitary, systematically started cleaning the cities where the Albanian population was the majority. In its report on Kosova, Human Rights Watch presents an example of the evacuation of Prishtinë, where witnesses from the settlements of Kodra e Trimave, Taslixhe, Arbëri and Dardani remember the moment when masked military-police forces went door to door telling residents to leave immediately. "You have to go to the train station"! There

¹³³² "Europe Kosovo exodus sparks aid crisis", *BBC*, March 30, 1999; Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 155; Jeffrey Smith & William Drozdiak, "Serbs' Offensive Was Meticulously Planned", *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1999; Peter Beaumont & Patrick Wintour "Milosevic and Operation Horseshoe" *The Guardian*, July 19, 1999.

¹³³³ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 146-147.

¹³³⁴ KMDLNJ, Buletini viti IX Nr. 13 Tetor - dhjetor (Prishtinë, 1999), 13.

were times when the threat was direct: "If you don't run away in a minute, we will kill you all!".¹³³⁵ According to a study by the American Association for the Advancement of Science¹³³⁶ in just 48 hours from March 27 to 28, 1999, more than 62,000 Albanians crossed the border in Morina on the border with Albania. 16,800 Albanians left Prizren alone in these two days. The deportees were mainly from the towns and villages of southern and western Kosova, most of whom reported that military-police forces, accompanied by Serbian paramilitary units, massacred the civilian Albanian population of Kosova, before they were sent to Albania.¹³³⁷

On March 29, 1999, more than 200 Albanians of various ages who were forced to leave their homes found the Albanian Catholic Church in Pejë as their only refuge. According to the agreement, the police and the Serbian army took them out by force. After harassing them, they forced them to head towards Montenegro via Rožaje.¹³³⁸ This group of civilians joined the continuous column of Albanians heading towards Montenegro. Some citizens who managed to cross the border told the *BBC* on 30 March 1999 that they left in a truck at gunpoint where a hand grenade was thrown at their feet as they were leaving. "We didn't have time to get clothes, food or anything else," said one woman. Another danger faced by the Albanian refugees was the mining of border areas in three directions of neighboring countries.¹³³⁹ On March 31, 1999, Serbian troops and police entered neighborhood after neighborhood in Prishtina, firing automatic rifles, terrorizing people who were hiding in their homes. They started from Hasan Prishtina Street, continued to the Old Madrasa and the Dodona Theater, and then continued to the Taukbahqe neighborhood. As a result, more than 7,000 citizens, men, women, and the elderly, were forcibly forced onto trains and buses to head towards Macedonia and Albania.¹³⁴⁰

An alarming situation was created at the border crossing at the Morinë crossing that connects Kosova with Albania. On April 1, 1999, the newspaper *Rilindja* wrote about a 17-kilometer-long convoy of Albanian civilians that reached Prizren.¹³⁴¹ The first column had 50 and the second 80

¹³³⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 144-145.

¹³³⁶ The acronym AAAS will be used further in this paper.

¹³³⁷ American Association for the Advancement Science, *Politikë apo Panikë*.

¹³³⁸ *Rilindja*, 30 mars 1999, 3.

¹³³⁹ Europe Macedonia border 'effectively closed', *BBC*, March 30, 1999.

¹³⁴⁰ Paul Watson, "Soldiers Prod Kosovo Exiles Onto Trains" *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1999; *Arkivi i Luftës* (1 mars – 10 prill 1999), 426.

¹³⁴¹ *Rilindja*, 2 prill, 1999, 5.

civilian vehicles, such as tractors, cars, trucks, etc. The convoy was escorted by Serbian military and police forces, and many citizens, due to the lack of vehicles, were forced to walk. As they entered the mountainous areas, they were beaten and robbed by Serbian police, and there were also cases of murder and rape.¹³⁴² Albanian refugees who crossed the border with Albania told AAAS how the Yugoslav army, police and paramilitary units forced them onto the road leading from Pejë through Gjakovë to Prizren. In the following testimony, citizen XX tells how he was forced to leave his home:

"The Serbs forced people to leave Pejë on April 1, 1999 at 10 a.m. They told us: 'Go to Albania.' They (Serb soldiers) went from one place to another. They burned houses as soon as people fled. They brought us trucks and buses. They treated us like animals. Men and women together. They didn't let us take our clothes or other things with us. We left as we were. From time to time they beat the men. They stole everything from our houses. We drove to the border. About 20 km before we reached the border, they stopped us and told us: 'Now walk. Since NATO is on your side, why don't you ask NATO for help?' We traveled by bus. We left at 1 p.m. and arrived at 7 p.m. Then we walked for about two hours. The windows were covered and the buses were packed."¹³⁴³

On April 2, 1999, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon told at a press conference that they had predicted as early as February 1999 that there would be an increased wave of refugees in the spring as a result of the offensive planned by Serbian leaders, but "I don't think anyone could have predicted the extent of this brutality that led to this influx of refugees."¹³⁴⁴ On April 3, 1999, the US State Department announced that it had received chilling reports that more than 200,000 Albanians of various ages were being held captive near the train station in Prishtina in preparation for forced deportation.¹³⁴⁵ The situation looked alarming. 40 wagons were stopped at noon on April 3, 1999 at the border of Kosova and Macedonia. On the paved road there was an equally large column of cars that arrived in Ferizaj. The strict order of the Serbian police was for everyone to get off the train, walk only along the track, because the parts along the track were mined. At the moment when the border with Macedonia was almost blocked, those who believed that they would

¹³⁴² *Arkivi i Luftës* (1 mars – 10 prill 1999), 452.

¹³⁴³ American Association for the Advancement Science, *Politikë apo Panikë*.

¹³⁴⁴ William Claiborne, "Relief Slow to Reach Refugees", *The Washington Post*, April 2, 1999.

¹³⁴⁵ Philip Shenon, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: IN WASHINGTON; U.S. Grapples With Issue Of Finding Refugees Homes", *The New York Times*, April 3, 1999.

soon pass to a safe zone, where they would be provided with the necessary first aid, soon became desperate. Upon entering the neutral zone, they met fellow citizens who had been staying there for days, who were sleeping in the rain under a clear sky.¹³⁴⁶ Faced with a very disturbing situation, UNHCR called on NATO to intervene in the management of the situation on 3 April 1999. The request was for NATO soldiers to help with the provision of food and the construction of camps to house the deported Kosova Albanians.¹³⁴⁷ NATO's reaction was immediate. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea announced during a briefing on 4 April 1999 that General Sir Michael Jackson, the Allied commander in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was now in full command of the situation and had taken full authority from the North Atlantic Council to direct the relief operation. "Our soldiers prepare food and transport it to the border areas; they are building six residence camps for the systematization of those deported from Kosova".¹³⁴⁸ On April 4, the UNHCR appealed to European countries to help the Albanian exodus. "Kosova's neighbors are overwhelmed and can no longer cope with the flow. More than 200,000 terrified and exhausted Kosova Albanians have fled to Albania, 115,000 to Macedonia and more than 30,000 to Montenegro." Moreover, the appeal states that the streets inside Kosova are filled with tens of thousands of people, while Serbian forces continue their violence to empty Kosova of its majority Albanian population.¹³⁴⁹

Between 5 and 6 April, more than 15,000 Albanians crossed the Qafa e Prushit border crossing, which connects Kosova with Albania. According to the UNHCR Kosova Crisis Update, each of them walked "in a very difficult physical condition" due to the atrocities they had suffered at the hands of the Serbian regime. The report also highlights the tense situation at the border crossing. Serbian police outside the crossing warned journalists (who were waiting for the deportees to be interviewed) to move 500 meters away from the crossing or face shooting. There were reports of thousands of people waiting to cross the border. The deportees came from various areas of Kosova, including Prishtinë, Mitrovicë and Drenas.¹³⁵⁰ Thanks to this goal, the Serbian regime, depending

¹³⁴⁶ Zeqir Bekolli, "Bllaca, dëshmi e pastrimit etnik të Kosovës", *Rilindja*, 18 qershor, 2000, 6; *Rilindja*, 3 prill, 1999, 13.

¹³⁴⁷ UNHCR and Kosovo: a personal view from within UNHCR, April 30, 1999.

¹³⁴⁸ NATO, Press Conference by NATO Spokesman, Jamie Shea and Air Commodore, David Wilby, April 4, 1999.

¹³⁴⁹ Press Releases: "UNHCR urges the world to receive Kosovo refugees as exodus grows", April 4, 1999; The Ethnic Cleansing of Kosovo, Fact Sheet based on information from U.S. Government sources, released June 4, 1999.

¹³⁵⁰ UNHCR, Kosovo Crisis Update – April 6, 1999.

on its priorities, developed an offensive of persecution throughout Kosova, which led to the blockade of all roads on 6 April 1999. In the direction of Albania, the number of deportees exceeded 2,000 people within one hour. In the meantime, long queues of up to 5 km were formed, in which deportees waited for days to find a place on the overcrowded train to Macedonia. Many elderly people and others with chronic illnesses were unable to survive the 65 km distance.¹³⁵¹

For Albanian migrants in Macedonia, the place of hell was the border crossing at Bllacë, where tired and exhausted deportees faced death under the open sky and in terrible weather conditions. Bllacë became their second tragic stop after they were forcibly expelled by Serbian forces. Over 65,000 Albanians were left trapped in the mud, without adequate food, clothing, or sanitation. CNN reported from the scene on April 6, 1999 that at least 50 people had died in the area, at a time when the Macedonian government had said it could not accept more than 20,000 refugees because a larger influx could destabilize the country.¹³⁵²

This was actually Milošević's goal, to cause chaos in Macedonia and Albania through the wave of refugees, and to destabilize Macedonia in particular, which served as NATO's supply area.¹³⁵³ The West was faced with a challenge that required a quick decision. The massive influx from Kosova overwhelmed all the capacities of Albania and Macedonia, but also of other neighboring countries, which constantly demanded that other nations share the burden of security, shelter, and care for the Kosova Albanians.¹³⁵⁴ Faced with this situation, the US and its Western allies promoted a program to evacuate a significant number of refugees from Macedonia to various European countries, including Turkey, Israel, the US, Canada, Australia, and even New Zealand. The first flights with refugees began in the first week of April 1999.¹³⁵⁵

Relocating refugees from the region had its risks. First, Milošević could easily interpret this as an aid to his campaign of ethnic cleansing, to further increase the pressure for the evacuation of Kosova, knowing that the international community is worried that they will be transferred even

¹³⁵¹ Jeffrey Smith & William Drozdiak, "Serbs' Offensive Was Meticulously Planned", *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1999.

¹³⁵² "More Kosovo refugees flown out of Macedonia", *CNN*, April 6, 1999.

¹³⁵³ Fischer, *Vitet kuq - gjelbër*, 169.

¹³⁵⁴ William Branigin & William Claiborne, "Refugee Airlift Begins in Balkans", *The Washington Post*, April 6, 1999.

¹³⁵⁵ UNHCR Global Report 1999 - Kosovo Emergency, 1999; Rilindja, 14 prill, 1999, 13.

further from their homes.¹³⁵⁶ Thanks to this goal, the Serbian regime, depending on its priorities, developed a "lurking" offensive throughout Kosova, which caused all roads to be blocked. Secondly, there was a justified fear that settling Albanians in rich European countries, with great opportunities for work and a dream life, would tempt them not to return to their country, which would dilute the reasons for military intervention.¹³⁵⁷

On April 6, 1999, in the midst of a major wave of ethnic cleansing of Albanians, Milošević declared to the Serbian media that the military offensive in Kosova was over and that "peace had come to Kosova." It seemed clear that the false ceasefire would buy time until he could consolidate the army, police, and paramilitary forces in Kosova, a tactic rejected by the US and NATO.¹³⁵⁸ However, the campaign of ethnic cleansing continued with even greater intensity. The killings and abuses of the civilian population continued. Even more disturbing was the fact that hundreds of thousands of residents remained isolated in the mountains of Kosova without food or clothing.¹³⁵⁹ "When civilians are attacked and massacred because of their ethnicity, as in Kosova, the world looks to the United Nations to speak on their behalf," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan during a speech on the issue of deported Albanians on April 7, 1999. Annan recalls that every time the world says "never again," it happens. "The vicious and systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing being carried out by the Serbian authorities in Kosova clearly has one goal: to expel or kill as many ethnic Albanians in Kosova as possible."¹³⁶⁰

The fact that the statement about the supposed end of the military offensive in Kosova was false is evidenced by the fact that on April 11, 1999, Serbian military-police forces launched attacks on the villages of Miradi e Poshtme and Miradi e Epërme, Bardhi and Madh in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë, threatening them to go to Albania as soon as possible. The convoy, which consisted of almost 5,000 Albanians, was joined by another 5,000 citizens from the Prizren region. All

¹³⁵⁶ *Rilindja*, 7 prill, 1999, 6.

¹³⁵⁷ D'Alema, *Kosova, Italianët dhe lufta*, 69.

¹³⁵⁸ *Arkivi i Luftës* (1 mars – 10 prill 1999), 500.

¹³⁵⁹ Jeffrey Smith & William Drozdiak, "Serbs' Offensive Was Meticulously Planned", *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1999.

¹³⁶⁰ United Nations, Press Release SG/SM/6949 HR/CN/898, April 7, 1999.

deportees were forcibly taken from their homes at gunpoint with the order "if they refuse, they will be killed".¹³⁶¹

An alarming situation was also established in the Ferizaj region. The railway line passing through Ferizaj made the municipality a convenient point for the deportation of thousands of Albanians from all over Kosova to Macedonia. On April 11, 1999, Serbian military forces launched an offensive in the region, keeping more than 5,000 citizens under complete siege from 7 a.m. until nightfall without food. Ramiz Ramadani, a teacher from the village of Ferizaj, told *The New York Times* that Serbian military forces came to "our village telling us that it is safe to stay in our homes. But the next day another group of soldiers came, the inhabitants scattered in fear. Soldiers killed five elderly people, two of whom were immobile in wheelchairs. When leaving, the soldiers looted everything and set the houses on fire."¹³⁶² In those days, the railways were full of civilians. On 14 April 1999, UNHCR spokesperson in Skopje, Paula Gerdini, announced that there were around 50,000 citizens waiting at the Ferizaj and Kaçanik railway stations to come to Macedonia.¹³⁶³ More than 16,000 citizens crossed the border from Ferizaj on 14 and 15 April, followed by another 31,000 on 16 and 17 April 1999. The situation was alarming in all centers of Kosova. On 11 April 1999, Serbian military and police forces set off a long convoy of civilian vehicles, filled with Albanian citizens from the Mitrovica area. The mass exodus from Mitrovica began on 12 and 13 April, peaking on 14 and 15 April, when more than 5,200 people left over two days. One witness told AAAS:

"We left Mitrovica on April 16 at 9 a.m. when four or five policemen came to my house and one of them said: Get out, go to Albania or America. The policemen were dressed in black camouflage uniforms, they had masks and automatic weapons. They told us that we had to leave in a few minutes or they would kill us. We were told to gather at the mosque in Zhabar, where there were thousands of people. From there we went to Shipol, then to Klinë, Pejë, Prizren and then to Morinë. On the way I didn't see what was happening because our tractor was covered. My son was driving

¹³⁶¹ *Arkivi i Luftës* (11 prill – 15 maj 1999), 43-48.

¹³⁶² David Rohde, "CRISIS IN THE BALKANS: IN MACEDONIA; Refugees Reportedly Are Hunted In Kosovo", *The New York Times*, April 11, 1999.

¹³⁶³ *Rilindja*, 15 prill, 1999, 10.

the tractor when they stopped us. They pointed a gun at him and asked for money. Yes, we had no money, only 25 dinars. We were lucky they didn't kill us."¹³⁶⁴

The number of Albanians deported to Albania was at its peak. According to the Albanian Ministry of Information, from 26 March, when the mass migration began, to 15 April 1999, 312,714 Albanians from various regions of Kosova arrived in Albania, with a daily average of 14,891 people. Among the majority of the displaced, it was difficult to find an Albanian who knew where his relatives were. The families were concerned not only about being expelled from their homes. The displaced were also worried about what might happen to their relatives who remained in Kosova.¹³⁶⁵

On April 16, 1999, the Yugoslav army took international journalists on a long bus ride through eastern and southern Kosova to show them the damage allegedly caused by NATO bombing. The journalist of *The New York Times*, Steven Erlanger, describes the terrible situation that prevailed in Ferizaj. "On the streets of the city, traces of ethnic cleansing could be found everywhere, in bars, houses, apartments of Albanians, after each attack, Serbian soldiers painted a well-known nationalist banner symbolizing a cross with four letters "C", "Only Unity saves the Serb" (Ser., Samo sloga Srbina spasava). This was a sign for everyone to understand that the owners and tenants of these buildings are Serbs."¹³⁶⁶

After the reduction of the number of Albanians expelled in the direction of Albania, on April 20, 1999, it was announced that 2,500 Albanians had crossed the Hani and Hotit border crossings. Sources from Albania confirmed that the deportees were mainly women, children and the elderly and that they were from the municipalities of Gjakovë and Pejë.¹³⁶⁷ But the situation changed radically by the end of the month. On 30 April 1999, UNHCR reported alarming figures of more than 16,000 Albanians deported to Albania and Macedonia in a single day, with many more waiting in line at the border. More than 8,500 crossed into Macedonia, another 7,500 into Albania, bringing the number of arrivals to 10,000 within an hour.¹³⁶⁸ The general situation of Albanian exiles in Kosova's neighboring countries was: in Albania there were 373,400 refugees scattered in

¹³⁶⁴ American Association for the Advancement Science, *Politikë apo Panikë*.

¹³⁶⁵ *Rilindja*, 16 prill, 1999, 11.

¹³⁶⁶ Steven Erlanger, "In Kosovo, Empty Towns, Burned Homes and Shops", *The New York Times*, April 17, 1999.

¹³⁶⁷ *Rilindja*, 21 prill, 1999, 3.

¹³⁶⁸ United Nations, Daily Press Briefing of office of Spokesman for Secreatry – General, April 30, 1999.

different cities. There were more than 160,700 Albanian refugees in Macedonia, of which 93,370 were accommodated in Albanian families, another 67,330 in refugee camps in Stankovec 1 and 2, Čegran, etc. In Montenegro, these figures were joined by another 22,779 Albanians who were resettled from Macedonian camps to various European countries, Israel and Turkey, bringing the total number of Albanians expelled from Kosova to 619,279.¹³⁶⁹

Unlike Macedonia and Albania, where exiles were helped by international organizations, the situation in Montenegro was different. Montenegro was one of the republics of Yugoslavia that was also at war. Albanian exiles made up 10% of the total population. The police were under the control of the Montenegrin government and the refugees considered them a protective force. But the Yugoslav army was controlled from Belgrade, so there were frequent cases of deportees being arrested and beaten by Yugoslav soldiers. Albanian refugees settled in populated areas with an Albanian population, mainly around Rožaje and Ulcinj, where they were largely left to fend for themselves.¹³⁷⁰

During May and early June, the number of Albanians deported from Kosova continued to rise by several thousand a day. Internal structures were created in Albania and Macedonia, which, with the help of international organizations, including NATO soldiers, ensured that the refugee situation did not worsen as it did in early April 1999.¹³⁷¹

The involvement of all Yugoslav state mechanisms: the army, the police, the paramilitary units, the immense violence used throughout the entire campaign of expulsion of Albanians clearly proves that this process was not spontaneous, but planned and organized in detail in Belgrade. According to UNHCR data, by June 10, 1999, military and police forces, accompanied by paramilitary units, had expelled about 90% of the Albanian population from their homes. While half of the population faced internal displacement, from village to village to remote mountains, in order to escape murders and massacres, more than 862,718 other Albanians were expelled from Kosova. Of these, 444,200 were in Albania, 327,018 in Macedonia, of whom 82,518 moved to

¹³⁶⁹ USAID, Kosovo Crisis Fact Sheet #41, April 30, 1999.

¹³⁷⁰ William Booth, "Refugees in Montenegro Report Abuse by Army", *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1999.

¹³⁷¹ American Association for the Advancement Science, *Politikë apo Panikë*.

various European Union countries and other countries such as the USA, Australia, Canada, Israel and Turkey. 69,800 were deported to Montenegro, and 21,700 to Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹³⁷²

10.4.3. Sexual violence

Rape by Serbian military and police forces and paramilitaries has been occurring since the beginning of the war on 28 February 1998. Unfortunately, very little has been documented, or remains hushed up due to sensitivity. OSCE researchers who interviewed dozens of deported Albanian witnesses found that acts of sexual violence were among the many crimes that survivors confessed to. It is difficult to assess how widespread rape was in the earlier period, but the examples below may provide some indication that the same methods were used throughout the war. Young women were vulnerable to attack in every setting of their daily lives. A 21-year-old Kosova Albanian woman described how Serbian police subjected her and her cousin to a six-hour rape in mid-February 1999. The girls were arrested¹³⁷³ while waiting for the bus: "At 6 p.m., while we were eating at the bus stop and waiting for the bus..., five police officers came. You have to come with us to the police station. We wanted to walk to the police station. They grabbed our hands and pushed us into a police car... I knew something dangerous was going to happen to us. Instead of going to the police station, they sent us to an open field, took off our clothes, and each of us raped us several times within six hours."¹³⁷⁴

With the intensification of the increase in violence, with the increase in the number of victims, the number of rape victims also increased. Sexual violence in Kosova was used as a weapon of war by the Serbian regime, because it had a humiliating political character, moral and spiritual breakdown of the Albanian people, which actually became one of the most serious war wounds in Kosova. All the evidence shows that they were organized and programmed by the leaders in Belgrade themselves. They were massive and attacked almost all ages and both sexes. Most of the victims were between the ages of 12-13 and 40-45. They ranged from underage girls, pregnant women about to give birth to elderly women.¹³⁷⁵

¹³⁷² UNHCR Kosovo Crisis Update: June 11, 1999.

¹³⁷³ Place names and other information are not shown to preserve confidentiality.

¹³⁷⁴ KOSOVO/KOSOVA As Seen, As Told, 95-96.

¹³⁷⁵ Buletin viti IX Nr. 11 -12 mars - shtator, 1999, 184-185.

According to Human Rights Watch, rape in Kosova was not a rare or isolated act by Serbian military and police forces. Rape in Kosova was deliberately used by the Serbian regime as an instrument to terrorize the Albanian civilian population, extort money from families, and force civilians to leave their homes. Rapists also served the purpose of forcibly expelling Albanians from Kosova. In general, when it came to rape during the war in Kosova, the Serbian regime used three categories: (1) rape of women in their homes, (2) rape during expulsion, and (3) rape in detention facilities. In the first category, Serbian forces entered private homes and raped women in the presence of family members. In the second category, people who moved were usually stopped, robbed, and threatened by the police and Serbian military; if the families had no money, Serbian forces took their daughters and raped them. The third category refers to rapes in temporary detention centers, such as houses, barns, or other abandoned places.¹³⁷⁶ BBC journalist Emily Buchanan, on April 13, 1999, recounted the horrors of some Albanian rape victims, "...Serbian soldiers killed four women after raping them dozens of times. One of the victims was seven months pregnant." The survivor who agreed to speak attempted to kill herself after being raped in front of her family. The whole incident took place after a group of soldiers entered her house, shooting non-stop:

"Four of them came in with masks. One was from my village. He started hitting me. The captain said to my father: 'Your daughter is too beautiful to be a Serb's wife... then they grabbed my hands, one of them had sex with me, while the others kissed and hit me at the same time.'¹³⁷⁷

The Washington Post, based on interviews with women and testimonies, writes that sexual violence was common in Kosova throughout the war. Rape was a very sensitive topic for Albanians. Kosova had a predominantly traditional society. Men were raised and educated in the spirit that the family must be protected, above all. Thanks to this upbringing, "to touch a woman is to touch the honor of the family and her husband." In this context, a sexual attack on a woman could permanently stigmatize her family and destroy her marriage or prospects for marriage. Therefore, collecting data on rape resulted in numerous difficulties, even for war crimes investigators.¹³⁷⁸ Three witnesses testified before the Hague Tribunal in case number IT-05-87-T,

¹³⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 137-138.

¹³⁷⁷ "Refugees tell of systematic rape", *BBC*, April 13, 1999.

¹³⁷⁸ Peter Finn, "Signs of Rape Scar Kosovo", *The Washington Post*, June 27, 1999.

regarding their experiences of sexual rape in Prishtina in April and May 1999. K62, K14 and K31, all Kosova Albanian women, gave detailed accounts of their ordeal at the hands of Serbian soldiers and police officers.

K62 testified that on April 1, 1999, she was alone in her house when three men wearing green camouflage uniforms and “some kind of caps and masks over their faces” arrived. Two of them began searching the apartment, while a third pushed K62 to the floor and raped her. The second man then raped her as well, and the third forced her to perform oral sex.¹³⁷⁹

The second witness, identified by the court as K14, was in her mid-teens when she was raped. She described how in late May 1999 a group of police officers came to her house and took her and her sister to a car parked outside. However, her sister was allowed to return home before the car left. K14 was sent to a hotel in Prishtina, where one of the police officers raped her. Another police officer was standing outside. The rapist told her that he would not let another police officer touch her if she promised to return on Monday and bring her sister for his friend. K14 agreed because she wanted him to leave. When she returned home, she told one of her friends what had happened. Her friend told K14 that the same thing had happened to her, and that she had been sent to a house where she was raped by four men for two consecutive days. On Monday morning at 4 a.m., when she was due to return to the hotel, K14 and her family left Prishtina.¹³⁸⁰

A third witness, K31, recounts the horror of her rape at a hospital in Prishtina, while she was accompanying an injured family member. Upon arrival, K31 was taken to a basement and placed in a closed, dark, unfurnished room with 10 to 15 other women, all Kosova Albanians. About 20 minutes later, a soldier entered, holding a torch, selected K31, and took her to another room in the basement, where she was raped by the soldier who had selected her. While she was still lying on the floor, another soldier entered the room and raped her twice more. The third soldier then entered the room when K31 had already lost consciousness. She left the hospital after NATO troops entered Kosova.¹³⁸¹

¹³⁷⁹ United Nations, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Case No. IT-05-87-T Milutinović et al. (‘Kosovo’) Judgement to Be Rendered on 26 February 2009, 318-319.

¹³⁸⁰ Case No. IT-05-87-T Milutinović et al., 319-320.

¹³⁸¹ Case No. IT-05-87-T Milutinović et al., 320-321.

According to the testimony of the KMDLNJ, throughout the deportation process, Serbian military-police and paramilitary forces forcibly abducted young girls from long columns and sent them to different camps and raped them. In some of the places where they were held hostage, traces of rape were found, such as: pulled out hair, women's clothing, men's underwear, pills and syringes, facts that prove that Albanian women were not only sexually abused, but also forcibly drugged. According to the testimony of one victim, there were cases when at one time in one camp more than 100 members of the Serbian forces, who had complete control of the facility, systematically raped groups of 60 to 500 Albanian girls and women.¹³⁸²

The most frequently cited estimate suggests that around 20,000 women underwent this kind of torture. This figure is based on research conducted by the US Centers for Disease Control, which estimates that 4.4% of the female population in Kosova has been raped or sexually assaulted.¹³⁸³

10.4.4. Burning houses and looting households

Massacres and deportations of Albanians during the Kosova War were largely accompanied by looting and ultimately the burning of homes and households. Albanians were usually looted before the deportation process, and their homes and other property were burned at the very end. Those who resisted were threatened with death or had their children taken away until they agreed to hand over all their financial assets. Victims also reported that Serbian forces confiscated their personal belongings and documentation, including identity cards.¹³⁸⁴

Military-police forces, accompanied by Serbian paramilitary formations, looted the Albanian civilian population using a chain of control. The idea was clear: during the deportation process, the Albanian population could not avoid any of the stages of looting:

- 1. - it was a rule that every attacked family would be the first to be robbed,
- 2. - military and police forces, accompanied by paramilitary units, entered already empty houses and apartments and looted them,

¹³⁸² Buletin viti IX Nr. 11 -12 mars - shtator, 1999, 185-186.

¹³⁸³ Amnesty International "Wounds that burn our souls" Compensation for Kosovo's Wartime rape Survivors, but still no Justice (London: December, 2017), 12.

¹³⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 156.

- 3. - on the road, while being expelled at every stop, Serbian forces searched Albanian civilians and took all their valuables,
- 4. - at the train and bus stations where thousands of citizens were waiting for their turn to be deported, most of them, in order to find a place, were forced to give their last money as the only chance to escape death,
- 5. - During the deportation process, many citizens ended up in long lines with the means of transport they had, cars, tractors, which they were eventually forced to hand over to Serbian military and police forces and cross the border on foot. The last time this happened was at the border crossings of Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, where military and police forces confiscated all their means before crossing the border.¹³⁸⁵

From 28 February 1998 to 12 June 1999, military and police forces, accompanied by paramilitary and local Serb units, looted and destroyed thousands of houses, apartments, business premises, schools, libraries, museums, cinemas, mosques, cultural centers, etc. According to the European Commission's estimates from July 1999, out of a total of 237,842 houses in Kosova, 119,518 or 50.3% were damaged or completely destroyed as a result of the war. Based on field assessments, the Commission classified the damaged houses into four categories:

- Category I, 5 - 20% damaged houses, 23,062 - (19%);
- Category II, 20 - 40% damaged houses, 18,003 - (15%);
- Category III, 40 - 60% damaged houses, 31,855 - (27%);
- Category IV, 60 - 100% damaged houses, 46,598 - (39%).¹³⁸⁶

In addition to the loss of life, looting, and burning of houses, a large part of the Albanian population lost all the wealth they had accumulated over years and generations. According to the Kosova Agency of Statistics, from 28 February 1998 to 11 June 1999, 154,272 households were damaged, divided into four categories:

¹³⁸⁵ Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo: An Accounting U.S. State Department Report - December 1999.

¹³⁸⁶ European Commission Kosovo, Emergency Assessment of Damaged Housing and Local/village Infrastructure in Kosovo July 1999, 16-19.

- First category up to €10,000, 30,787 households were damaged;
- Second category €10,000 to €20,000, 26,791 households damaged;
- Third category €20,000 to €40,000, 30,364 households damaged;
- Fourth category over €40,000, 66,364 households were damaged.¹³⁸⁷

During the war, the Serbian regime also committed culturicide, looting over 25,000 files with various documents, over 3,000 artifacts from the Museum of Kosova, and burning or destroying 1.7 million books in the Albanian language.¹³⁸⁸

In the summary report of the European Commission on the assessment of war damage and destruction, damage/destruction of 240 health facilities, 617 failures on the network of electrical distribution facilities, and 440 damages on the distribution network of drinking water were documented.¹³⁸⁹

The Serbian regime showed no mercy to schools or mosques. According to the UN's assessment of the damage, 130 of the 649 schools in Kosova were severely damaged, 78 of which were completely destroyed. On the other hand, after June 1999, Human Rights Watch analyzed damaged and destroyed mosques in Gjakovë, Pejë, Istog, Skenderaj, where it found numerous damages. A report from August 1999, based on refugee testimonies, documented 155 destroyed mosques throughout Kosova.¹³⁹⁰

11. END OF THE WAR

11.1 Combining bombing with diplomacy

After the NATO bombing began, many Western European leaders tried to persuade Russian President Yeltsin to begin constructive cooperation with NATO. Primakov recalls conversations with European leaders, where their main demand was to increase Russian influence in persuading Milošević to accept NATO's demands, otherwise, given the American position, the

¹³⁸⁷ Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës, *Regjistrimi i popullsisë, ekonomive familjare dhe banesave në Kosovë*, (Prishtinë: ASK, 2024), 53.

¹³⁸⁸ RFE/RL, *Evropa lirë* 24 prill, 2024.

¹³⁸⁹ Emergency Assessment of Damaged Housing and Local/village Infrastructure in Kosovo July 1999, 67-69.

¹³⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Nën Pushtetin e Urdhrave*, 152-153.

bombing would continue.¹³⁹¹ The West's dual strategy of using military pressure on Belgrade, while at the same time opening the way for diplomacy, where Moscow could play an important role in convincing the Yugoslav leadership, continued throughout the NATO bombing campaign.¹³⁹² On the other hand, Moscow was squeezed between the internal political need to appear to protect Serb interests and the inevitable economic need for greater financial assistance from the West.¹³⁹³ Russia was seething with internal discontent. In addition, NATO's expansion to its doorstep and the bombing of Yugoslavia were seen as "a hostile expression of NATO's ambitions at a time of Russian weakness."¹³⁹⁴ Faced with such a situation, President Yeltsin, although he condemned the NATO attack "as a violation of international law", emphasized that Russia would not allow itself to be drawn militarily into the conflict in the Balkans, announcing that it would "do everything possible to stop military actions in Yugoslavia". He authorized Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, with clear instructions, to hold talks with the Yugoslav leadership, which could stop the war in the Balkans.¹³⁹⁵ "If the Russian initiative aims to convince Milošević to stop the killings in Kosova, withdraw military troops, agree to a ceasefire, accept the beginning of political negotiations, that is our goal," said NATO spokesman Jamie Shea at a press conference on March 29, 1999.¹³⁹⁶ In the meantime, US Secretary of State Albright noted that "it would be a disaster if the visit of the Russian delegation to Belgrade left the impression that Moscow was siding with Milošević".¹³⁹⁷ The secretary's concern was based on the fact that, as former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin says, through premeditated statements by some of our politicians, we were actually provoking the Yugoslav leadership to continue this devastating war, which did not serve the necessary end.¹³⁹⁸

The first Russian diplomatic mediation attempt was old-fashioned and not at all serious. On March 30, 1999, Prime Minister Primakov, accompanied by Ministers Ivanov and Sergeyev, met with Milošević and other Serbian leaders in Belgrade. Six hours of talks yielded no concrete results.

¹³⁹¹ Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, 270-271.

¹³⁹² *Rilindja*, 10 prill, 1999, 10.

¹³⁹³ Blaine Harden, "A Long Struggle That Led Serb Leader to Back Down", *The New York Times*, June 6, 1999.

¹³⁹⁴ William Drozdiak, "The Kosovo Peace Deal", *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999.

¹³⁹⁵ Greg Myre, "Yeltsin Denounces NATO Strikes", *The Washington Post*, March 30, 1999.

¹³⁹⁶ NATO Press Conference by Spokesman, Jamie Shea and Air Commodore David Wilby, SHAPE, March 29, 1999.

¹³⁹⁷ Norris, *Collision Course*, 17.

¹³⁹⁸ Černoměrđin, *Prapaskenat*, 35.

Belgrade was ready to reduce its troop presence in Kosova if NATO stopped bombing. With these results, which the Russian Prime Minister called “a positive signal from Milošević”, he traveled to Bonn on March 31, 1999, where the Serbian proposal was discussed.¹³⁹⁹ On the other hand, Chancellor Schröder was surprised to say that Milošević's proposal offered "no basis" for negotiation progress. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivanov himself stated that there is a "bunker mentality" in Belgrade, which united even more the position of the Western allies to continue the bombing with increased intensity.¹⁴⁰⁰ Another diplomatic attempt at Russian mediation took place on April 13, 1999, in Oslo, Norway, when US Secretary of State Albright and Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov met for the first time since the bombing began. As reported after the meeting, many unresolved issues between Washington and Moscow had been successfully resolved. But two critical points of disagreement between the US and Russia remain at the center of the US-Russian conflict: the composition of the international peacekeeping force that would be deployed in Kosova to protect returnees; and the question of when to stop the NATO bombing. Moscow and Milošević insist that the attack be stopped immediately, paving the way for a political solution. On the other hand, Albright stressed that NATO was ready to take this step after the Yugoslav president stopped ethnic cleansing and withdrew all its military and police forces from Kosova.¹⁴⁰¹ Sources in Moscow described the meeting as difficult but necessary, warning of other meetings to follow, including a G-8 meeting scheduled to take place in the coming weeks.¹⁴⁰²

Primakov's stop for talks with the German government in Bonn was a good diplomatic opportunity for Germany to strengthen Russia's diplomatic ties to Europe. In this context, from the beginning of April, at the initiative of the German Foreign Minister, the development of an ambitious diplomatic alternative began, which is known to the public as the "Fischer Plan". Although the plan contained some promising points, such as the removal of all Serbian forces from Kosova, the landing of international peacekeeping forces under the mandate of Chapter VII of the UN, and

¹³⁹⁹ Primakov, *Russian Crossroads*, 273.

¹⁴⁰⁰ "Primakov: Milosevic ready in principle to talk peace", *CNN*, March 30, 1999; Fischer, *Vitet kuq – gjelbër*, 176; Norris, *Collision Course*, 19.

¹⁴⁰¹ U.S. Department of State: Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov April 13, 1999; Phil Reeves, "War in the Balkans: Russians and US 'narrow differences'; Russia", *Independent*, April 13, 1999; Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 481.

¹⁴⁰² Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 338-339.

some other points, the methods and goals of this idea were not seen the same by the main allies within NATO. From the Anglo-French point of view, it seemed that it was too early for diplomatic efforts, and Primakov's unsuccessful diplomatic mission proved this best. Their position was based on the continuation of the bombing phase. Criticism of the "Fischer Plan" also came from the USA, especially because of the point that envisaged a 24-hour cessation of air attacks, so that the Serbs could leave Kosova.¹⁴⁰³ The basis of the "Fischer Plan" was the involvement of Russia and the United Nations, negotiations, mediation. In other words, German diplomacy wanted to build a united front through cooperation with Russia in order to implement Security Council resolutions and legitimize peace.¹⁴⁰⁴ Russia's involvement in the international process surrounding Kosova was in everyone's interest, including Moscow itself. Namely, if it is not included, Russia risks becoming irrelevant in the appropriate solution and being marginalized. On the other hand, the planned future activities of the UN, related to the activities after the NATO bombing in Kosova, would not be possible without Russia.¹⁴⁰⁵ Since the start of the bombing, Russia has been actively seeking a peaceful way out of the crisis. For this purpose, former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin was appointed special envoy for the Balkans in mid-April.¹⁴⁰⁶ His appointment was an alternative after the complete failure of Primakov's first attempt, because it now seemed that Russia was more seriously signaling its demands for good relations with the West and charting a new diplomatic course in the Balkans. In his first statements, Chernomyrdin openly acted as Milošević's defender. The turning point occurred when Russia realized the persistence within the NATO structure. Then the change of discourse in Russian politics began, that is, the intensification of efforts to find a diplomatic solution as soon as possible.¹⁴⁰⁷ Many outstanding questions were clarified between April 20 and May 3, 1999, in a series of telephone conversations between President Clinton and Yeltsin. Both presidents agreed that the attacks on Kosova Albanians must be stopped immediately, that Yugoslav forces must be withdrawn from Kosova, and that the safe return of refugees must be enabled and unhindered access to humanitarian aid organizations must

¹⁴⁰³ Fischer, *Vitet kuq – gjelbër*, 174-193; Weller, *Shtetësia e kontestuar*, 292. "14 April: Germany unveils new peace plan", *The Guardian*, 14 April, 1999.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich, "Kosovo and the Evolution of German Foreign Policy in the Balkans" in: Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich, Wolfgang Ischinger, Rudolf Scharping, *The Legality of Kosovo, German Policies in the Balkans*, (Washington: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies The Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 22.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Pardew, *Paçebërësit*, 215.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, 260-261.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 36.

be ensured to Kosova.¹⁴⁰⁸ The two presidents agreed to work closely together to find a solution to the Kosova conflict. US Assistant Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, an expert on Russian affairs, and Viktor Chernomyrdin were appointed to the negotiating team for these talks.¹⁴⁰⁹ The talks were held in the shadow of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO leaders left the anniversary summit confident that they would succeed in their military campaign against Milošević. All NATO leaders promised to escalate attacks and expand their targets in the coming days.

While the intensification of diplomatic efforts continued and the bombing continued, NATO pilots performed up to a thousand flights a day.¹⁴¹⁰ NATO insisted on its demands – any agreement is led by the NATO command, as the only force that can ensure the safe return of refugees to their homes, otherwise the bombing continues.

Russian envoy Chernomyrdin, in his diplomatic activities, met with German and Italian leaders, and spoke by phone with American Vice President Gore in order to find a negotiated compromise. At the very end, he met with Milošević.¹⁴¹¹ Chernomyrdin left Belgrade with a proposal from the Yugoslav government: Milošević would begin withdrawing some of his troops from Kosova if NATO guaranteed that it would not intervene with ground troops and immediately halted the bombing. Shortly after this “agreement,” which he reported to Moscow on 2 May, President Yeltsin called Clinton, suggesting that it might be time for Chernomyrdin to meet with the American president to see if a common position on Kosova could be reached. His departure for Washington immediately after his return from Belgrade reinforced the view that diplomatic progress had been made in his meeting with Milošević. The Russian envoy to the meeting with President Clinton brought with him a letter from President Yeltsin proposing a ceasefire during which Kofi Annan and he (Chernomyrdin) would go to Belgrade to discuss finding a solution, to

¹⁴⁰⁸ Frank Csongos, “Russia/Yugoslavia: Clinton, Yeltsin Agree On End To Attacks On Kosovar Albanians”, RFE, April 20, 1999.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Jane Perlez, “Clinton and Yeltsin Agree to Share Ideas on Kosovo”, *The New York Times*, April 26, 1999.

¹⁴¹⁰ Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, 262.

¹⁴¹¹ William Drozdiak, NATO Intensifies Attacks, *The Washington Post*, April 30, 1999; Černoměrđin, *Prapaskenat*, 122-123; Vukaj, *Kosova dhe Rusia*, 370.

be implemented by the UN. President Clinton's response was clear and direct: "I will not let the UN speak for NATO."¹⁴¹²

American opposition to this solution was due to the low effectiveness of the UN in Yugoslavia. Namely, as this organization was unable to prevent mass crimes against Kosova Albanians, as a result of their indecision and the incompetence of their leadership, the NATO alliance was forced to get involved militarily.¹⁴¹³ That evening, May 3, 1999, hours of discussion took place at the residence of Vice President Al Gore in Massachusetts about a diplomatic solution to Kosova after the end of NATO's military intervention. The talks were punctuated by successive proposals and counter-proposals, and although some progress was made, no concrete results were achieved. The next morning, Chernomyrdin presented a new idea at breakfast. Now Secretary of State Albright joined the discussions. Chernomyrdin's idea was to include a third representative in the talks, alluding to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, which Secretary Albright immediately rejected. Chernomyrdin continued the discussion about Russia's influence over Milošević and the Serbs, adding that the Russians would not publicly support anything that the Serbs opposed. "This is absurd," Albright said bluntly: "Russia's role should be to guide the Serbs, not just to convey their views." The former Russian Prime Minister added in his argumentation: "If someone from the West is with me, I have a better chance to do it". He proposed the additional diplomatic participation of someone with international status, before whom Milošević could admit capitulation, which he himself or any Russian representative could not do, due to the internal reaction in Russia.¹⁴¹⁴ Based on the proposed specifications, Albright proposed Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari. Chernomyrdin considered such a proposal a prudent step on the part of the American side in finding a compromise. Ahtisaari had proven himself to be a successful peace negotiator in Namibia, and for years had advised Europe to be patient with Russia. Coming from a neutral country, he would have been acceptable even for Milošević's surrender.¹⁴¹⁵ Thus began a new process of trilateral diplomacy. The Americans called this diplomatic format the "hammer and anvil". According to this model, Chernomyrdin would "hit" Milošević with a hammer, while

¹⁴¹² Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 167; Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 484.

¹⁴¹³ Černoměrđin, *Prapaskenat*, 139.

¹⁴¹⁴ PBS - *Frontline*: Interview with Strobe Talbott, 1999; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 313-314; Walter Isaacson, "Madeleine's war", *Time*, May 9, 1999; Johanna McGeary, "Why he blinked", *CNN – Time*, June 14, 1999.

¹⁴¹⁵ Blaine Harden, "A Long Struggle That Led Serb Leader to Back Down", *The New York Times*, June 6, 1999; Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 485; Černoměrđin, *Prapaskenat*, 140.

Ahtisaari, as the UN-EU representative, would support his Russian colleague in convincing Milošević to accept NATO's terms. On behalf of the USA, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott would negotiate. Talbott had great authority within the US administration. He was close to President Clinton, as they shared a student room at Oxford. He had previously been the Eastern Europe correspondent for *Time* magazine, based in Belgrade. In addition to his knowledge of Serbia, he was also well-versed in Russian affairs.¹⁴¹⁶

The first step that this diplomatic troika had to take was to reconcile certain issues, as significant differences still existed between NATO and Russia. NATO insisted on the removal of all Serbian forces from Kosova, while Serbia, with the support of Russia, continued to insist on the remaining of several thousand Serbian soldiers in Kosova. In the circumstances, the solution to the problem was to give in to Milošević. So, Russia had to be persuaded to support NATO's conditions and Serbia had to be made clear that it could not count on it militarily or politically.¹⁴¹⁷

On 6 May in Bonn, G-8 foreign ministers, including Russia, agreed to a five-point peace proposal for the Kosova War, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities: 1. the withdrawal of all Serbian police, military and paramilitary forces, 2. the deployment of effective UN-backed civilian and security forces in Kosova, which would be able to fulfil their shared objectives through the formation of an interim government in Kosova, 3. the unhindered return of all refugees and displaced persons, 4. the opening of a political process to find a provisional solution to the status of Kosova, and 5. the demilitarization of the KLA. The proposed solution was intended to end NATO's seven-week campaign in the Balkans. "Today we have agreed on these principles. Much more needs to be done," said the chairman of the meeting, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer.¹⁴¹⁸ Although Russia continued to oppose a central role for NATO in peacekeeping operations, Moscow for the first time supported the need for an "effective international security presence" in Kosova after Yugoslav forces withdrew. Work on defining the details of the five G-8 principles and bridging the remaining disagreements between Russia and the West became a constant theme over the next few weeks for Chernomyrdin, Talbott, and Ahtisaari.¹⁴¹⁹

¹⁴¹⁶ Norris, *Collision Course*, 87; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 314; Judah, *Kosova*, 333; Fischer, *Vitet kuq – gjelbër*, 201.

¹⁴¹⁷ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 43.

¹⁴¹⁸ "G-8 countries endorse Kosovo plan", *CNN*, May 6, 1999; *Rilindja*, 7 maj, 1999, 2.

¹⁴¹⁹ William Drozdiak, "The Kosovo Peace Deal", *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999.

While the troika coordinated the diplomatic itinerary, successive consultative talks and meetings were held with all international parties in the decision-making bodies. All the main European leaders Blair, Chirac, Schröder, D'Alema, encouraged Ahtisaari's commitment to finding a diplomatic solution. The NATO attack on the Chinese embassy, 7 May 1999, the Russians and Serbs tried to capitalize, to put pressure on the Alliance to give in to its positions, and if possible, to divide them. Although NATO and the leaders of the main countries reacted immediately, apologizing for the unintentional incident. German Chancellor Schröder visited China to apologize on behalf of NATO and the West to the government of the Chinese people.¹⁴²⁰ This was not enough for the Russians; they wanted to incite everyone against this action so much that it was proposed in Moscow that Russia and China together issue an ultimatum to NATO to stop the bombing.¹⁴²¹

At the time, Russia was facing internal problems, with a rivalry over who would succeed the ailing President Yeltsin. Ivanov told reporters in Moscow that NATO would “seriously complicate the work being done” in the negotiations to end the war in Yugoslavia. There was even talk in Moscow of Chernomyrdin’s withdrawal from diplomatic dialogue, an attempt to divide the Alliance internally.¹⁴²² The Russians were surprised by the stance of French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine, who was in Moscow on 12 May 1999 to lay the groundwork for the French president's visit. He declared that “NATO will continue bombing until it has reduced the Yugoslav army's ability to repress in Kosova to zero”. Even more direct messages were sent in bilateral meetings. Védrine was firm and uncompromising, telling the Russians: you can be part of the solution or “clear the way”.¹⁴²³ Faced with pressure to resolve the Kosova issue as quickly as possible, at a time when the Russian economy was on the verge of collapse, Yeltsin decided on 12 May to dismiss Prime Minister Primakov instead of removing Chernomyrdin from the diplomatic dialogue. In addition to his failure to overcome the economic crisis, he was often seen as an obstacle to finding a political solution for Kosova due to his nationalist views. Former Russian Interior Minister Sergei Stepashin was chosen as the new Prime Minister.¹⁴²⁴ In his first statements as Prime Minister, Stepashin firmly stated that there would be no change in Russia's view on

¹⁴²⁰ Fischer, *Vitet kuq e gjelbër*, 200.

¹⁴²¹ Norris, *Collision Course*, 98.

¹⁴²² Celestine Bohlen, “An Outrage, Yeltsin Declares, and Warns of ‘Consequences’”, *The New York Times*, May 9, 1999; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 315.

¹⁴²³ Norris, *Collision Course*, 98; Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 381.

¹⁴²⁴ David Hoffman, “Citing Economy, Yeltsin Fires Premier”, *The Washington Post*, May 13, 1999.

Kosova, giving clear indications for the continuation of Russia's direction within the diplomatic dialogue.¹⁴²⁵

In the following weeks, four meetings were held, with dozens of hours of negotiations, most of which did not end until the morning hours. All of them took place in a discourse in which the US, together with the EU, tried to convince Russia of a common international position that could force Milošević to sign peace terms. However, in mid-May, the political structures of the “greens” (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) in Germany and (Federazione dei Verdi, FdV) in Italy demanded that their governments stop the NATO bombing. Thus, a Congress was convened with a demand to end the bombing. During the vote, although it ended in favor of continuing NATO military intervention, the dissatisfied Fischer was pelted with various objects and called a warmonger. “I was seething inside,” Fischer recalls, “but I still had to give a speech, I had to go all the way.” “You call me a warmonger, and then you want to nominate Milošević for the Nobel Peace Prize,” he shouted at his critics. “You can whistle as much as you want, but if you want to know the truth, go and meet the Albanian exiles in the refugee camps in Macedonia.” “Peace requires that people not be killed, that they not be expelled and that women not be raped. All this is happening in Kosova. Therefore, the bombing must continue until these crimes are stopped.”¹⁴²⁶ In this spirit was the statement of the Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema given to the Italian newspaper *Repubblica* on 16 May 1999. “...weapons can be stopped, there can be a pause in military actions if the conditions for a diplomatic solution exist. But if Yugoslavia rejects the proposed solution, NATO attacks will continue.” D'Alema recalls that his message was directed first of all to the Russians, and then to the Chinese: “If you do not want NATO to be forced to take on responsibilities that do not belong to it, allow the UN Security Council to function. Otherwise, the logic of the veto has the following consequences: decisions are made in other headquarters.”¹⁴²⁷

The US and Britain were determined to enter Kosova from Macedonia with ground forces if necessary. In that case, neither France nor most of the other countries of the NATO Alliance would stand aside, but would be militarily involved with their troops.¹⁴²⁸ This approach was confirmed during a meeting of five defense ministers (the United States, England, France, Germany, and

¹⁴²⁵ Çërnömërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 183.

¹⁴²⁶ Fischer, *Vitet kuq e gjelbër*, 218; Ian Traynor, “Greens back Nato amid uproar”, *The Guardian*, May 14, 1999.

¹⁴²⁷ D'Alema, *Kosova, Italianët dhe lufta*, 60-61.

¹⁴²⁸ Fischer, *Vitet kuq e gjelbër*, 202-203.

Italy) held in Germany on May 27. British Minister George Robertson strongly advocated the need for intervention on the ground. All ministers agreed to intensify the air campaign. Except for the Germans, who were somewhat more hesitant. Their position could be summarized in the words: "let's see what happens." The other ministers did not rule out the participation of their forces in a ground attack, in case the air strikes proved insufficient.¹⁴²⁹ So the political strategy of dividing NATO through resistance has failed. On the other hand, instead of discord in Brussels, signs of discontent are growing in Belgrade: Serbian soldiers are abandoning their posts, Serbian civilians are protesting against their leader's policies, young people are avoiding military service, and prominent Serbs are calling on Milošević to accept NATO's conditions. Clinton declared: "Our military campaign will continue until these conditions are met, not because we are stubborn or self-willed, but because they are the only conditions under which refugees will be able to return safely to their homes."¹⁴³⁰ Thus, Milošević's position became more difficult in several directions: on the domestic political front, things began to move in comparison to the first month of NATO air strikes, when there seemed to be complete national unity against it. The opposition began to oppose Milošević. According to reports from Montenegro, more than 1,000 reservists returned to the cities where the protests were taking place.¹⁴³¹

On the military level, in addition to NATO's military intervention with air strikes, changes are taking place in the fighting on the ground. Namely, in the Battle of Pashtrik, the KLA won with "Operation Arrow (Alb. Operacioni Shigjeta)."¹⁴³² Also, by the beginning of winter, hundreds of thousands of displaced Albanians must be safely returned to Kosova, or the US and its allies should ensure that the refugees spend the winter in refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia. So if the combination of air power and diplomacy failed, the only option was to intervene militarily with ground troops.¹⁴³³ This fact was best illustrated by the decision of the North Atlantic Council ambassadors on 25-26 May 1999 to increase their ground forces in the region to 50,000 troops.

¹⁴²⁹ Pasini, *Lufta e Kosovës*, 184-185.

¹⁴³⁰ William Jefferson Clinton, "A Just and Necessary War", *The New York Times*, May 23, 1999.

¹⁴³¹ Gabriel Partos, "Serbia: Cracks begin to show", *BBC*, May 26, 1999.

¹⁴³² William Drozdiak, "The Kosovo Peace Deal", *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999. There is not much objective data for this operation.

¹⁴³³ "Before Winter Arrives in Kosovo", *The New York Times*, May 20, 1999.

This, according to Jonathan Eyal, gave the Yugoslav leader a clear deadline: in a month he would face the real threat of a ground attack.¹⁴³⁴

On the other hand, Chernomyrdin criticized the US and NATO approach to the Kosova war in an editorial in *The Washington Post* at the end of May, stating that the bombing had achieved nothing but destruction. According to him, “Russia took on the mission of mediator between Belgrade and NATO, and not to help NATO implement its strategy, the essence of which is the capitulation of Milošević... these NATO goals are absolutely not in line with Russian interests... Therefore, I call on the leaders of NATO countries to muster the courage and accept the only just solution, the cessation of bombing, otherwise I will recommend to President Yeltsin that Russia withdraw from participation in the negotiations and terminate any military-technical cooperation with the US and Western Europe.”¹⁴³⁵

11.2 Negotiation tactic "Hammer and anvil and empty chair"

The first meeting of this format was held on May 18, 1999 in Helsinki. As the host of this meeting, Ahtisaari reminds that the main goal of the negotiating trio (Ahtisaari, Chernomyrdin and Talbott) was to find a joint unanimous solution with which they would go to Belgrade, which would contain provisions of the agreement by which NATO could stop the bombing.¹⁴³⁶ The controversial points of this meeting, and those that followed, were as follows: the Americans demanded the withdrawal of all Serbian forces from Kosova, while the Russians insisted on the retention of some military troops and the creation of a special Russian zone, outside the NATO command. Talbott recalls that the Russians initially insisted on the presence of 24,000 Serbian soldiers in Kosova, based on the “formula” according to which there are 8,000 historical Orthodox religious monuments in Kosova and that for their preservation, at least three people are needed for each monument. “While I just listened and shook my head, Chernomyrdin kept stringing together the numbers 20,000 – 10,000 – 5,000 until finally I said that the only answer was zero soldiers.” The second question concerned the role of NATO in the context of international security forces and the timing of the end of the bombing.¹⁴³⁷ Chernomyrdin insisted that NATO stop its bombing

¹⁴³⁴ Jonathan Eyal, “Europe Analysis: A fight to the finish”, *BBC*, May 27, 1999.

¹⁴³⁵ Viktor Chernomyrdin, “Comment: Bombs Rule Out Talk of Peace”, *The Washington Post*, May 27, 1999.

¹⁴³⁶ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 92.

¹⁴³⁷ *PBS - Frontline*: Interview with Strobe Talbott, 1999; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 317.

campaign as soon as Milošević accepted the basic principles of the settlement. This was a demand that Talbott strongly opposed. According to him, "NATO is ready to stop its airstrikes only when Belgrade unequivocally accepts five essential conditions, when it begins to demonstrably withdraw its forces from Kosova according to a precise and rapid timetable."¹⁴³⁸ After this meeting, Chernomyrdin went to Belgrade for the third time, to see what he could achieve with Milošević based on the progress of the Helsinki talks and the agreement based on the G-8 declaration. The conversation with Milošević lasted several hours. According to what was said in public, the meeting in Belgrade was a continuation of the previous meetings, and Milošević did not make any diplomatic concessions that could pave the way for an end to the bombing. Chernomyrdin is believed to have told Milošević that the West would not accept anything less than NATO troops on the ground as peacekeepers, but that it was possible to "convince the Westerners" in negotiations that the peacekeepers were operating under UN control. Chernomyrdin himself, reporting from Moscow, assessed that the parties were fixed in their positions and that neither wanted to withdraw.¹⁴³⁹ However, diplomatic sources in Moscow claimed that some "small steps" had been taken and that Chernomyrdin and Milošević agreed that any peace agreement should be based on the principles of the G-8 plan, but that the details should be negotiated directly with the United Nations.¹⁴⁴⁰

On May 20, 1999, the trio of Ahtisaari, Chernomyrdin and Talbott continued a new series of talks, now at the Government Villa outside Moscow, which in the past was often visited by the communist dictator Joseph Stalin.¹⁴⁴¹ Chernomyrdin, as host, announced the progress of the talks with Milošević. According to him, the Yugoslav leader was ready for serious talks, but he stressed the need for more detailed talks regarding the international presence in Kosova. Talbott argued that the American side and all NATO countries made a major concession when they agreed on the role of the UN in Kosova.¹⁴⁴² Chernomyrdin recalled that Belgrade would not accept the deployment of peacekeeping troops from countries participating in the NATO bombing campaign.

¹⁴³⁸ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 170.

¹⁴³⁹ Çernomërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 194-195; Norris, *Collision Course*, 112.

¹⁴⁴⁰ "G-8, Russia draft Kosovo proposal in Moscow talks", *CNN*, May 20, 1999.

¹⁴⁴¹ For Talbott, it was a strange experience. He was enthusiastic about finally seeing Russia. The surprise was that in this country, "Stalin would bring members of the Politburo here to watch American films," he recalls, "and the next day he would decide which of them to kill." Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 318; Judah, *Kosova*, 334.

¹⁴⁴² Çernomërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 196-197.

It could accept some troops coming from Greece, Portugal, Sweden, Finland from countries that did not participate in the bombing. He proposed that Russia contribute to the peacekeeping mission and military troops on the condition that they be deployed under a special UN command, and that they be stationed in the northern area of Kosova, where there will be no NATO troops. Talbott categorically rejected these ideas, arguing that Milošević should understand that the forces of all the allies will be in Kosova and that they will be under a single command. The idea of a Russian sector in Kosova was unacceptable to him, given the risk that it could easily turn into a Serbian area that might one day seek to secede from Kosova.¹⁴⁴³ Ahtisaari writes in his book: "I agreed with Talbot that NATO should be an essential part of the troops, and these troops must have a unified leadership. Finnish and Russian troops will never be able to pacify the Albanians in Kosova. The only troops that the population of Kosova trusts are NATO troops".¹⁴⁴⁴

The Ahtisaari, Chernomyrdin, and Talbott troika continued negotiations on May 26, 1999, which had not yet produced a concrete result. Military representatives also participated in the meeting. The United States was represented by General Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong, (the commander of US Air Forces in Europe), Russia by General Leonid Ivashov, and Finland by Admiral Juhani Kaskeala. That night, almost all the papers were reviewed in great detail. Russian, American, and Finnish military representatives formed their own negotiating teams, which reviewed every detail of the composition and format of the peacekeeping force leadership. Whenever an issue caused serious disagreement, it was brought to the table of politicians for further consultations.¹⁴⁴⁵ Global events also had a major impact on the negotiations. First, Chernomyrdin clearly understood that NATO would not back down on its main demands – the withdrawal of all Serbian forces from Kosova and the stationing of an international peacekeeping force under NATO command. Second, the Russian diplomat understood that there was no room for the *divide et impera* diplomatic tactic between the Americans and the Europeans that Moscow could exploit. In this case, the conclusion for the Russians was clear: if they wanted an agreement, it would be done largely, if not entirely, on NATO terms.¹⁴⁴⁶ Chernomyrdin ultimately agreed that the international peacekeeping force

¹⁴⁴³ Martin Walker, "Revealed: How deal was done in Stalin's hideaway", *The Guardian*, June 5, 1999; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 170-171.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 117; Norris, *Collision Course*, 121.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Jarkko Vesikansa, "Operation Balkans", *Suomen Kuvalehti*, June 18, 1999

¹⁴⁴⁶ Martin Walker, "Revealed: How deal was done in Stalin's hideaway", *The Guardian*, June 5, 1999; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 171.

should be commanded by NATO. The central question was whether Milošević would agree to such conditions.¹⁴⁴⁷

A few months later during an interview, Talbott recalled: "To better emphasize the arguments, in the room where we were talking there was a triangular table at which the American, Finnish and Russian delegations were sitting. We all knew that one side was not present. I asked Chernomyrdin why there was no "empty chair" at the table. The Russian envoy, known for his theatrical improvisations, ordered a chair to be placed between the Russians and the Finns, which Talbott called "the man on the empty chair."¹⁴⁴⁸ They brought a chair. A fourth chair, to remind them at all times that the main character in their venture was not there. In those days, the trio tried to overcome their deep differences through very difficult negotiations in search of a diplomatic solution to end the NATO bombing and the end of the War in Kosova.¹⁴⁴⁹ The talks resumed the next morning, on 27 May 1999. This time the Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov joined the talks. The progress that had seemed to be approaching a solution immediately returned to zero. The idea of a joint visit by Chernomyrdin and Ahtisaari to Belgrade could not be realized.¹⁴⁵⁰ Ivanov refused Chernomyrdin's concessions that had been agreed upon, saying that it was "unacceptable to the Russian government".¹⁴⁵¹ With this diplomatic action, the Russians used a maneuver: "the political line agrees, but the military line is against and vice versa." The goal was to see the possibilities of the USA and its allies for possible concessions. Another issue that the Russians wanted to capitalize on with such diplomatic wiles was the indictment of the Hague Tribunal for war crimes in Kosova against Milošević and four other Serbian leaders. Outraged Chernomyrdin writes: "We, as participants in the negotiation process, are led by this act to think that we will negotiate with a criminal, and with a criminal we can only talk about his capitulation and nothing more."¹⁴⁵² Talbott and Chernomyrdin held a meeting, at which the Russian envoy seemed ambivalent about the indictment. The indictment received attention at all meetings that day.¹⁴⁵³

¹⁴⁴⁷ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 318.

¹⁴⁴⁸ PBS - *Frontline*: Interview with Strobe Talbott; Norris, *Collision Course*, 134.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Serge Schmemmann, "Trying to Find Way Out, But the Key Is Missing", *The New York Times*, May 29, 1999.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 117.

¹⁴⁵¹ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 318 – 319.

¹⁴⁵² Çernomërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 212.

¹⁴⁵³ See more in Chapter 9.

The question that now Ivanov and Talbott were facing was: should the US and Russia continue their mission in Belgrade in light of the indictments? Ivanov was told clearly: “a solution, not a deadlock.” He stressed that it was essential that the indictments not halt diplomacy, because the indictment was a “complicating” factor, not a fatal obstacle.¹⁴⁵⁴ Objectively, the indictment could serve the Russians the most to distance themselves from Milošević's politics. Diplomatic activity was halted when Talbott informed Foreign Minister Ivanov: “I'm going to the airport now. I will inform Washington that the US is withdrawing from this entire initiative”. Ivanov immediately made a U-turn, asking for a new meeting. Talks between the American-Russian duo (Chernomyrdin - Talbott) continued. It was announced that the positions were approximated, but also that doubts remained, especially regarding military issues.¹⁴⁵⁵ In parallel, Moscow communicated with Milošević. Based on this, Chernomyrdin will go to Belgrade.¹⁴⁵⁶ Thus, on May 28, the Russian representative arrived in Belgrade for the fourth time to meet with Milošević. The issue of the indictment made no impression on the Serbian leader. The Serbian leadership called it “a political and illegal accusation, arguing that they are ready to answer only to the people who elected them.”¹⁴⁵⁷ From the ten-hour talks between the Russian diplomat and Milošević, two problems known from the preliminary negotiations were identified: who should command the peacekeeping forces, and the issue of the remaining part of the Serbian troops in Kosova.¹⁴⁵⁸ Chernomyrdin's meeting with Milošević resulted in a 180° turn.¹⁴⁵⁹ The difficult economic situation that affected Russia made the help of the West necessary for the restructuring of the Russian economy. Under these circumstances, President Yeltsin invited Chernomyrdin and Prime Minister Stepashin to a meeting, making it clear that he wanted a more principled agreement with NATO, so that the bombing would stop as soon as possible. However, the situation in Russia, apart from the tactical ones, also had contradictions within the Russian government. The president faced resistance in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defense, as well as in the Duma.¹⁴⁶⁰ On the other

¹⁴⁵⁴ Norris, *Collision Course*, 130-133.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 320.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 404.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Çërnomërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 233.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Steven Erlanger, “Belgrade Talks Go On, Clouded By Indictments”, *The New York Times*, May 29, 1999.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Viktor Chernomyrdin, “Comment: Bombs Rule Out Talk of Peace”, *The Washington Post*, May 27, 1999; William Drozdiak, “Kosovo Mediation Near Failure”, *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1999.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Martin Walker, “Revealed: How deal was done in Stalin's hideaway”, *The Guardian*, June 5, 1999; Fischer, *Vitet kuq – gjelbër*, 226.

hand, parallel to the developments in Belgrade and Moscow, US Assistant Secretary of State Talbott reported to the NATO Council on the progress of the diplomatic line. NATO sources confirmed that the North Atlantic Council (NAC) supported the diplomatic agreement¹⁴⁶¹ based on the principles defined by NATO.¹⁴⁶² Dissatisfied with the decision, the Russians demanded that Washington change the American representative in the negotiations. They demanded a person with a higher level of political responsibility, a vice president or at least a secretary of state. President Clinton made it clear that Talbott had full authority to speak on behalf of the United States.¹⁴⁶³

The Russian diplomatic tactic was "seek and don't retreat". Chernomyrdin accepted the invitation of the German Government and joined Talbott and Ahtisaari in the final round of talks at Petersberg Castle near Bonn.¹⁴⁶⁴ The one-on-one talks began on the afternoon of June 1, 1999, and in parallel with the diplomacy, a session of military experts began, at which the USA was represented by General Foglesong, Russia by General Leonid Ivashov, and Finland by Admiral Kaskeala.¹⁴⁶⁵ Both the Russians and the Americans believed that Ahtisaari should accompany Chernomyrdin to the next meeting in Belgrade, so that the diplomatic concept of the "hammer and anvil" could finally be implemented. But before that could happen, Chernomyrdin, Talbott, and Ahtisaari had to agree on a joint agreement document.¹⁴⁶⁶ Since the differences between the Americans and the Russians were well known, the first meetings between the two delegations took place in an effort to reconcile the known incompatible views. The position of the Americans and NATO was that the Yugoslav side was to blame for the tragedy in Kosova, and that as such it should withdraw from Kosova, and to set an exact date for the withdrawal of all military troops from Kosova. After that, peacekeeping forces would enter Kosova, and they would be under NATO military command. On the other hand, the Russians continued to oppose the complete departure of Serbian troops from Kosova, insisting on the geographical division of Kosova, which was to be carried out under the "political" control of the UN. They also demanded their own military-peacekeeping sector that should not be subject to NATO. Talbott writes in his memoirs

¹⁴⁶¹ The withdrawal of all Serbian military-police forces from Kosovo, the deployment of a peacekeeping force led by NATO, which would ensure the return of Albanians to their homes.

¹⁴⁶² NATO Press Conference by Mr Jamie Shea, Spokesman and Major General Walter Jertz, SHAPE, May 28, 1999.

¹⁴⁶³ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 323.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Fischer, *Vitet kuq – gjelbër*, 227.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Norris, *Collision Course*, 165.

¹⁴⁶⁶ PBS - *Frontline*: Interview with Strobe Talbott, 1999; PBS - *Frontline*: Interview with Viktor Chernomyrdin, 1999; Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 138.

that during the day they tried out different formats: large and small working groups, all three delegations together. “Between Chernomyrdin and Ahtisaari, Chernomyrdin and me, nothing had been achieved up to that point.”¹⁴⁶⁷ The differences were not overcome even during the cold dinner organized by German Chancellor Schröder as a form of relaxation of dialogue.¹⁴⁶⁸ The session continued into the early hours of the morning without achieving any results. In some cases, both Talbott and Chernomyrdin withdrew from the talks for further consultations with Washington and Moscow.¹⁴⁶⁹ As a result, on the morning of June 2, Chernomyrdin returned to the talks with clear instructions from Yeltsin’s office to continue until an agreement was reached. He eventually agreed to the long-sought line: all Serbian forces were to leave Kosova. Since then, the issue of NATO command and the “Russian sector” has remained at a standstill. The Russians insisted that the peacekeeping force should be under UN control. The West insisted that the force would be commanded and led by NATO. Examples of the so-called “double-switch” system in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, under which NATO commanders and senior UN officials had to approve any military action, proved impotent, ineffective, and often disastrous.¹⁴⁷⁰ Faced with such a situation, Talbott proposed that this point be removed from the basic text of the peace agreement, and that a military discussion be held on why this issue should be resolved between NATO and Russia, and that Milošević and the issue of Yugoslavia should not be involved.¹⁴⁷¹ The Russian military negotiating line continued to resist and General Ivashov stated that he could not support the agreement because it did not reflect the opinion of the Russian military and was not approved by the Russian Minister of Defense. This led to chaos in the Russian delegation.¹⁴⁷² Chernomyrdin, citing the support of President Yeltsin, ignored the military representatives and agreed to the agreement. In order to force Milošević to accept the deal, Chernomyrdin, Talbott, and Ahtisaari devised a formulation that was acceptable to both the Americans and Chernomyrdin. The text explicitly stated that the “effective international and civilian forces” required by the G-8 Document should be under the name of the United Nations, not NATO. However, the text clearly specified that: “an international presence to ensure security with participation and leadership commanded

¹⁴⁶⁷ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 323-324; Çernomërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 249-250; Daalder & O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 172.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 140.

¹⁴⁶⁹ William Drozdiak, “The Kosovo Peace Deal”, *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999; Blaine Harden, “A Long Struggle That Led Serb Leader to Back Down”, *The New York Times*, June 6, 1999.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Roger Cohen, “Moscow and the West Making Headway on a Kosovo Plan”, *The New York Times*, June 3, 1999.

¹⁴⁷¹ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 325; Daalder & O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 172; Albright *Zonja Sekretare*, 488.

¹⁴⁷² Norris, *Collision Course*, 177.

by NATO.”¹⁴⁷³ Before leaving for Belgrade, Chernomyrdin and Ahtisaari also agreed on a protocol of tasks to be completed when presenting the document in the meeting with Slobodan Milošević. The most challenging was the fact that NATO independently decides whether Milošević's positive response to the proposed peace agreement can be accepted, regardless of the American diplomatic representative.¹⁴⁷⁴

11.3 NATO dictates the terms of the end of the War

As soon as the agreement between the West and Russia was confirmed, Chernomyrdin and Ahtisaari departed on separate planes for Belgrade on the afternoon of 2 June, where they were met at the airport by Yugoslav Foreign Minister Živadin Jovanović, and proceeded directly to the government building to meet Milošević. The meeting began at 17:55 according to regular protocol. The purpose of the meeting was known to both sides. The Yugoslav leadership had to choose: peace or continued bombing and the ground war that was expected.¹⁴⁷⁵ From the beginning, the two diplomats made it clear in the basic rules of the meeting that they are in the role of mediators, not negotiators, and that their task is to present the basic conditions and principles by which peace can be achieved.¹⁴⁷⁶ Ahtisaari recalls: “I read the ten-point document point by point and expressed my readiness to answer every question.” Reading the document aloud, with Chernomyrdin present, was necessary for Milošević to understand that the diplomatic representatives presented a single peace idea, although the Russians had previously briefed Serbian officials in detail on the document's contents. The talks continued for four hours, during which Ahtisaari made it clear to the Yugoslav leadership that NATO would be at the center of the peacekeeping force and that KFOR would be deployed in every part of Kosova. Serbian leaders quickly intensified their questions about all points of the plan. Milošević wondered why Yugoslav military troops had to withdraw before the UN could pass a resolution. Ahtisaari emphasized in his explanation that the entire agreement depended on NATO's ability to verify that the demands had been met. Ahtisaari was also asked about Russia's participation in KFOR, and he emphasized that the issue of Russia's role in KFOR had not yet been resolved, but that any agreement would be in accordance with

¹⁴⁷³ Černoměrđin, *Prapaskenat*, 255; Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 142; Martin Walker, “Revealed: How deal was done in Stalin's hideaway”, *The Guardian*, June 5, 1999; Judah, *Kosova*, 335.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 115.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Martin Walker, “Revealed: How deal was done in Stalin's hideaway”, *The Guardian*, June 5, 1999.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Blaine Harden, “A Long Struggle That Led Serb Leader to Back Down”, *The New York Times*, June 6, 1999.

NATO's command and control. And in the end, the essential question that created the silence was: Can anything be changed in the proposal? The Finnish president's response was clear and direct: "This is the best offer you can get," making it clear that in the event of his departure with a negative response, NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia would continue with even greater intensity, and the terms of any future agreement would only be more painful.¹⁴⁷⁷ Milošević, after looking at the document in English, addressed his colleagues: "Either we have to accept this or we have to fight." In this context, the Yugoslav president asked the mediators for a little time to talk about it with members of the government, so that the following day the document would be considered in the Serbian parliament. He asked Ahtisaari to talk to the representatives. The latter refused: "Internal state matters and very important issues, such as deciding on war or peace, should be resolved in one's own circle, not in the presence of foreigners."¹⁴⁷⁸ Ahtisaari also declined an invitation to a joint dinner. Chernomyrdin did the same. According to Serbian journalist Bratislav Braco Grubačić, this refusal enraged Milošević. "It showed him that the time for dinner jokes was over."¹⁴⁷⁹

Shortly after the end of the first round of negotiations, NATO bombing resumed. Air raid sirens were heard in Belgrade, but from that night onward NATO aircraft focused on other targets, sparing the capital.¹⁴⁸⁰ Milošević proposed that the international representatives meet again the next day at 9:00 a.m. after reviewing the document - the draft peace agreement¹⁴⁸¹ which contained the following points:

- 1 An immediate and verifiable end to violence and oppression,
- 2 Verifiable withdrawal of all military, police and paramilitary forces from Kosova according to a rapid plan,
- 3 The deployment of effective international civil and security forces in Kosova under the leadership of the UN,

¹⁴⁷⁷ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 145-149; William Drozdiak, "The Kosovo Peace Deal", *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999; Norris, *Collision Course*, 184.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Çërnomyërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 258-259; Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 150.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Jarkko Vesikansa, "Operation Balkans", *Suomen Kuvalehti*, June 18, 1999; Judah, *Kosova*, 336.

¹⁴⁸⁰ "Europe Hope for Kosovo peace plan", *BBC*, June 3, 1999.

¹⁴⁸¹ Ahtisaari first submitted it on June 2, 1999, in Belgrade.

- 4 Significant NATO involvement in security matters, under unified command and control, with the authority to establish a secure environment for all citizens of Kosova and facilitate the return of all displaced persons and refugees,
- 5 The establishment of a temporary administration in Kosova, "under which the people of Kosova will enjoy significant autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia",
- 6 After the withdrawal, a small number of Yugoslav and Serbian personnel may return, in cooperation with the international mission, to mark and clear mined areas, and to be present at Serbian heritage sites, as well as at border crossings,
- 7 The safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons, under the supervision of the UN,
- 8 The beginning of the political process of creating a temporary system based on the Rambouillet agreement, based on the sovereignty of Yugoslavia and other countries in the region,
- 9 Economic reconstruction and stabilization of the crisis,
- 10 Military action will cease when these principles are accepted, when a rapid and precise withdrawal schedule is drawn up, and when a verifiable withdrawal begins. A military agreement, which refers to these issues, will be drawn up.¹⁴⁸²

After the meeting with the mediators ended, Milošević gathered his allies in the Serbian political leadership, including Milan Milutinović and his wife Mirjana Marković, the group that had controlled Yugoslavia for most of a decade. Also present were Vojislav Šešelj, president of the Serbian Radical Party, and Vuk Drašković, president of the Serbian Renewal Movement. The Yugoslav president told those present that the government would not be able to oppose NATO indefinitely. Although a few weeks earlier the Serbian leadership had “sworn that it would never accept surrender”. Ten weeks later he was forced to “swallow the acceptance of foreign troops on Yugoslav soil” and leave Kosova once and for all.¹⁴⁸³ Except for Šešelj, who opposed it, because

¹⁴⁸² *The New York Times*, June 4, 1999; Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 142-143.

¹⁴⁸³ Blaine Harden, “Serb Miscalculation: Persistence and Resources Can Compel Victory”, *The New York Times*, June 5, 1999; Norris, *Collision Course*, 188; Johanna McGeary, “Why he blinked”, *CNN – Time*, June 14, 1999.

signing the document "means capitulation", the others declared for the agreement: 136 voted for the plan, 74 against, 3 abstained, 1 did not participate in the vote, while 36 voted, the others were absent.¹⁴⁸⁴ The mediators met again with Milošević at noon, who informed them: "The Federal Government and the Parliament of Serbia have accepted the peace proposal that you have made." The Yugoslav leader, in his role as "protector of peace," argued that the agreement guaranteed the unity of Yugoslavia, which was a very important process for Yugoslavia, as well as for the entire region and Europe.¹⁴⁸⁵ Chernomyrdin called Talbott to confirm the news that Milošević had accepted the peace agreement. Both men agreed to organize a meeting between NATO and Yugoslav military representatives as soon as possible.¹⁴⁸⁶ The two mediators left the Belgrade airport in different directions. Chernomyrdin traveled to Moscow to report to the Russian president, while Ahtisaari reported to European Union leaders gathered in Cologne, Germany. Upon arrival at Bonn airport, he first spoke briefly with Talbott.¹⁴⁸⁷ Then, being applauded from the prime minister and EU foreign ministers, he presented a comprehensive report on his mission in Belgrade. The first step has been taken, he told those present, but he reminded them that many difficult details must be worked out: the military aspects and the adoption of a UN Security Council Resolution.¹⁴⁸⁸ In a statement after the meeting, EU leaders congratulated the two envoys on their success, describing the agreement as a real opportunity to achieve a political solution. From now on, the next step must begin with the verifiable withdrawal of all Yugoslav forces from Kosova, a condition for the cessation of NATO air operations.¹⁴⁸⁹

While EU leaders praised Chernomyrdin for his role in reaching the agreement, the opposite happened in Moscow, where he faced a lot of criticism. The political trend in favor of the Duma and the military line reacted strongly.¹⁴⁹⁰ Chernomyrdin himself responded to the criticism: "We had two options: either to stop the war by political methods, or to put on our cloaks and fight. The

¹⁴⁸⁴ Patrick Wintour, "Why Milosevic blinked first", *The Guardian*, June 6, 1999.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 151.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 327; Çërnömërdin, *Prapaskenat*, 262.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 153; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 327.

¹⁴⁸⁸ "European envoy says Kosovo war could end in days", *CNN*, June 3, 1999; "Kosovo peace plan agreed", *BBC*, June 4, 1999.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Colonge European Council Conclusions of the Presidency, ANNEX V - European Council declaration on Kosovo, June 3 -4, 1999.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 408.

option we made was the one the Russian people needed." ¹⁴⁹¹ President Yeltsin himself congratulated him on reaching an agreement, but remained publicly silent due to the great opposition. ¹⁴⁹² Faced with such a situation, President Clinton and other NATO leaders reacted cautiously to the agreement, reminding that it represents the beginning of the peace process, but not the end. ¹⁴⁹³ "We'll celebrate when it's really over," said Samuel Berger, the White House's national security adviser.

"This time we don't want just fine words, we want concrete actions, in particular we want to see the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova," British Foreign Secretary Cook reminded. Namely, there was concern that Milošević would try to make various maneuvers to keep Kosova. ¹⁴⁹⁴ Based on these premises, NATO decided that it would not make any compromises before the government in Belgrade began withdrawing its troops. NATO Commander Clark, in his first contact with Serbian General Dragoljub Ojdanić, made it clear to him: every hour of delay in reaching the Technical-Military Agreement ¹⁴⁹⁵ there will be additional hours that will force NATO to continue airstrikes. On June 4, 1999, NATO announced the terms of the Military Agreement, and the next day, by fax in the early morning hours, the Serbs were informed and the first official meeting with the Yugoslav generals was scheduled. ¹⁴⁹⁶ The meeting took place on the Macedonian-Kosova border, in the village of Blace, in the restaurant "Europe 93", owned by an Albanian. NATO was represented by General Mike Jackson, Commander of the NATO Mission in Kosova, while the Yugoslav delegation consisted of General Obrad Stevanović, Assistant Minister of the Interior of Yugoslavia, General Blagoje Kovačević, a member of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, and several other representatives. During the five hours of talks, General Jackson informed the Yugoslav army through a six-page plan about the ways to leave Kosova with all forces and for NATO forces to enter. According to this plan, Serbian forces must withdraw from Kosova within the next 7 days. The plan provided for the Serbian army and police forces to first gather in Prishtina, and then completely leave Kosova through three road lines determined by

¹⁴⁹¹ David Hoffman, "Russians Assail Kosovo Accord", *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1999.

¹⁴⁹² *Rilindja*, 6 qershor, 1999, 2.

¹⁴⁹³ Daniel Williams, "Serbia Yields to NATO Terms", *The Washington Post*, June 4, 1999.

¹⁴⁹⁴ "UK Politics Blair's cautious welcome for deal", *BBC*, June 3, 1999; William Drozdiak, "The Kosovo Peace Deal", *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1999; Fischer, *Vitet kuq – gjelbër*, 228.

¹⁴⁹⁵ It was a NATO request, part of the negotiations between Ahtisaari and Milošević during a meeting on June 3, 1999.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 398- 402; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 327.

NATO. The plan also provided for a buffer zone of 25 km between Kosova and Serbia, in which neither the Yugoslav army nor NATO forces may be present.¹⁴⁹⁷ The Yugoslav army requested more time for consultations with higher authorities in Belgrade. NATO officials reminded the Serbian delegation that the aim was to establish the basic rules of withdrawal and assess the terms of negotiations.¹⁴⁹⁸ Sources from NATO confirmed that the talks are proceeding correctly, but warned of a number of complex issues, the conclusion of which is expected to take a long time.¹⁴⁹⁹

Milošević intended to break the agreement this time as well. His intention was to draw NATO into a bombing moratorium without surrendering Serbian military control over Kosova, with the idea that divisions among the Western allies would make it impossible to continue bombing. The Serbian arguments were: it was not possible to talk about the tasks of KFOR, as well as about other "military-technical" issues, at a time when KFOR was not established by the Security Council.¹⁵⁰⁰

With these views, talks were held on 6 and 7 June 1999, this time at Kumanovo, the border point between Serbia and Macedonia, as the meeting place. Several Russian and Yugoslav generals participated in the talks. NATO was represented by British General Mike Jackson. Generals Stevanović and Kovačević were joined by the Deputy Chief of the VJ General Staff, General Svetozar Marjanović. The atmosphere in the border negotiations deteriorated with the arrival of Lieutenant General Yevgeny Barmjantsev, the Russian military attaché from Belgrade. Upon arrival, he immediately went to a private meeting with the Yugoslav delegation, which further complicated matters.¹⁵⁰¹ In these two meetings, the Yugoslavs (mostly Serbs) continued their tactical game, sharp and regressive. They agreed to start withdrawing, but only up to the level of forces they normally had in Kosova before the start of the war, which was estimated to be up to 25,000 military personnel. They proposed the adoption of the Security Council Resolution, which would specify the establishment of KFOR, before continuing the withdrawal. They insisted that even after the end of the bombing, they retain the right to self-defense of their forces in Kosova. Ultimately, their view of the agreement was that all international forces should operate under the

¹⁴⁹⁷ *Rilindja*, 6 qershor, 1999, 5.

¹⁴⁹⁸ "NATO, Yugoslavs to discuss terms for troop withdrawal Sunday", *CNN*, June 5, 1999.

¹⁴⁹⁹ NATO Press Conference by Mr Jamie Shea, Spokesman and Major General Walter Jertz, SHAPE, June 6, 1999.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 157; *Rilindja*, 9 qershor, 1999, 7.

¹⁵⁰¹ Norris, *Collision Course*, 210-211.

authority of the UN, not NATO.¹⁵⁰² The talks broke down on the morning of 7 June 1999 after hours of discussions that questioned the peace agreement reached by political leaders the previous week. The Serbian objection was not just to the details of the plan but to almost the entire concept of the peace agreement. There are always three stages in reaching an agreement with President Milošević, said NATO spokesman Jamie Shea: "The first is agreement in principle, the second is agreement on details and the third is full implementation. Then you know you have an agreement. What we are seeing is an attempt to negotiate terms that are not negotiable."¹⁵⁰³ Mike Jackson, who was leading the talks on the NATO side, said that the positions taken by the Yugoslavs during the negotiations were contrary to the peace framework agreed upon by the Finnish and Russian envoys and accepted by the Yugoslav political leadership. "Our task was to translate the political agreement into a workable military reality. The Yugoslav delegation presented a proposal that would not guarantee the safe return of all Albanian refugees, nor the complete withdrawal of Yugoslav forces." With such an approach, "NATO has no alternative but to continue and intensify the air campaign until the Yugoslav side is ready to implement a full agreement." He added at the very end that NATO was ready to continue talks with the Yugoslavs at any time when the Serbs were ready to accept NATO's proposal.¹⁵⁰⁴ When NATO continued its attacks throughout the day, impressive results were recorded.¹⁵⁰⁵ The Serbs are changing their approach, Goran Matić, minister without portfolio, a close associate of Milošević, pointed to possible rapid progress in solving the deadlock. He asked "NATO to be patient and restrain its air offensive... there is no reason to intensify the bombing or to continue the bombing at all, because the people and the government will keep the peace".¹⁵⁰⁶

However, the stalemate in Kumanovo created new momentum in the negotiations. All other planned steps now depended directly on this agreement. President Ahtisaari, who had planned to travel to China to seek Beijing's support for the UN resolution, postponed his trip until the following day.¹⁵⁰⁷ In the midst of these conflicting efforts, the G-8 Foreign Ministers' meeting began in Köln, Germany, on the afternoon of June 7. The main topic was the drafting of a Security

¹⁵⁰² Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 406.

¹⁵⁰³ NATO Press Conference by Mr Jamie Shea, Spokesman and Major General Walter Jertz, SHAPE, June 7, 1999.

¹⁵⁰⁴ "Talks between NATO, Yugoslavia fall apart", *CNN*, June 7, 1999.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 409.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Michael Dobbs & Daniel Williams, "Milosevic Still Angling for Concessions", *The Washington Post*, June 8, 1999.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Ahtissari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 168.

Council Resolution that would allow for the complete withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova, replacing them with NATO military forces. The Foreign Ministers had before them a draft Resolution, where there were still many disagreements between representatives of the political West and the Russians. The differences were put in parentheses. While the Ministers accepted it as their duty to eliminate them and find a common consensus within the next 24 hours.¹⁵⁰⁸ The Russians reached the Petersberg fortress with about twenty remarks. At the beginning of the meeting, Ivanov warned fellow ministers that agreeing to some provisions of the agreement would exceed his powers and instructions.¹⁵⁰⁹ After several hours of discussion, many of the parentheses were removed. The issue of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, the formulation of the War Crimes Tribunal, the presence of some Serbian forces in Kosova, etc. NATO's role in peacekeeping became the main obstacle. The need to obtain instructions from Moscow and Ivanov postponed the continuation of the session until the next day.¹⁵¹⁰ At Moscow's urging, parallel telephone conversations were held between President Clinton and Yeltsin, Vice President Al Gore and Chernomyrdin. The invitations were crucial in resolving disputes between the West and Russia, from which the conclusion emerged that the Russians would be cooperative in drafting the Resolution.¹⁵¹¹ When the session resumed early the next morning, things moved quickly toward reconciliation. Secretary of State Albright, in her memoirs, wrote: "As a former ambassador to the UN, I told myself that I should do what I had done before: divide the issues, deal with each colleague individually, until we reached the agreement I sought. After twelve hours of discussion, I stood firm on every issue. Finding himself isolated, Ivanov finally surrendered. Russia agreed to vote on the Security Council Resolution."¹⁵¹² Delighted with the agreement, the foreign ministers immediately began the process of preparing to vote on the Resolution.¹⁵¹³ The agreement in principle on the draft Resolution, which the Security Council was to give final shape to, contained a division between two powerful international organizations: the UN would take over the civilian aspect, and NATO the military aspect.¹⁵¹⁴ With the first step being to refine the draft Resolution, followed by a military-technical agreement to be finalized in border talks. Yugoslav military forces

¹⁵⁰⁸ Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër*, 231.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Norris, *Collision Course*, 215.

¹⁵¹⁰ "G-8 agree on draft UN resolution for Kosovo Social Sharing", *CBC NEWS*, June 8, 1999.

¹⁵¹¹ Çërnomyrdin, *Prapaskenat*, 272-277; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 330.

¹⁵¹² Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 489.

¹⁵¹³ Fischer, *Vitet kuq-gjelbër*, 233-234.

¹⁵¹⁴ *Rilindja*, 10 qershor, 1999, 2.

are to begin a full withdrawal, and as soon as NATO confirms that the withdrawal has begun, an order would be issued to halt the bombing. The UN Security Council would then approve the Resolution, and KFOR would enter Kosova.¹⁵¹⁵

Hadji Tepe Sports Airport, in Kumanovo, long ago converted into a French military base as part of the NATO mission, became the site of a new meeting between NATO and the Yugoslav Army. And this time, the NATO delegation was led by Mike Jackson, and the Yugoslav one by Svetozar Marjanović. The instructions were clear, to continue efforts until the last moment so that in one form or another the agreement would keep Serbia connected with Kosova. On the other hand, NATO's demands remained the same. The talks lasted for hours and then broke off after the Yugoslav army requested additional consultations with Belgrade. NATO spokesman Lt. Col. Robin Clifford said the difficulties facing the two sides are more political than military in nature. When the Serbs realized that they were not there to negotiate, but to agree to the terms of withdrawal, on the evening of June 9, they finally submitted to NATO's terms, signing the Military Technical Agreement.¹⁵¹⁶ There was no public signing of documents, no congratulations, no handshakes, no military pomp. There were only two generals representing the opposing forces and the sharp glare of dozens of television cameras. The signing of the agreement marked another important step towards achieving final peace in Kosova.¹⁵¹⁷ Of the few words that were spoken after the signing of the agreement, the statements given to journalists by the two opposing generals stand out, Jackson who pointed out that Yugoslavia agreed to a "in phases, verifiable and orderly withdrawal from Kosova", and Svetozar Marjanović that with this agreement "the war is over".¹⁵¹⁸ The agreement provided for the end of NATO's air war against Yugoslavia and the withdrawal of 40,000 troops, paramilitary police and all other security forces operating in Kosova. The agreement specified that the withdrawal of troops would begin immediately on the day of signing. The Yugoslavs had 24 hours to withdraw "in a verifiable manner" from northern Kosova, identified as Zone 3. Once this was completed, NATO would cease its air strikes. Within the first 72 hours of the withdrawal, the Yugoslavs must cease all military flights over Kosova, turn off their air defense systems, provide NATO with information on the placement of mines and explosive devices, and

¹⁵¹⁵ Norris, *Collision Course*, 221.

¹⁵¹⁶ "NATO, Yugoslavs hold marathon talks", *CNN*, June 9, 1999; *Rilindja*, 10 qershor, 1999.

¹⁵¹⁷ Molly Moore & Jeffrey Smith, "At the End, Just Two Generals", *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1999.

¹⁵¹⁸ "Yugoslavia agrees to withdraw forces from Kosovo" *CNN*, June 9, 1999; *Rilindja*, 10 qershor, 1999.

all Yugoslav anti-aircraft artillery must leave Kosova. Within 6 days, the Serbs must complete their withdrawal from southern Kosova - the part of the border with Macedonia designated as Zone 1. Within 9 days, Serbian forces must leave the western part of Kosova bordering Albania designated as Zone 2. By the time all Yugoslav Army troops withdraw from Kosova after 11 days, the cessation of bombing would become a permanent cessation of bombing.¹⁵¹⁹ June 10 was full of events directly related to peace in Kosova. The NATO Council approved the Military-Technical Agreement, which was followed by a cessation of bombing. General Clark, as leader of the 78-day bombing campaign, wrote in his memoirs: "We decided that as soon as we confirmed the start of the withdrawal, we would stop the bombing. Information coming from Kosova indicated the start of the withdrawal of Serbian forces. In this context, I remember that at 15:36 I gave instructions to James Ellis to suspend the air campaign. Operation 'Allied Force' was carried out."¹⁵²⁰ On the same day, 10 June 1999, the UN Security Council, in an emergency session, approved Resolution 1244 by 14 votes in favour and 1 abstention from China. The resolution demanded that Yugoslavia immediately and verifiably cease the violence and begin the full withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosova, that, under a UN mandate under Chapter VII, an international security force, with the participation of NATO forces, be established under a single command and control capable of creating a secure environment for all the inhabitants of Kosova, that it required full cooperation by all parties with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and that the UN Secretary-General appoint a Special Representative to oversee the international civilian presence, with full executive, legislative and judicial powers in Kosova, pending the establishment of local institutions. The resolution calls on the international civilian presence to create conditions for a political process designed to determine Kosova's future status, supports the reconstruction of key infrastructure and economic recovery, calls for the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons, and demands the demilitarization of the KLA.¹⁵²¹ The adoption of the Resolution opened the way for the deployment of peacekeeping troops in Kosova, whose preparations were complete, and over 18,000 NATO soldiers were already stationed in Macedonia and Albania, waiting for the first signal to enter Kosova. According to NATO officials, an initial force of British and French troops will enter on June 12, followed by American, German

¹⁵¹⁹ Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force ("KFOR") and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, June 9, 1999.

¹⁵²⁰ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 417.

¹⁵²¹ UN - Resolution S/RES/1244, June 10, 1999.

and Italian soldiers and marines, eventually totaling 50,000 troops from a total of 30 countries that have indicated their willingness to send troops.¹⁵²² The NATO plan envisaged the division of Kosova into five sectors among the main NATO allies: an American sector in the southeast, centered at Bondsteel near Ferizaj, a British sector in the center - Prishtina, a French sector in the north, centered at Mitrovica, a German sector in the south, centered at Prizren, and a Italian sector in the west, centered at Peja. The pattern of division resembled the Allied division of Germany at the very end of World War II. In the case of Kosova, the role of Russia, which insisted on having its own territory, which NATO leaders strongly opposed, remained unknown. In a statement to the media, British Secretary Robin Cook announced that there would be no "East Germany" within Kosova, ruling out the option desired by the Russians for a de facto division of Kosova.¹⁵²³ When the first NATO troops entered Kosova in the early hours of June 12, refugee camps housing hundreds of thousands of Albanians welcomed the arrival of NATO troops after hearing the news that morning. With flowers and banners, they chanted "Thank you NATO", "Welcome brave soldiers", "Thank you Clinton - Blair". Tears of joy from Albanians with banners of gratitude accompanied the NATO troops all the way through the villages and towns of Kosova.¹⁵²⁴ However, the celebratory enthusiasm of Albanians and NATO allies waned slightly when *CNN* announced that a contingent of 50 military vehicles with the Russian flag, freshly painted letters and the acronym KFOR, which were located in Bosnia and Herzegovina, had crossed the Bosnian-Yugoslav border, heading towards Kosova.¹⁵²⁵ Upon receiving the news, the US government ordered Assistant Secretary of State Talbott, who had just left Moscow for Washington, to return with instructions to "make a scandal", since in the first statement, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov had assured the US administration that Russian troops would not enter Kosova without an agreement with NATO. The situation in Moscow was quite tense, and the differences between the rebel military line and their political leadership were quite large. When the NATO allies realized, on the night of June 11, that the Russians were moving people towards Prishtina, General Clark quickly devised a plan to deploy NATO troops by helicopter to the Prishtina airport. The plan was

¹⁵²² "Wave of Yugoslav troops, trucks leave Kosovo", *CNN*, June 11, 1999.

¹⁵²³ "NATO, Yugoslav generals take a break; no resolution in sight", *CNN*, June 6, 1999; "K-For: The task ahead", *BBC*, June 13, 1999.

¹⁵²⁴ Chris Bird, "Flowers for Nato, jeers for Serbs", *The Guardian*, June 14, 1999; "NATO peacekeeping commander arrives in Pristina" *CNN*, June 12, 1999; Sullivan, *Mos kij frikë se i ke djemtë në Amerikë*, 325.

¹⁵²⁵ "Russian troops enter Kosovo; Moscow orders them to leave", *CNN*, June 11, 1999; *Rilindja*, 13 qershor, 1999, 2.

not implemented by British General Michael Jackson, arguing that such an action would violate the delicate agreements he had negotiated with Yugoslav officers for their withdrawal from Kosova and could conflict with the Russians.¹⁵²⁶ According to Ahtisaari, there were facts that the Russian armed forces and the Yugoslav regime had agreed that Russia would take control of Prishtina and the northern parts of Kosova in order to form its own sector.¹⁵²⁷ Ivanov, "surprised" by the news about the entry of troops into Kosova at the meeting with Talbot, admitted that it was a mistake, and agreed to the American request to contact *CNN* and condemn this action: "in connection with the appearance of Russian military personnel in Prishtinë... we are in the process of clarifying how this happened and the army will be ordered to leave Kosova immediately."¹⁵²⁸ The next day, in a communication with Secretary of State Albright, Ivanov denied his statement, emphasizing that it was a "misunderstanding" about the departure of Russian soldiers from Kosova. According to him, the Russians would remain at the airport in Prishtina, and in case no agreement was reached for Russian troops, then additional troops would be sent to occupy the north of Kosova.¹⁵²⁹ Sources from Moscow confirmed that General Anatoliy Kvashnin proposed to President Yeltsin a plan for the invasion of 200 Russian soldiers, which Yeltsin approved without hesitation, describing it as a "real, strong step."¹⁵³⁰ And that's not all, NATO sources confirmed Russian efforts to send additional troops. Six transport planes carrying 600 Russian soldiers were preparing to leave Russia. There was also a plan to quickly deploy Russian amphibious troops from Bosnia to Kosova to seize the airport in Prishtina. The plan resembled the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, when a Russian landing plane, which landed at Prague airport, blocked everything, creating the possibility for other planes with military units to land.¹⁵³¹ On that day, June 12, the Russian military leadership sent Colonel Gramov, the attaché in Skopje, to meet with the commander of KFOR. Mike Jackson, recalls the meeting: "Gramov gave me a letter from the Russian Ministry of Defense informing me that the main element of the Russian KFOR contingent now controls the airport in Prishtinë." "Mike, reject the letter," Clark instructed. "Find the man who brought it and return it to him. NATO cannot accept such a request." Talks between

¹⁵²⁶ Robert G. Kaiser & David Hoffman, "Secret Russian Troop Deployment Thwarted", *The Washington Post*, June 25, 1999.

¹⁵²⁷ Ahtisaari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 186.

¹⁵²⁸ Norris, *Collision Course*, 266.

¹⁵²⁹ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 492.

¹⁵³⁰ Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 426; Ahtisaari, *Detyra në Beograd*, 185.

¹⁵³¹ Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 425; Vukaj, *Rusia dhe Kosova*, 426.

the two generals (Welsey Clark - Mike Jackson) continued during a meeting on June 13, 1999. Clark came with a request that General Jackson order the runways of the Prishtinë airport to be blocked so that they would not be forced to deal with a problem that could bring a crisis. On the other hand, "My team", remembers Jackson, "failed to see the logic in this order. We already controlled the airspace, so the Russians would have to control NATO if they wanted to control the planes." Placing a helicopter on the runway would only make the situation chaotic and provoke the Russians. Both men wrote in their memoirs about tense and quite personal discussions about how to proceed:

Clark: "We have to block the airport!"

Jackson: "I won't do it! Sir, I just won't do it! I'm tired of taking orders from Washington, from people who don't seem to appreciate the problems on the ground."

Clark: "These are not Washington's orders, I'm issuing them!"

Jackson: "By whose authority?"

Clark: "By my authority as Commander-in-Chief!"

Jackson: "You don't have that authority!"

Clark: "I have the authority! The Secretary-General stands behind me on this issue!"

Jackson: "Sir, I'm not going to start World War III because of you..."

Talks continued, Clark was persistent, despite the risk of conflict with the Russians. While Jackson suggested that armored vehicles would be more suitable for blocking the runway than helicopters, on the advice of Washington and London, an agreement was reached.¹⁵³²

The unilateral march of Russian troops created anxiety among Western allies. There was a consensus within NATO leaders to strongly oppose further Russian troop advances. The message was sent directly to Ivanov, about the dangers of a "confrontation" following the preparation of

¹⁵³² Sir Mike Jackson, "My clash with Nato chief", *The Telegraph*, September 4, 2007; Clark, *Të bësh luftë moderne*, 435.

aircraft to reinforce Russian troops, otherwise the US would consider a direct military response.¹⁵³³ To carry out the Russian air support plan, they needed the use of the airspace of several countries, such as Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. When senior American officials realized what the Russians had in mind, they advised these countries to refuse Russian requests for the use of their airspace.¹⁵³⁴ As Hungary had just been admitted to NATO at the time, while the other two countries were the main candidates for joining it, the decision of those countries to resist Moscow was a clear commitment to regional security, first of all justifying the correct decision to expand NATO.¹⁵³⁵ In this context, Russia could not keep any more troops in Kosova, nor could it supply the soldiers stationed in Prishtina for more than two consecutive weeks. The British provided food and water to the isolated Russian contingent.¹⁵³⁶ In the following days, almost everything depended on the US's management of the crisis, as only the Americans had the ability, power, and experience to find a diplomatic solution with Moscow.¹⁵³⁷ In this context, President Clinton and other senior US leaders spoke with their counterparts in Russia to find a solution to the issue of Russian troops in Kosova. The Clinton-Yeltsin talks resulted in a shift. The two leaders agreed to send their foreign and defense ministers to Helsinki for further talks.¹⁵³⁸ Ahead of the meeting with his Russian counterpart, State Secretary Cohen recalled the American position: "There can be no division of Kosova and there will be no separate Russian sector. We are trying to find a way to meet their demands, but we will not violate the basic rules in any way".¹⁵³⁹ Sources in Moscow confirmed that President Yeltsin instructed Minister Igor Sergeyev to fight resolutely for a separate Russian zone.¹⁵⁴⁰ The meeting began on June 16. The Russians continued to insist on a special zone and the deployment of 10,000 troops to Kosova. The session continued the next day. Secretary of State Albright and Minister Ivanov joined the talks, and despite their differences, both sides hoped to reach an agreement and present it to the NATO Council in Brussels, which was scheduled to meet on June 18. The document on the agreement was to be signed by Presidents

¹⁵³³ Norris, *Collision Course*, 284.

¹⁵³⁴ Robert G. Kaiser & David Hoffman, "Secret Russian Troop Deployment Thwarted", *The Washington Post*, June 25, 1999.

¹⁵³⁵ Albright, *Zonja Sekretare*, 492.

¹⁵³⁶ Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 347.

¹⁵³⁷ Fischer, *Vitet kuq – gjelbër*, 239.

¹⁵³⁸ John M. Broder, "Phone Calls to Russia Fail to End Stalemate", *The New York Times*, June 15, 1999.

¹⁵³⁹ *Rilindja*, 17 qershor, 1999, 3.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Robert G. Kaiser & David Hoffman, "Secret Russian Troop Deployment Thwarted", *The Washington Post*, June 25, 1999.

Clinton and Yeltsin at the G-8 summit in Köln on June 20, 1999.¹⁵⁴¹ The talks made no progress, and word spread that they had broken off. Finally, after thirty hours of negotiations, in the late hours of June 18, Ministers Cohen and Sergeyev signed the agreement.¹⁵⁴² In short, the agreement stipulated that Russian troops would be deployed in three sectors, two battalions would be located in the American sector and would be under American command, and they would also operate in the German and French sectors, with a maximum number of 3,600, which would decrease in proportion to the reduction in the overall size of KFOR. The agreement clearly defined that Russian troops would be subordinate to the KFOR commander.¹⁵⁴³

In parallel with these negotiations, NATO generals were discussing with KLA representatives a demilitarization agreement, as directed by UN Resolution 1244. Even in this case, the discussions lasted for hours. NATO representatives, recalling that foreign peacekeepers should be the only armed force in Kosova, insisted that the surrender of weapons should begin immediately and unconditionally, which meant the end of the KLA. On the other hand, KLA leaders, above all, demanded recognition of the Kosova Liberation Army as a regular army, arguing that the demilitarization process should not insist on complete disarmament, but that some units should be allowed to keep their weapons in order to act as local police.¹⁵⁴⁴ NATO insisted that the demilitarization process be completed within 7 days to 1 month, while KLA leaders Hashim Thaçi and Agim Çeku asked for four months. In the end, a compromise was reached that the KLA would complete the entire demilitarization process within 90 days, stop wearing uniforms and any KLA insignia. The agreement, which is officially known as the *Undertaking of demilitarization and transformation by the UCK*, was signed on June 20, 1999. The signatories of this agreement are: Hashim Thaçi in the position of Supreme Commander of the KLA, Agim Çeku in the position of Chief of Staff of the KLA, and it was accepted by Lieutenant-General Mike Jackson, Commander of KFOR. The agreement stipulates that part of the KLA soldiers will be transformed into the Kosova Police, which should be consolidated in the coming weeks. As part of defining the status of Kosova, it was necessary to form an army similar to the American National Guard, which was not clearly defined, but left many possibilities. After numerous difficulties, this process was

¹⁵⁴¹ Newsline RFE - June 16, 1999; Talbott, *Russia Hand*, 347.

¹⁵⁴² William Drozdiak, "U.S., Russia Reach Military Agreement", *The Washington Post*, June 19, 1999.

¹⁵⁴³ NATO Agreed Points on Russian Participation in KFOR June 18, 1999.

¹⁵⁴⁴ "KLA Demilitarization Finalized", *CBS NEWS*, September 20, 1999.

Libri i Lirisë, 347-348.

successfully completed, and the result was the formation of the Kosova Defense Troops TMK (Alb. Trupat Mbrojtëse të Kosovës), initially as a force intended for quick reaction in cases of natural disasters, to be later transformed into the true defense forces of Kosova.¹⁵⁴⁵

With the departure of the last Serbian soldier from Kosova on 20 June 1999, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana announced that, acting under the authority of the North Atlantic Council, he had finally "decided to terminate the air campaign with immediate effect".¹⁵⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

During the 78-day bombing campaign, the United States and its NATO allies engaged in the largest European military operation to end the Serbian regime's campaign of ethnic cleansing against Kosova Albanians. In Operation Allied Force, NATO did not engage in direct combat with the Yugoslav Army on the ground. Yugoslav Army ground forces were forced to hide in tunnels, caves, and mountains for the 11 weeks of the NATO bombing campaign. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević chose to fight largely by asymmetric means: through terror tactics and repression directed against Albanian civilians, attempts to exploit civilian casualties and potential collateral damage, the creation of a refugee and humanitarian crisis, and a propaganda war aimed at disinformation.¹⁵⁴⁷ On his orders, Yugoslav Army and police forces killed and massacred around 10,000 Albanian civilians, sexually assaulted over 20,000 young Albanian girls and women, expelled around a million Albanians from their homes, and destroyed and burned thousands of houses and households.

NATO exposed this tactic, developed a very careful air campaign, the objectives of which were agreed upon at multiple levels of command. The primary task of NATO strategists was to ensure that the selected targets complied with international military law and with minimal risk to civilian life and property. "We were extremely rigorous in our assessment of each of the alleged attacks. We did not simply accept mission reports as the sole source of evidence of a successful attack. Two or more of the sources cited had to be present for final verification," General Clark said during

¹⁵⁴⁵ NATO - Undertaking of demilitarization and transformation by the UCK, June 20, 1999; *Libri i Lirisë*, 347-348.

¹⁵⁴⁶ NATO - Press Release 101, Statement by the NATO Secretary General, June, 20, 1999.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Department of Defense, Report to Congress: "Kosovo/Operation Allied Forces After Action Report" 6.

a press conference on 16 September 1999.¹⁵⁴⁸ NATO has proven successful because it has used more intelligent weapons than in any other conflict in history. The rules of engagement were very restrictive to minimize the risk to Kosova Albanians, the civilian population, that the airstrikes were supposed to protect. Despite the challenges, the air campaign was successful thanks to the skill and control of the pilots. The factors that allowed the Alliance to succeed with very few civilian casualties was what US Defense Secretary William Cohen described as an air campaign of the highest standards, "the most precise application of air power in history".¹⁵⁴⁹

The Alliance was patient, giving Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milošević time to meet NATO's demands before the attacks intensified. "The attacks will cease immediately if Milošević accepts the peace plan," British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said on March 25, 1999.

NATO began the air campaign with about 200 sorties per day. It intensified in the following weeks, reaching 1,000 sorties by the end of May. At the end of the operation, US Secretary of Defense William Cohen and General Henry Shelton, in a report to Congress on 31 January 2000, estimated that 38,004 sorties had been flown as part of Operation Allied Force, out of a planned total of 45,935, including strategic targets targeting Yugoslav air defenses, surveillance command, military and police forces and their supporting infrastructure, supply routes and assets, and tactical attacks targeting Serbian military and police forces deployed in Kosova and southern Serbia. NATO planned 14,112 strikes, of which 10,484 were successful and carried out without losses to the Alliance.¹⁵⁵⁰ In total, according to the US Department of Defense, NATO attacked more than 900 targets, of which 421 targets were accurately identified and hit. Of these, half were military installations. Of the 421 fixed targets attacked, 232 were seriously damaged, 135 targets suffered minor damage, and 51 targets were not damaged. In total, about 9,815 "aiming points" were assigned to targets of all types, and about 58% of these "aiming points" were successfully hit.¹⁵⁵¹

¹⁵⁴⁸ NATO, Press Conference on the Kosovo Strike Assessment by General Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Brigadier General John Corley, Chief, Kosovo Mission Effectiveness Assessment Team, September 16, 1999.

¹⁵⁴⁹ NATO, The conduct of the air campaign, October 30, 2000; Arkin, *Operation Allied Force*, 28.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Department of Defense, Report to Congress: "Kosovo/Operation Allied Forces After Action Report" 1; NATO, Press Conference on the Kosovo Strike Assessment by General Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Brigadier General John Corley, Chief, Kosovo Mission Effectiveness Assessment Team, September 16, 1999.

¹⁵⁵¹ Arkin, *Operation Allied Force*, 22.

The US carried the brunt of the military operations with a total of 23,300 sorties, or 61%. While other NATO allies participated with 14,704 - 39%. Of the 28,018 pieces of ammunition used in the 78-day operation, the US participated with 23,315 or 83%, while other NATO allies participated with 4,703 or 17%. Over time, the type of ammunition used by NATO also changed. In the early days of the air campaign, more than 90% of the bombs and missiles used were precision-guided munitions. Better weather and the continued damage to Yugoslav air defenses allowed NATO to use an increasing number of unguided weapons. The US also played a leading role in sending aircraft. Of the total of 1,058 aircraft that participated in the air campaign, the US provided 731 aircraft, or 69%. While other allies contributed 327 aircraft - 31%, in which France participated with 84, Italy with 58, Great Britain with 39, Germany with 33, the Netherlands with 22, Turkey with 21, Canada with 18, Belgium with 14, Denmark with 8, Spain with 7, Norway with 6, Hungary with 4, Portugal with 3, and NATO participated with 10 aircraft from common resources.¹⁵⁵²

Following the conclusion of Operation Allied Force, NATO released an initial assessment of the effectiveness of its attack against a range of targets. These targets destroyed or significantly damaged included: 11 railway bridges, 34 highway bridges, 29% of all Serbian ammunition depots, 57% of oil reserves, all Yugoslav oil refineries, 14 command posts, over 100 aircraft, 10 military airfields.¹⁵⁵³ NATO estimated that at the end of the campaign, it destroyed around 800 pieces of Serbian heavy weapons. This total includes 450 artillery and mortar tubes, 220 armored fighting vehicles and 120 tanks.¹⁵⁵⁴

To verify all its claims, NATO sent a team of 35 experts (aviators, weapons technicians, intelligence personnel) to Kosova in the first week of July 1999. The field team traveled to 429 different locations, identified from NATO reports as well as from witnesses. Brigadier General John Corley, the leader of the assessment team, described their research method during a press conference on September 16, 1999. "We started with our foundation, which was the aircrew mission report. Then we continued to tour Kosova, visiting each of the locations where we had a mission report. We interviewed air traffic controllers, looked at before-and-after pictures of the

¹⁵⁵² Department of Defense, Report to Congress: "Kosovo/Operation Allied Forces After Action Report" 32-78. Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons*, 41.

¹⁵⁵³ Department of Defense, Report to Congress: "Kosovo/Operation Allied Forces After Action Report" 82.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 153.

attacks, used intelligence samples, and finally reached out to the witnesses themselves. During the assessment, the team also found decoys that the Serbs had left in various locations. Most of these decoys were artillery. In the end, the team was able to prove that there were 93 successful hits, 19 multiple hits and 9 deceptions in the tank category. In the category of armored personnel carriers, 153 successful hits, 26 multiple hits and 5 decoys were confirmed. In the military equipment category, the team confirmed 339 successful hits, 37 multiple hits and 5 deceptions. And recently, in the category of artillery and mortars, 389 successful hits, 46 multiple hits and 5 deceptions were confirmed.¹⁵⁵⁵

NATO accomplished its mission and achieved its strategic, operational and tactical objectives in the face of an extremely complex challenge. It forced Slobodan Milošević to withdraw from Kosova, degraded his ability to conduct military operations, and rescued and facilitated the return of nearly a million Albanians to Kosova. These goals were achieved as a result of the cooperation of nineteen NATO member states. Although the United States dominated the supply of all weapons of war, the role of the Europeans was equally important. European air bases were crucial for the effectiveness of air operations. NATO stationed half of its aircraft (about 500), including helicopters, at Italian air bases. The Europeans provided the bulk of humanitarian aid, especially to neighboring countries such as Albania and Macedonia, at a time when these two countries were facing a large influx of Albanian refugees from Kosova. In the end, the role of the Europeans proved to be dominant in the participation of 50,000 KFOR soldiers in Kosova, 80% of whom were European soldiers.¹⁵⁵⁶

Finally, there is no doubt that NATO's operation in Kosova was a major challenge in the entire history of the North Atlantic Alliance. For the first time, a protective alliance launched a military campaign to prevent a humanitarian tragedy outside its borders. At the same time, NATO did not fight for the conquest or preservation of territory, but for the protection of the values on which the alliance was founded. And despite many challenges, it won!¹⁵⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵⁵ NATO, Press Conference on the Kosovo Strike Assessment by General Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Brigadier General John Corley, Chief, Kosovo Mission Effectiveness Assessment Team, September 16, 1999.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Department of Defense, Report to Congress: "Kosovo/Operation Allied Forces After Action Report" 2; Daalder & O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 148-149.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Javier Solana, "NATO's Success in Kosovo", *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 78 • Number 6, November/December 1999, 114.

The end of the war dismissed any dilemma about Albanian patriotism for Kosova. The world was impressed by the dignity of the refugees and their eagerness to return, although they were aware that most of them had nowhere to return.¹⁵⁵⁸ “Please do not rush to return before the mine threat is eliminated,” US President Bill Clinton told the crowd on June 21, 1999, during a visit to Camp Stankovec. “You have suffered a lot, I do not want any children to be killed by mines when you return there.”¹⁵⁵⁹ However, by the first week of August 1999, UNHCR, updating data on refugee returns, reported that over 90% of the 850,000 Albanians who had forcibly left Kosova had returned, giving full legitimacy to immediate military intervention to return the majority of refugees to their homes in a short period of time.¹⁵⁶⁰

On November 25, 1998, Milošević, in coordination with his political and military team, began the implementation of the "Operation Horseshoe" plan, which aimed to ethnically cleanse the Albanian civilian population from Kosova. The crimes committed as an integral part of this operation showed that Milošević's regime had not changed. In the weeks that followed, the number of displaced Kosovars activated the already fragile situation around the disputed borders of Albania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. In this context, the 19 members of the Atlantic Alliance of NATO, despite the complex historical relations in the Balkans, were convinced that it was in the interest of the wider region to end the War in Kosova as soon as possible, including military intervention for this purpose. The protracted conflict meant danger for the entire region.

The military intervention was the last step in preventing and halting human rights abuses in Kosova. NATO thus began a campaign of airstrikes on Kosova to protect the values on which it was founded. The decision to intervene militarily was made only after a series of failed diplomatic efforts, and after it had been established beyond doubt that:

1.) There were repeated efforts by the international community to resolve the Albanian-Serbian conflict peacefully - through dialogue. The international community, as never before, tried all possible diplomatic options, starting with economic sanctions, passing Security Council resolutions, numerous meetings of the Contact Group, threats of the use of force by NATO, to

¹⁵⁵⁸ Press Conference by SACEUR, General Wesley K. Clark, 12 June 1999.

¹⁵⁵⁹ “Kosovo refugees' rapturous welcome for Clinton”, The Guardian, June 22, 1999.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Kosovo Crisis Update, August 4, 1999.

providing a last chance - the Rambouillet conference, when the stubborn Yugoslav leadership refused to sign the proposed agreement.

2.) There are verifiable facts that various Serbian regimes violated the human rights of Albanians in Kosova in various ways during the 20th century. Human rights violations escalated in Kosova after 1989, when Serbian policy denied Albanians the right to education, work, freedom of speech, etc. The crimes that had been committed for a decade were exposed to the world at the beginning of the Kosova War in 1998, when police-military expeditions killed and massacred hundreds of women, children and the elderly, bombed dozens of villages, burned hundreds of houses, and expelled thousands of residents from their homes. The massacres were often carried out in the presence of powerful international media. Since October 1998, all international organizations have been reporting on the humanitarian catastrophe and the dangers it poses for the region. During the 1998-1999 War more than 10,000 civilians were killed, while the number of displaced persons forced to leave Kosova approached one million, and another 500,000 people wandered from mountain to mountain, in constant danger of harassment, rape and murder.

3.) that the documents of international organizations warn of the danger to the peace and security of neighboring countries in the event of a long-term war in Kosova. At that time, the Balkans were still facing great political instability. All neighboring countries were in a fragile political situation, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina itself. When you add to that the number of Albanians in at least four different neighboring countries: Albania, Greece, Macedonia and Yugoslavia, it was reasonable to assume that the longer the war in Kosova lasted, the more Albanians would be involved in it, which could lead to destabilization in the entire area.

NATO's intervention finally achieved its goal - stopping mass human rights violations and returning the displaced to their homes. In this way, about a million Albanians avoided permanent migration to the West.

The decision of the NATO alliance to launch air strikes on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in March 1999 was based on the premises of: stopping the killing and expulsion of Kosova Albanians, preventing a humanitarian catastrophe and preserving regional security. Namely, after the bitter experiences of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international community decided to act proactively, arguing that ethnic cleansing could not be allowed in a

democratic Europe on the threshold of the 21st century. European countries defined within the Western political sphere bore the stigma of belated intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which contributed to the fading credibility of the international community. The war in Kosova was an opportunity not only to atone for the rather passive observation of the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia, but also to create a new geostrategy of contemporary Europe. On the other hand, it was precisely the latter factor that influenced the political positions of Russia, also an important protagonist in the Kosova agony. Despite continuous Russian opposition to a whole range of possible diplomatic and political solutions, the so-called Western diplomacy, led by the US, showed patience and persistence by giving Belgrade several options for ending military operations in the Balkans. Global economic conditions were a silent ally of the US, which included Russia in all diplomatic attempts, which ultimately, under the pressure of the internal crisis, played a key role in reaching a final agreement on the withdrawal of all Serbian police and military forces from Kosova.

The diplomatic techniques and level of inter-Allied cooperation to end the Kosova War were and remain examples of attempts to avoid global conflict. The insistence on dialogue and negotiations represented a model of international integrity for resolving the situation while avoiding unnecessary humanitarian or military disasters.

During the war in Kosova, many international organizations, based on the experience of the slow return of refugees after the wars in Bosnia and Croatia, estimated that in the case of Kosova, it would take two years for Albanians to fully return to their homelands. However, the opposite happened.

After June 12, the international mission UNMIK was established in Kosova, which became the executive administrative body of Kosova. In the next nine years, with the help of international institutions, Kosova's self-governing institutions were established, thus creating the legal basis for building an independent state. The long-awaited final moment for the Albanians came on February 17, 2008, when Kosova, with international coordination, declared its independence, which was internationally recognized by 116 countries of the world (until February 2024). While a quarter of a century has passed since the NATO military intervention, in political terms Kosova has achieved impressive results as an independent state in all fields and has joined many international organizations, bringing peace and stability.

NATO's military intervention in Kosova is the first military intervention of global proportions that took place as a result of the long and painful breakup of Yugoslavia and marks a new phase in the history of Kosova. It was a successful humanitarian intervention, with the aim of long-term geopolitical stabilization of the Balkans. The case of Kosova in international geopolitics marks a military-humanitarian triumph, but also a triumph of the high school of diplomacy, which enabled the USA, together with its allies, to work together with the goal of achieving stability in the region and stopping ethnic cleansing and mass violations of human rights against Albanians from Kosova.

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Since 2012, he has been participating in various conferences and presentations inside and outside of Kosova. He wrote articles and reviews that were published in local Kosova newspapers on the subject of the war in Kosova in 1998-1999. In 2018, he participated in the international conference XVI European Conference on Social and Behavioral Science, organized by the International Association of Social Sciences Research and the University of Prizren, with the report *Kosovo Liberation Army in the Discourse of International Authors*. In 2022, he participated in the II. INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ASSEMBLY: The importance of European memory for the European future: Communist crimes, with the report *Kosova youth Demonstration 1981 - Violence against the Protestors*.

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Kombi

Kosova Sot

Radio Free Europe

Rilindja

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