

**KOSOVO MISSION REPORT - MARCH 2002
to Canada's Department of National Defence (DND)**

by

Wayne Nelles, Ph.D.

DFAIT Human Security Research Fellow, Centre for Global Studies, UVic

Senior Associate, Sustainable Development Research Institute, UBC

P.O. Box 33739 Station D, Vancouver, B.C., V6J 4L6

Email: wnelles@sdri.ubc.ca

Overview

This report follows a DND travel grant allowing me to conduct field research in Kosovo as part of a study called: "*EDUCATION, MULTILATERALISM AND HUMAN SECURITY IN THE*

BALKANS" while tudA50Chis.ec3l w 7.815 0 AIwis.f00011 Tc 0 Tw -7.815 MC/P ÅMCID 19-0.0e.999903 Tmv

During meetings and field visits I was able to gather documents otherwise not widely available, and a wealth of useful information while conducting informal interviews with senior officials. Both official meetings and unescorted tours showed me just how ethnically divided Kosovo remains. Although there appears to be good progress on physical reconstruction, multi-ethnic integration and cooperation remains a goal of the international community in principle but not much in practice. Concerning how this manifests itself in education one UNMIK official from Pristina lamented (off the record) to me that he no longer attends school openings. He said many children (supported by their teachers and parents) proudly sing powerful nationalist songs that portray Serbs with hate and vindictiveness and that some curriculum materials including textbooks still reinforce this. When I asked a second official about the problem he did not view it with the same concern. But this issue needs to be better assessed (examining similar or counter tendencies in Serb schools as well) through more formal, comprehensive and systematic research, particularly for its long term security implications.

Meetings Postponed for Security Reasons

Beyond official meetings and field tours I attempted unsuccessfully (for security reasons) to visit the town of Lipljan, but still hope to in future. Prior to departure from Canada I had arranged with the Serb-Canadian Society of Vancouver to visit a mainly Serb area and schools within Lipljan, to get a Serb view of the situation. But I was not able to publicly meet or travel with that English speaking contact (also an interpreter for UNMIK who worked daily until 4:00 PM). I could have gone separately and alone by bus after he had finished work at night but this would have been unwise. Civilians traveling with or meeting a Serb in public are vulnerable, could easily be identified as Serb sympathizer, and might be endangered.

Three years after the NATO intervention Serbs continue to feel insecure, unable to walk safely alone in Pristina and many other parts of Kosovo. Police or armed KFOR guards still must accompany Serbs attending official meetings or if they are transported on business through Albanian areas, according to UNMIK policy, a senior official informed me. There is still a real danger Serbs could be killed or hurt by Albanian criminal gangs or vigilantes even in downtown Pristina where none dare walk freely. In speaking with some Albanians (now the largely safe and NATO-KFOR protected majority) about this several people dismissed such fears as irrational. Some intimated only those guilty of past atrocities should worry. Other Albanians appear to be seeking a peaceful existence just wanting to carry on with their lives after the war. But as recently as early February 2002 local news reports documented hundreds of Albanians who rioted violently on Pristina's streets protesting UNMIK police arrests of suspected Albanian war criminals. They threw bricks damaging police vehicles and hotel windows, and intimidated others not joining the protest. Yet during my mission to Kosovo, following just one week after, all seemed relatively calm on the surface.

Unescorted Mitrovica Visit - Personal Experiences

While Serbs are still at risk in Pristina and many other Albanian areas, in some Serb dominated areas significant personal/human security threats exist for Albanians, those perceived to be pro-Albanian, or those working for UNMIK. I learned this first hand during an unescorted personal visit by public bus and walking tour to the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica where I (graphically) experienced the lingering effects of the 1999 Kosovo war, and its implications for long term human security.

Reaching Mitrovica from Pristina is only possible by crossing a bridge through a heavily guarded KFOR checkpoint dividing the Serb North and the Albanian South. On the Serb side about a dozen so-called “bridge-watchers” (mid 40s and 50s apparently ex-Serb police an UNMIK official later told me) wait and stare down all passers by. Just a hundred yards past the bridge, out of sight from KFOR, I was stopped on the sidewalk and intimidated by a man of about 30 with a walky-talky, in a small group. He claimed to be Serb police saying that I must show him my identification demanding that I go back across the bridge immediately. I refused asking him to show me his ID instead, but he would not. I told him I entered the country legally and was not engaged in criminal activity so he had no right to detain or interrogate me. After about 15 minutes of jostling (where I felt quite vulnerable) he and his compatriots suggested we “go for coffee” down a small alleyway. I declined, negotiating my way out by talking about the research I was doing, that I just wanted to learn more about Serb education activities and wanted to see the town to begin. While on my walkabout I observed French KFOR street patrols on a sweep and later doing emergency planning exercises on the bridge. A young Serb man of about 18 (who observed my altercation earlier) approached me warning me to stay clear of the “bridge-watchers” and to go back right away because I could be in trouble. Things were tense I later learned from an UNMIK policeman who said they recently arrested a couple of Serbs. In retaliation others warned they might kidnap an UNMIK official (I might have been a good mark instead on officer told me).

Initial Reflections and Conclusions

What initial conclusions can I make from my Mission? Given the limited time of one week for this visit I was just able to scratch the surface for my research purposes, but I hope to return later for more in depth work. However, my initial impressions from official meetings, general observations and personal experiences suggest that the effects of the 1999 NATO intervention still run very deep for both Serbs and Albanians.

Now despite the veneer of some normalcy in Pristina, conditions in Kosovo remain tense with potentially volatile human security threats in certain areas. Future security arrangements and aid programmes must better address long-term social, economic and psychological effects and impacts of the war. Formal education programmes in schools and universities have an important role to play. As do non-formal community education programmes and teacher training. Despite some international initiatives these have just scratched the surface in relation to need. Much more needs to be done to reconcile divisions and mitigate systemic conflict amoJ0.nsecuritysn007ggest thatemic

