
Interview: Dr. Bujar Bukoshi

People must not look on idly as another people is exterminated

Dr. Bujar Bukoshi, M.D., Ph.D., prime minister of the Republic of Kosova, was interviewed for EIR by Mark Burdman and Ortrun Cramer on Jan. 16. It has been translated from German.

EIR: To start out, could you give us a brief historical overview of the conflict in Kosova?

Bukoshi: Without having the historical background, it is impossible to understand certain developments today. Kosova is one of the most grievous wounds of former Yugoslavia, and one of Europe's greatest problems.

It all began when the London Conference of 1913 promised Kosova and other [ethnic] Albanian areas to Serbia, in order to block the progress of "pan-Germanism" into the Middle East. Following the Balkan Wars (1912-13), thanks to the Serbian occupation of Kosova, one-half of all Albanian territory and half of all Albanians ended up in the "Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes." This happened after the Albanians had liberated their territory in the course of battles against the Turks, an effort which left the Albanians so weakened that they were unable to hold out against the Allied-backed Serbian troops.

Without any exaggeration, Yugoslav policy toward the Albanians during the inter-war period deserves the description "genocide."

During World War II, a large portion of this Albanian territory was incorporated into the Albanian state. At the Bunjaj Conference, it was decided that following the war this region would be attached to Albania. But when the war ended, Kosova was put under martial law. Under the pretext of a threatened "counter-revolution," thousands of Albanians were liquidated. Without any plebiscite, Kosova was incorporated into the federal Yugoslavian state.

Up to 1966, the Albanians in Kosova were subjected to heavy police persecution, and approximately 400,000 Kosovans were expelled to Turkey. Serbia attempted to alter Kosova's ethnic structure, using brutal methods of colonization, assimilation, and expulsion of Albanians. But all these efforts failed. Albanians' resistance continued to grow, such that in 1968 Tito decided to grant Kosova considerable auton-

omy. For the first time, Albanians had some limited legal rights. According to the 1974 federal Constitution, Kosova had the de facto status of a republic; it had its own parliament, government, and other authorities which were independent of Serbia and were tied directly to the federation. But when [Slobodan] Milosevic came to power, all these rights were declared unconstitutional and were abolished by force. Kosova was annexed to Serbia.

Already back in 1981, the Albanians were demanding a republic with equal rights in the framework of the Yugoslav Federation. The 1981 student demonstrations were very convenient for the Serbian government; a state of emergency was declared, and that was the beginning of the end of Kosovan autonomy.

The repression became unbearable: Since 1981 we can count over 100 deaths, and many hundreds of injuries; over 650,000 Albanians were put on trial, arrested (with prison terms ranging from 30 days to 20 years), or mistreated. With their daily fare of terror, the Serbs hoped they could provoke an Albanian uprising. But so far, they have not succeeded.

Since July 5, 1990, when Serbia forcibly dissolved the Kosovan parliament, the Albanians, with the help of a whole slew of legal, democratic measures, were once again able to prove that they are capable of seeking peaceful pathways even in the most serious crisis situations, and of sticking to them despite the great sacrifices involved.

In late September 1991, the Kosovan parliament held a referendum, in which 87% of the population participated, resulting in a 99% vote in favor of an independent state. On Oct. 19, 1991, on the basis of this referendum, Kosova was declared a sovereign, independent state, and a transitional government was formed. On May 24, 1992, the first multi-party elections for parliament and President of the Republic of Kosova took place. But on June 23, 1992, the Serbian police used armed vehicles to prevent the seating of the newly elected Kosovan parliament.

EIR: What happened in 1981?

Bukoshi: The unrest, the student demonstrations in Kosova in 1981, were a welcome opportunity for the Serbian secret

service KOS and the Serbian ideologues, the Serbian Academy of Sciences, and the Serbian [communist] Central Committee. The demonstrations were crushed brutally, people were killed, and there was a wave of mass arrests and persecutions.

In addition, another powerful weapon of modern civilization was employed: the mass media. It was an indescribable offensive, especially coming from *Nin* in Belgrade, the literary paper *Knjizevne Novine*, and *Politika*, which can only be compared with the [German Nazi daily] *Völkischer Beobachter*. The aim was to demonize the Albanians so as to provide a pretext for the onslaught against Kosova. One member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences wrote more or less the following in an article: "We Serbians have a holy mission: We must civilize the Albanians!" This fascistoid propaganda was distributed year-in, year-out, as a preparation for further measures being prepared by the Serbian Central Committee. Before the actual war, came the war of words. This propaganda—evening after evening on the television, and 10-20 articles each day in the newspapers—was not without result. The Serbian population was ideologically indoctrinated and manipulated.

EIR: Is there a Serbian center for psychological warfare?

Bukoshi: The spiritual mentors of this campaign were the Serbian Academy of Sciences, and also, secretly, the Serbian Orthodox Church. Within the church there was also a moderate wing, but over time the extremists gained the upper hand. And behind all that were the state structures—the Central Committee, military circles, certain experts, and the Serbian secret service KOS.

The nub of the problem was the fact that the state—Serbia—yearns to dominate the others and to enlarge its own territory. Underlying this is the medieval ideology of reviving the kingdom of Czar Dusan Lasar. Belgrade considers Kosova to be the cradle of the Serbs, as the land of the Amselfeld [site of a battle in 1389 in which the Turks defeated the Serbs; now called Gracanica—ed.]. They've made up a myth about it—a myth that goes counter to reality and which asserts the rights of those who died there 500 years ago over and above the rights of those living there now. This medieval ultra-nationalism went together perfectly with communism. Wherever Serbs live, should also be part of Serbia's territory.

Various factors came on top of this: Yugoslavia was located between two political blocs. From the West it obtained credit and currency; from the Soviet Union came weapons, but also its ideology and mentality, which was transferred to Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia became a laboratory experiment, a mini-Soviet Union. And Serbia knew how to make clever use of this situation.

EIR: But Yugoslavia was also a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Bukoshi: In my opinion, Yugoslavia's role in the Non-

Aligned Movement was a fictional construct. The Americans, and the West as a whole, needed a mediator like Yugoslavia which would enable them to achieve certain aims in the Third World, while at the same time it would serve as a buffer against the Soviet Union. Tito had played his role brilliantly—a classic double role in the exchange of information between East and West. At the time, Istanbul was the center of espionage activities, comparable to Casablanca in earlier times. In this way, he secured the West's support, in the form of credit, technology. The impression given was of a country open to the world, cosmopolitan. Of course, there was a planned economy, and Tito was a dictator; but he knew how to compensate for that. It was a big put-on.

Serbia has adopted much of Tito's system—its economic potential, its diplomatic relations. And they continue to play this card: Serbia, the stabilizing factor among the peoples of the Balkans, which must continue to exist, because otherwise the dangerous fundamentalists would take power.

Yet another tactic is the threat that behind Serbia, is probably the Russians. They could even threaten to use nuclear weapons, which there's now no problem purchasing on the international arms market. And then comes the blackmail: If Serbia goes under, Europe will go under with it. The well-known author Milan Komnenic formulated it just that way.

EIR: It is our view that the war was encouraged by the United States, France, and England, in order to destabilize Germany. We remember well that immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the press of these three countries warned about a "Fourth Reich." And now Karadzic and others are saying the same thing. What do you think about these geopolitical aims?

Bukoshi: The Serbs have always maintained that "pan-Germanism" in Europe must be halted, so that it does not expand all the way to the Bosphorus. In World War I, Serbia offered itself as a partner against pan-Germanism, and had the support of czarist Russia. Today it's the same opera, only the singers are new.

Germany is a serious country which is interested in peace in Europe. People are speculating with the "German mortgage" and the "old Nazis," and that is why German foreign policy is so completely paralyzed today. Germany does not dare do anything. In the parliament they are debating about their constitution [i.e., whether it allows German troops to participate in military actions abroad—ed.], but all this is basically only an alibi in order to do nothing. And yet all of Europe is at stake. Quite soon we could be calling it the "European powder-keg," instead of only the "Balkan powder-keg."

These developments are very dangerous. To put it in the language of the daily tabloids: It smells like World War III.

EIR: Do you believe that it will come to outside military action?

Bukoshi: Only when people realize that peace and security are endangered throughout Europe, will anything happen. As long as German or English television or French newspapers only scream about it, nothing will happen; hundreds could continue to die each day in Bosnia. It is, after all, part of man's nature to always take the path of least resistance.

EIR: Right, but there are also people who are putting up resistance and are fighting for the good. They're human beings, too.

Bukoshi: But that is only the one side; the other side is the system, the establishment. And the establishment has no sense of humor; you must follow specific rules. The foreign minister has to say this and that, and that's the end of it—all of Germany can go up in flames, but that's what he has to say. And then there is also the bureaucracy, a Babylon of international game-rules: Everything is programmed in. A functionary or a foreign minister who acted unconventionally would make himself a laughingstock. What about public opinion? Politics uses only that part of public opinion which it wants to.

We are living through a deep moral crisis. Somehow, the European has fallen down, and he must get back on his feet. This has long ceased to be just a question of policy, but of people's morality.

EIR: What is the greatest danger facing Kosova at this point?

Bukoshi: Perhaps a political solution will be found, though I don't believe that that will happen. But if Serbia actually leads aggression against Kosova, it will get really bad—perhaps worse than in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But Serbia can't kill 2 million people.

The Albanians have done everything, and have made great sacrifices, in order to avoid this catastrophe. But under the present circumstances, we Albanians are no longer an active factor; we don't hold any of the cards—we can only wait.

EIR: Do you believe that the Serbs will open a new front?

Bukoshi: I fear that Serbia will continue to intensify its repression in Serbia, and will then cook up a pretext in order to intervene militarily.

EIR: You have told the press that 40,000 Serbian troops are stationed in Kosova.

Bukoshi: We don't have access to accurate data. Right now it is probably more like 30,000. But according to our information, within a few hours Serbia could have 80,000 armed Serbs deployed into Kosova. That includes paramilitary units. All around just outside Kosova there are strong troop contingents which are very mobile and could come into Kosova within a few hours. They have artillery and bombers.

EIR: And the people from Serbian paramilitary gangster Arkan and Chetnik leader Vojislav Seselj are there.

Bukoshi: Yes, their units are provoking the population every day. Especially tragic are the Serbian civilians—Serbs who had lived side-by-side in tolerance with Albanians for centuries. There were never inter-ethnic conflicts between Albanians and Serbs. But now the Serbs are armed, indoctrinated, and manipulated by Serbian propaganda. Practically every Serbian household is an arms depot. In broad daylight you can see box after box of ammunition and arms from the regime. Or you can go to the police station to get weapons. We've documented this in detail. The civilian Serbs, worked up into a frenzy, are provoking the Albanians. The Serbian paramilitary units are doing the same, of course, along with the Serbian militia and the Serbian Army, which also includes Chetniks. But the most dangerous element is the civilian Serbs. The Serbian Army needs to wait for orders, and has a commander in Belgrade who must first give them; but at any moment, the civilian Serbs can provoke an incident which could set off an explosion.

EIR: Are you seeking to establish an independent state?

Bukoshi: Yes, we have declared Kosova as an independent state.

EIR: Allied with Albania?

Bukoshi: No. It would be unrealistic, dangerous, and politically unwise to call for joining with Albania at this time.

EIR: How do you evaluate the danger that the conflict will be internationalized?

Bukoshi: The problem of Kosova is already internationalized. The situation is extremely dangerous—on this, both intelligent and stupid politicians are at least in agreement. The population of Kosova, who are over 90% non-Serb, are living in a state of colonial oppression which is unique in Europe. The Albanians are completely oppressed—politically, socially, economically, educationally, culturally, and in their ability to speak out. A reign of state terror has been practiced, which has escalated in waves. Life has become unbearable for the Albanians. An estimated 20% of the Albanian population has already left Kosova. This is called "silent ethnic cleansing"—a euphemism for the expulsion of Albanians.

There will probably be further repression and mass expulsions of the Albanian people. This expulsion is already under way. Serbia has gone politically insane. In the Serbian mass media, public statements from the Serbian President and other leading Serbian politicians, parliamentarians, and intellectuals are repeated over and over, that the "holy soil" must be "cleansed" and must belong to Serbia alone. It will get very bad, unless effective action is taken "from the outside." People must not look on idly, as yet another European people is exterminated.