

# The 'New Colombia of Europe' Grows in Balkans

by Umberto Pascali

A large black spot, like ink on a piece of blotting paper, is spreading across the map of Europe. At this very moment, Kosovo, Albania, and a large part of the Balkans have been swallowed up, and tentacles are stretching out across the Black Sea, through the Caucasus, to merge with another such spot centered around Afghanistan. The "spot" does not respect national borders or ideological, ethnic, or religious differences, it just keeps spreading, bringing misery and destruction—on which it thrives. The "spot" is what was, until recently, labelled as the "black economy," or "illegal economy," or organized crime. In fact, it is a much more pervasive and totalitarian phenomenon. It represents the creation of a new perverse form of society: a modern form of feudal anarchy.

We are no longer facing societies penetrated by or hosting the parasitical "black economy"; we are facing societies dominated by it in every aspect. We are facing entities that, by virtue of this perverse system, are financially and otherwise more powerful than nation-states in the region. Such entities are not "passive"; on the contrary, they are extremely aggressive, and by their nature, expansionist. As in the metaphor of the she-wolf in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, "after eating, [they] are hungrier than before." Almost by their nature, they are based on, and at the same time spread a violent, artificial, fanatical ideology. And, on that basis, they secrete ferociously chauvinist, paramilitary formations, not much different in their belief structure, *mutatis mutandis*, from the youth recruited and trained by the Nazi or Fascist movements.

Of course, this kind of phenomenon is not new in history. It was widespread, for example, in Europe during the Thirty Years War, or earlier, during the collapse of the Roman Empire. The emergence of the nation-state rolled back feudal anarchy. The difference in its resurgence today, is that it is not spontaneous, but rather, it is sponsored and protected.

## 'National Security' Drug-Running

In general, the official justification for support for such groups, is that a particular group, even if devoted to criminal activities, "must" be supported, on behalf of some higher necessity, often "national security." This was the justification for the support by British and U.S. agencies to the Afghan mujahideen after the 1979 Soviet invasion of that country; as for that given to the Nicaraguan Contras. Both groups financed themselves, and a much bigger structure, with a huge

traffic in cocaine, in the case of the Contras, and opium/heroin in the case of the Afghanistan "freedom fighters." This was tolerated, or even aided, by Western agencies.

In Afghanistan, the production of opium under the present Taliban regime has continued to expand, and, as we shall see, presently the main axis controlling more than 80% of the heroin market in Europe (plus a growing slice of the heroin market in other areas, including the United States) is the Afghanistan-Kosovo axis. Or better, a Taliban-Kosovo Liberation Army axis.

One of the targets of the Taliban machine in Asia is the Russian province of Chechnya. Here, a fundamentalist "freedom fighter" organization, heavily financed and armed, has been trying to repeat the Afghan enterprise of the 1980s. The model is the same: "Western" support; terrorism, use of organized crime and drug trafficking, forced recruitment; and violent imposition of feudal loyalty on the population on behalf of a cult-like fundamentalism.

Besides Chechnya, basically all of the southern region of Russia and almost all of the former Soviet states have been affected by growing terrorist movements with an Islamic fundamentalist façade, all easily traceable to the Taliban and their puppet-masters.

On May 8, during the commemoration of Victory Day, Russian President Vladimir Putin did not hesitate to compare the danger of this growing terrorist machine feeding on drug trafficking, to Fascism and Nazism. He denounced the peculiar variety of armed radicalism unleashed in southern Russia, stating that "fascism is only one example of extreme radicalism. At the end of the 1930s, Europe and the U.S. could not unite to prevent the Hitlerian aggression, and they paid a heavy price."

Of course, this destabilizing strategy coincides to the millimeter with Zbigniew Brzezinski, Samuel Huntington, et al.'s "Arc of Crisis" policy, that advocates an explosion of the Muslim areas from South Asia to the Balkans, to be unleashed against the "north" in an artificially triggered "Clash of Civilizations." Leaders in many Muslim countries are disgusted at the support the Taliban receive from the West, including the extreme ease with which the regime is able to procure any weapons system imaginable, while a policy of *de facto* or *de jure* embargo, deprives many other Muslim countries from procuring even the minimum of technology.

## The Taliban-KLA Axis

On March 18, while his country was in the middle of fending off a ferocious and well-organized assault by the Kosovo Liberation Army aimed at provoking a bloody ethnic confrontation between Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, Macedonia's Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski launched a dramatic appeal to the nation. "It is obvious that the international community cannot run away from the fact that this time we are dealing with the creation of a new Taliban by the Western democracies within Europe," he said. In a moment

FIGURE 10

**'KLA-Taliban' Drug Route to Europe**



Sources: NNICC; DEA; UN; *EIR*.

The map shows an area that goes from Western Asia to the Balkans. Eighty percent of the heroin traffic destined to Europe — an estimated market value of \$400 billion — is now produced in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The opium from this area is mostly refined into heroin in Turkey, and then shipped through the Balkan Route into Central and Northern Europe and to Italy. The Balkan Route is now controlled by the so-called Albanian or Kosovo Mafia, which supports and is meshed politically with the Kosovo Liberation Army.

The dramatic increase of opium production in Afghanistan goes back to the 1980s, when British and U.S. agencies sponsored the Islamic mujahideen who later produced the Taliban, the fundamentalist power in Afghanistan now, and the Osama bin Laden terrorist groupings. The heroin is shipped from Kosovo/Albania to the north and west, through the Otranto Canal into Italy. The Balkan Route includes also weapons, “white slavery,” rackets involving refugees, etc. A powerful new mafia formation (the “Sacra Corona Unita”) has emerged over the last year in Apulia, Italy, as the receiving point of this criminal escalation of the Taliban-KLA axis.

This road of crime is a major obstacle to the New Silk Road of Eurasian Land-Bridge development.

of existential danger for his country, the Prime Minister put his finger in the wound. He indicated in clear terms what was behind the well-armed, well-trained, and well-financed gangs that had invaded his country, using as their base a Kosovo province solidly under the control of NATO’s Kosovo Forces (KFOR).

“It the same old story. Ten [twenty—ed.] years ago we were arming and equipping the worst elements of the mujahideen in Afghanistan — drug traffickers, arms smugglers, anti-American terrorists,” said Michael Levine, former U.S. counter-narcotic agent and one of the most decorated agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), in May 1999. “We later paid the price when the World Trade Center

was bombed, and we learned that some of those responsible had been trained by us. Now we’re doing the same thing with the KLA, which is tied in with every known Middle and Far Eastern drug cartel. Interpol, Europol, and nearly every European intelligence and counter-narcotics agency has files open on drug syndicates that lead right to the KLA, and right to Albanian gangs in this country.”

Levine explained that “my contacts within the DEA are, quite frankly, terrified, but there’s not much they can say without risking their job. The Albanian mob is a scary operation. In fact, the Mafia relied on Albanian hit-men to carry out a lot of their contracts. . . . And now, according to my sources in drug enforcement, they are politically protected.”

A good method to track down the cancerous growth of the “black spot” is to look at the traffic of illegal drugs, heroin in particular. Almost all of the heroin circulating in Europe comes through the Balkans. It is mostly produced from opium cultivated in the Taliban-dominated Afghanistan and refined in Turkey. It is distributed mostly by the so-called “Kosovo mafia,” whose military exorcism is known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) or the Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosoves (UCK), operating inside Serbia as the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja, and Bujanovac (UCPMB), and in Macedonia as the National Liberation Army (UCK).

Before we look in some detail at the nightmarish history of the KLA, let’s establish some basic points concerning Afghanistan and the Taliban. It makes the KLA exploit much clearer.

Who are the Taliban? The word *talib* means religious student in Arabic, for which *taliban* is the plural. These were originally young boys and teenagers escaping or forced out of Afghanistan (under Soviet domination) and set up in refugee camps just across the border in Pakistan. The youth were indoctrinated in the most brutal and fanatic way. They became, billions of U.S. and European dollars of weapons aid and years of warfare later, the leadership of the country, imposing one of the most obscurantist and repressive regimes in recent history. And now, Afghanistan has become a center for training and organizing terrorist groups to be unleashed against neighboring countries. It has consolidated its control over opium production, and thus, the Taliban enjoy an inexhaustible financial reserve to pursue their aims.

The Taliban have come up a long way on the ladder of international organized crime activity, and many observers believe that such an escalation in such a strategic and controlled area of the world could not have happened by chance. Many point out that the leader of the mujahideen who went to fight in Afghanistan, under the sponsorship of Western agencies, was Osama bin Laden—the scion of a prominent Saudi family, who is now the most wanted terrorist in history. (See also “Foreign-Backed Taliban Armies Threaten Central Asia,” *EIR*, Sept. 8, 2000.)

### **Bin Laden, Bush, Afghanistan, and Texas**

Reportedly, Osama’s half-brother, Sheikh Salem M. bin Laden, was in Texas at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980, in charge of his family’s business. The family is one of Saudi Arabia’s richest and most powerful, and owns one of the biggest construction companies in the Middle East. Was Salem involved in the most crucial part of the bin Laden Afghan operation, namely, the logistics and supplies? According to a PBS Frontline report, “There was also a political aspect to Salem bin Laden’s financial activities. . . . Salem bin Laden played a role in the U.S. operations in the Middle East and Central America during the ’80s.” In fact, Salem was gravitating to the highest political, financial, and economic circles in Texas, where he had arrived in 1973.

He also started his own air company, Bin Laden Aviation, which was incorporated in Austin.

In 1976, he nominated another expert in air transportation, James Bath, as his trustee. As Pete Brewton, Texas’ most informed investigative journalist, put it: “[In 1976] Bath got a huge break. He was named as a trustee for Sheikh Salem bin Laden of Saudi Arabia, a member of the family that owns the largest construction company in the Middle East. Bath’s job was to handle all of bin Laden’s North America investments and operations.”<sup>1</sup>

Bath was an aircraft broker in Houston, a businessman involved in several private air cargo companies. Apparently, the relation with Salem bin Laden coincided with an escalation of his activities. He bought several planes from Air America, the company reputed to be an intelligence front, and in 1979, became the partner of George W. Bush. Bush’s father, the future President, had only recently completed a brief stint in 1976-77, as director of the Central Intelligence Agency. In 1979, Bath became George W. Bush’s partner in an oil company called Arbusto (Spanish for “bush”).

As the *Progressive Review* explained in 1992, “In 1979, George W. Bush begins operations of his oil firm, Arbusto Energy. He assembles several dozen investors in a limited partnership including Dorothy Bush, Lewis Lehrman, William Draper, and James Bath, a Houston aircraft broker who bought several planes from Air America, a CIA front. Bath’s firm appears to be owned by Saudi investors. He also was a part-owner of a Houston’s Main Bank, along with a couple of BCCI [Bank of Credit and Commerce International, later prosecuted and shut down as a money-laundering bank] figures.”

Also interesting is another Texas account of this story by Jerry Urban in the *Houston Chronicle*, June 4, 1992. “The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network—known as FinCEN—and the FBI are reviewing accusations that entrepreneur James R. Bath guided money to Houston from Saudi investors who wanted to influence U.S. policy under the Reagan and Bush Administrations, sources close to the investigations say. . . .

“According to [Bath’s former real estate business associate Bill] White, Bath told him that he had assisted the CIA in a liaison role with Saudi Arabia since 1976. Bath has previously denied having worked for the CIA. . . . Bath received a 5% interest in the companies that own and operate Houston Gulf Airport after purchasing it on behalf of bin Laden in 1977.”

Salem bin Laden died in a 1988 plane crash. Bin Laden Aviation was immediately dissolved. The PBS Frontline web page, in its report entitled “Origins of the bin Laden Family,” said that “Salem bin Laden’s accidental death revived some speculation that he might have been ‘eliminated’ as an ‘embarrassing witness.’ ”

1. Pete Brewton, *The Mafia, CIA and George Bush—Corruption and Abuse of Power in the Nation’s Highest Office* (New York: S.P.I. Books, 1992).

## Opium War on Russia and West Europe

In the years of Salem bin Laden's business activities in Texas and Osama bin Laden's guerrilla activities in Afghanistan, the Afghan "operation" was not seen as embarrassing in the official world of Washington or London. Contrary to the dirty connection of the U.S. National Security Council's Lt. Col. Oliver North with the Nicaraguan Contras, the support for the Afghan "freedom fighters" was official, including substantial funds approved by the U.S. Senate. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the surrounding area paid a high price for this policy. The country was destroyed not only physically, but also culturally; now, also in the grip of a terrible three-year drought, it is comparable to Pol Pot's Cambodia.

An integral part of the policy was the increase in opium production. The drug addiction statistics available for Pakistan, explain the terrible crime committed there. Pakistan has the highest number of heroin addicts per capita in the world. In 1980, before the start of the Afghan operation, there was virtually no consumption of heroin in Pakistan.

In 1988, when the Soviet troops withdrew, Afghanistan and bordering areas in Pakistan were producing about 955 tons of opium per year, one-third of the world's production. A tremendous financial resource was placed in the hands of the Taliban. The opium, refined mostly in Turkey, was smuggled into Europe by the Turkish mafia, which dominated the so-called Balkan Route, previously given the misleading name of the "Bulgarian Connection." Heroin was coming into Europe through Yugoslavia, and part of it was consistently shipped into Italy from Albania and Montenegro.

But suddenly, a new organized-crime cartel emerged, the Albanian mafia, or better, the Kosovo mafia.

In 1996, the DEA, in a report prepared for the National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee, stressed: "Drug-trafficking organizations composed of ethnic Albanians from Serbia's Kosovo Province were considered to be second only to Turkish groups as the predominant heroin smugglers along the Balkan Route. These groups were particularly active in Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia. Kosovan traffickers were noted for their use of violence and for their involvement in international weapons trafficking. There is increasing evidence that ethnic criminals from the Balkans are engaged in criminal activities in the United States and some of that activity involves theft of licit pharmaceutical products for illicit street distribution."

In the section on Southwest Asia, the report noted: "Despite the country's political shift to Islamic fundamentalism, Afghanistan maintained its position as the second largest producer of opium in the world." The report pointed out that Afghanistan's opium production went through "six straight years of increases during which the crop more than tripled." It also admitted, that "according to the United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP), total opium production is much higher [than the DEA's figures]. Relying on an in-country survey of Afghan opium poppy farmers, the UNDCP esti-

mates a potential opium yield of 2,336 metric tons from 56,824 hectares of opium poppies."

In a euphemistic passage, the DEA's report noticed with disappointment that "despite early pronouncements on their aversion to drug cultivation and production, the Taliban appears to have reached an accommodation with opium poppy farmers." It was much more than an "accommodation," of course. From then on, the Taliban's opium invasion of Europe increased, and with it, the power and the criminal machine of the Kosovo mafia and the KLA skyrocketed as well.

Several intelligence reports have stated that bin Laden and his organization, al-Qaeda, have both trained and financially supported the KLA. Bin Laden has been connected to one of the most prominent "staging areas" for the KLA, before the terrorist organization took over Kosovo with the help of 78 days of air bombing and war by NATO in 1999. The "staging area" is the Albanian town of Tropoje.

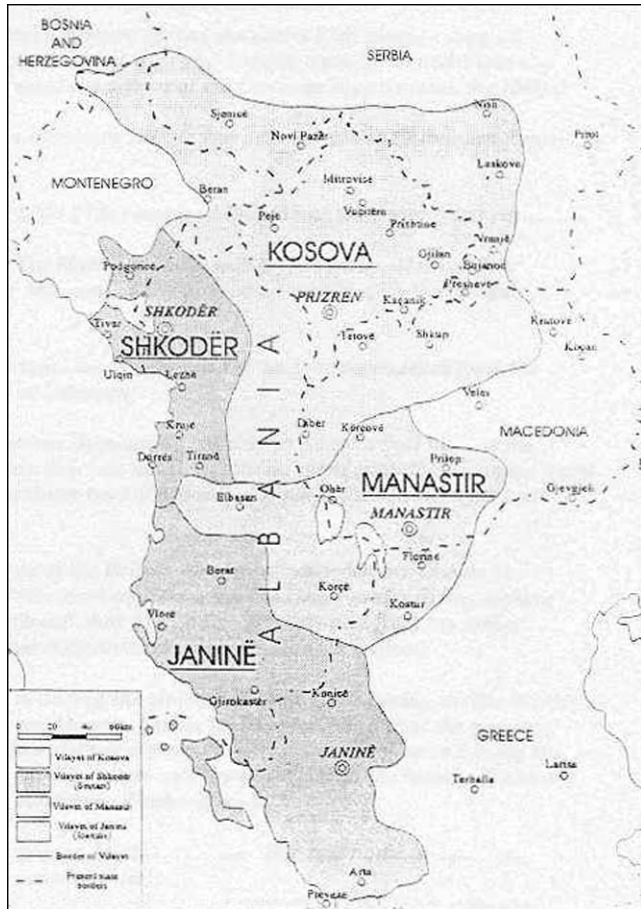
## KLA: From Hoxha to Albright

Though the KLA emerged in the international media only at the end of the 1990s, the organization goes back at least to 1982, when the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha—who controlled Albania with an iron fist and a cult-like radicalism from World War II to the early 1980s—was pushing with every means the Greater Albania project. The first modern sponsor of Greater Albania was Hoxha, who called for the union of all Albanians—including Albania, Kosovo, the southern part of Serbia, the northwestern part of Macedonia, the northern part of Greece—especially after the death of Yugoslavia's President Josip Broz Tito in 1980.

The Kosovo radical hard-core created international centers in Switzerland, Germany, and other European cities, in addition to Hoxha's Albania. The KLA's original core went through a large number of elaborated Marxist-Leninist party names, mixing up the idea of Greater Albania with radical Hoxha thought.

They were kept in a state of political suspended animation, with minor spurts of activity, until Bosnia's Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. Then they were activated to take advantage of the wave of resentment which spread through the Kosovars for having been "left out" of the Dayton agreement (the province had lost its autonomy in 1989, in a Serbian decision pushed through by then emerging leader Slobodan Milosevic).

Of course, there were a lot of political activities in Kosovo itself among the ethnic Albanians, but these had nothing to do with the KLA. The Kosovars formed a sort of self-declared autonomy under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova and his Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK); Rugova advocates nonviolence and was known as the "Gandhi of the Balkans." Still now in Kosovo, despite the KLA terror regime, Rugova has the support of the ethnic Albanians. However, the KLA usurped Rugova's leadership thanks to two elements: first, the unconditional support of U.S. and British leaders, in par-



*This map is taken from the website of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and demonstrates concretely that the territorial ambitions of “Greater Albania” are those of 1878, the year of the Berlin “great powers” conference which carved up the Balkans in the first place. It presents the borders of the four Albanian vilayets (administrative entities) during the Ottoman Empire. The dotted lines represent the borders of today’s sovereign nations, and of provinces such as Montenegro and Kosovo in the Balkan region. The darker shaded areas are, supposedly, Albania in 1878.*

*The KLA’s Greater Albania targets large chunks of Greece, Montenegro, Yugoslavia, more than half of Macedonia, the whole of Kosovo, and even a part of Bosnia. The KLA has chosen a map drawn in 1878. The Congress of Berlin of that year arbitrarily redrew the whole map of the Balkans on racist ethnic lines, creating a legacy that led to the instability—later known as “balkanization”—and successive wars in the area.*

*The KLA website choice demonstrates the close understanding between the mafia-sponsored gangs and the plan pushed by Lord David Owen and Sir Henry Kissinger, for a “new Berlin Congress” to redraw today’s Balkans map according to criteria of “ethnic purity.”*

particular then-U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (a protégé of George Soros and Zbigniew Brzezinski) and British Prime Minister Tony Blair; and second, the support of the Kosovo mafia.

At the 1999 negotiations supposedly to peacefully settle

the turmoil between Serbia and Kosovo, in Rambouillet, France, Albright imposed the young KLA political leader, Hashim Thaci, rumored to be the scion of an important family at the center of organized crime in Kosovo, as the top representative of the ethnic Albanians. Rugova was pushed brutally aside. In fact, the KLA had been engaged for a long time in a “manhunt” against Rugova and his leading officials, using intimidation, violence, even murder. The KLA had dedicated more time and resources to attacking ethnic Albanians around Rugova, than it did to opposing the Serbian regime. As we shall see, the same tactics are being repeated right now in Macedonia.

Rugova himself had expressed some perplexity when the KLA began escalating its terror activities, expressing his suspicion that the guerrillas could just be provocateurs, sponsored by Yugoslav President Milosevic, to provide the pretext to bring Kosovo again under control.

At the moment of the so-called peace negotiations in Rambouillet, a NATO assault on Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo had already been decided. The use of the KLA gangs inside Kosovo, especially to “triangulate” and guide the air bombings from the ground, had also been decided. The training of the KLA had been going on for a long time.

## The Colombia of Europe

The NATO air campaign increased the power of the Kosovo mafia dramatically, in terms of its criminal activities and its control over the population, by eliminating every obstacle, even the vestige of a narcotics police. The bombing campaign also fed the KLA’s predisposition to broaden its area of control, starting with Serbia and Macedonia.

One year after the bombing, when many think-tanks made their first thorough analysis, the situation looked appalling. NATO’s 78 days of bombings had included the use more than 1,000 aircraft to fly more than 38,000 “sorties” at a cost estimated in the tens of billions dollars. About 40,000 men had been deployed in Kosovo, while reconstruction had not taken place at all. But the KLA, under the NATO umbrella, became the absolute master of Kosovo, and the Kosovo mafia became one of the leading criminal organizations in the world. Another year later, at the beginning of 2001, the KLA was ready to launch its well-organized expansionist assault on two sovereign countries, Macedonia and Yugoslavia, using NATO-administered Kosovo as its base.

Under the cease-fire agreement of June 1999, the KLA was supposed to disarm and disband. The 5,000 KLA guerrillas were to join the unarmed, civil protection Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) under the leadership of the KLA military commander, Agim Ceku. Ceku is a former general in the Croatian army, reportedly trained by Military Professional Resources, Inc. (MPRI), a U.S. firm based in Alexandria, Virginia. MPRI includes on its board some of the highest-level retired U.S. military officers and is specialized in “pri-

## Rapprochement Among Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia

Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic was in Sarajevo with a trade delegation on June 12, for meetings with the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, to discuss economic cooperation, including protection of investments, a ban on dual taxation, and ways to regulate smooth money flow between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.

The day before, the Interior Ministers of Yugoslavia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska, which is part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, met in Belgrade, to discuss cooperation in the fight against organized crime and illegal immigration. At the meeting, a joint monitoring group was established, as had been agreed upon a month earlier.

On June 9, Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica and Croatian President Stipe Mesic, meeting at an informal summit of Eastern and Southeastern European heads of state in Verbania, Italy, issued a joint declaration, stressing that neither of them had any territorial ambitions in Bosnia, and that a stable Bosnia was in the best interest of both their countries. They want a complete normalization of bilateral relations, including guarantees of minority rights, return of refugees, and clarification of the fate of missing persons, Kostunica and Mesic declared. They also called for the free exchange of persons, goods and ideas.

No less important is the fact, that after being disrupted for ten years, the rail line connecting the Croatian capital, Zagreb, to the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, has been reopened, and a regular daily train connection established as of June 12. — *Alexander Hartmann*

vately” arming, training, and “advising” foreign governments and foreign groups, including the KLA (see box, page 23).

The KLA is better armed than ever, according to observers, and based on the findings of secret weapons caches in Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia. Evidence is also piling up that the structure of the KLA-KPC coincides with that of the Kosovo mafia. The Albright-sponsored Thaci continues to be the political leader of Kosovo, despite the fact that his political adversary, Ibrahim Rugova, can still count on the large majority of the Kosovo-Albanian votes. “Kosovo is set to become the cancer center of Europe, as Western Europe will soon discover,” stated Marko Nikovic, vice-president of the New York-based International Narcotic Enforcement Officers As-

sociation, speaking to the London *Guardian* March 13, 2000, one year after the NATO bombing campaign had officially installed the KLA in power in Kosovo.

“It is the hardest narcotics ring to crack, because it is all run by families,” said Nikovic, who estimated that as of March 2000, the Kosovo mafia was handling between four and a half and five tons of heroin a month, and growing fast, compared with two tons per month before NATO and the KLA took over the province. “It’s coming through easier and cheaper, and there is much more of it. The price is going down, and if this goes on, we are predicting a heroin boom in Western Europe, as there was in the early ’80s” — i.e., the boom due to the increase in opium production in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Afghanistan war. Sources in the Balkans have confirmed that the Kosovo mafia bosses, divided into four major families, are concentrating even more on Western European and U.S. markets. A high-level informant admitted, “There is nobody to stop them.”

“Kosovo is the Colombia of Europe,” Nikovic explained. “When Serb police [during the ruthless retaliation for the KLA assassination of Yugoslav police officers, which led to the NATO intervention] were burning houses in Kosovo, they were finding heroin stuffed in the roof. As far as I know there has not been a single report in the last year of KFOR seizing heroin. You have an entire country without a police force that knows what is going on. Everything is worked out on the basis of the family or clan structure—their diaspora have been in Turkey and Germany since Tito’s purges, so the whole route is set up. Now they have found the one country between Asia and Europe that is not a member of Interpol.”

### NATO Troops Do Not Police

Under the NATO protectorate, Kosovo organized-crime activities have been left *officially* undisturbed for a long time. “Generals do not want to turn their troops into cops. . . . They don’t want their troops to get shot pursuing black marketeers,” a top NATO official in the Brussels headquarters told a reporter.

“The KLA is indebted to Balkan drug organizations that helped funnel both cash and arms to the guerrillas before and after the conflict,” according to a report published by the U.S.-based *Stratfor Global Intelligence* on March 3, 2000, entitled “Kosovo: One Year Later.” “Kosovo is the heart of a heroin trafficking route that runs from Afghanistan through Turkey and the Balkans and into Western Europe. . . . The KLA must now pay back the organized crime elements. This would in turn create a surge in heroin traffic in the coming months, just as it did following the NATO occupation of Bosnia in the mid-1990s. . . . The route connecting the Taliban-run opium fields of Afghanistan to Western Europe’s heroin market is dominated by the Kosovo Albanians; this ‘Balkan Route’ supplied 80% of Europe’s heroin. The U.S. government has been—and likely continues to be—well aware of the heroin

trade coming through Kosovo, as well as the KLA connection. . . . For the KLA, the Balkan route is not only a way to ship heroin to Europe, but it has also acted as a conduit for weapons filtering into the war-torn Balkans.”

According to a NATO report which surfaced in June 1999, after the end of the bombings, “the smugglers” either trade drugs directly for weapons or buy weapons with drug earnings in Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Montenegro, Switzerland, or Turkey. The arsenal of weapons smuggled into Kosovo has included: anti-aircraft missiles, assault rifles, sniper rifles, mortars, grenade launchers, anti-personnel mines, and infrared night vision gear.

### **More Powerful Than a State**

On Feb. 1, 1995, the British *Jane's Intelligence Review*, considered very close to intelligence circles, wrote an analysis called “The Balkan Medellín,” which described a scenario in which Macedonia would become the target of “Albanian narco-terrorism,” especially using the “Albanian-dominated region of western Macedonia,” an area dominated by drug trafficking that makes it much “richer” than the rest of Macedonia.

In fact, the *Jane's* report was pointing to the well-known fact that the border area between Kosovo, Albania, Serbia proper, and Macedonia has been, at least since the 1970s, an important center for illegal activities. Of course, until the collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s there was no border between Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia proper. Albania was a rigidly isolated country; however there were still many relations and exchanges between Albania and the Albanian community in Kosovo. This situation was exploited fully by the Albanian mafia, and Kosovo became an area of choice, because of the ease of running traffic through this province. It was in this cross-border area—including southern Serbia, western Macedonia, and northern Albania, with Kosovo at its center—where the illegal smuggling had established a well-organized logistical apparatus, that the KLA emerged. This trans-border area is also the region that is supposed to constitute “Greater Albania.”

“The Albanian-dominated region of Western Macedonia accounts for a disproportionate share of Macedonia’s shrinking GDP,” reads the 1995 *Jane's* report. “This situation has strengthened Albanophobic sentiments among the ethnic Macedonian majority, especially as a great deal of revenue is thought to derive from Albanian narco-terrorism as well as associated gun-running and cross-border smuggling to and from Albania, Bulgaria and the Kosovo province of Serbia. This rising Albanian economic power is helping to turn the Balkans into a hub of criminality. . . . [The Albanian mafia is] closely associated to the powerful Sicilian mafia. If left unchecked, this growing Albanian narco-terrorism could lead to a Colombian syndrome in the Southern Balkans, or the emergence of a situation in which the Albanian mafia becomes powerful enough to control one or more states in the

region. In practical terms this will involve Albania or Macedonia or both. Politically, this is been done by channeling growing foreign-exchange profits from narco-terrorism into local governments and political parties.”

In other words, the 1995 British report was presenting the scenario that was later on actually implemented by the KLA. As of this writing, in June 2001, what is at stake in the ongoing KLA assault on Macedonia is whether the KLA mafia has become powerful enough to “break away” from its high-level sponsors, and whether it is ready to take control of Macedonia, after having taken over large part of Albania and the totality of Kosovo.

Concerning the Sicilian mafia. It is important to note that a whole new mafia branch has developed with a dramatic accumulation of power, as a direct consequence of the Albanian mafia escalation. It is the mafia based in Apulia, just across the Otranto Canal from Albania. It calls itself *Sacra Corona Unità* (Holy United Crown).

Confirming the existence of an integrated organized-crime network across the Yugoslavia-Albania borders, later used to develop the KLA structure, was a June 1994 report by The Geopolitical Drug Dispatch. The Dispatch, a French center for research and analysis on drug traffic that advises governments, in a report titled “Guns and Ammo for ‘Greater Albania,’ ” pointed out: “Heroin shipment and marketing networks are taking root among ethnic Albanian communities in Albania, Macedonia and the Kosovo province of Serbia, in order to finance large purchases of weapons destined not only for the current conflict in Bosnia, but also for the brewing war in Kosovo. Hence on May 18, as part of a ten-month-old operation code-named ‘Macedonia,’ the Italian police dismantled a major Italian-Macedonian network and seized 40 kilograms of heroin produced in Turkey and shipped to Italy via the Balkans.

“In recent months,” the report continues, “significant quantities of heroin have been seized in Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Greece, from traffickers who usually hail from Pristina (the Kosovo capital), Skopje (capital of Macedonia) or Skorda (a large town in Northern Albania).”

### **Target: Macedonia**

Nikola Dimitrov, the National Security adviser of Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski, told the March 21, 2001 *Newsweek* that “Kosovo has become the combined Afghanistan and Colombia of the Balkans. There is no rule of law, no ethnic tolerance, no human rights. Not even an economy, except foreign aid and organized crime.” His interviewer, not a Macedonian sympathizer, concluded: “A year ago, that sweeping denunciation would have been easy to dismiss as Slav rhetoric. Now it has begun to sound plausible.”

The first KLA invasion of Macedonia from Kosovo at the beginning of 2001, had produced a political shock in the country’s leadership, especially when their strong protest to NATO was met with evasive statements by the Secretary





*At a rally in Washington, D.C. of Macedonians living in the United States, leader Nestor Oginar rallied his compatriots to fight the civil war scenario for his country, by organizing for the European Land-Bridge and New Bretton Woods alternative of LaRouche.*

General, Lord George Robertson, and the other military leaders responsible for Kosovo. Confronted with the dramatic emergency appeals of the Macedonians, the NATO officials repeatedly replied that, first, they were trying to seal the borders, but they really did not see any invasion; second, that Macedonia should react in a peaceful way and try to negotiate with the aggressors; and third, the invasion looked like an internal uprising against the government, and had little to do with outside factors.

The attitude of Lord Robertson and his co-thinkers was even more insulting because it was known in many quarters, that Tanusevci, the Macedonian village just across the Kosovo border, which the KLA had been occupying for weeks, was one of the “secret” weapons depots that the KLA had already built up at the time of the NATO bombing of Kosovo. Reportedly the Macedonian authorities had been asked to close one or both eyes, because this operation concerned the war against the Serbs and those weapons were never to be used against Macedonia.

To illustrate how the military and the criminal sides of the operation are connected, it is enough to point out that the same, very high mountain village of Tanusevci had been for many years one of the smuggling centers to and from Kosovo.

In other words, it had been one of the bases of operation for the Kosovo mafia. According to observers, the Kosovo mafia’s territorial and logistical structures correspond almost identically to the KLA logistical structure on the ground.

Furthermore, the Macedonian authorities knew precisely who the man in charge was for the Tanusevci operation: Xhavit Hasani, an ethnic Albanian born in Tanusevci, who is a KLA member wanted in Macedonia for shooting a policeman. He was also arrested in Kosovo by the KFOR troops following the murder of Serb civilians.

On March 18, Prime Minister Georgievski broke the spell that had paralyzed the country after the Tanusevci invasion and made his dramatic denunciation of Western support for the “Taliban of Europe.”

In that televised appeal to the nation, the Prime Minister said also: “It is not a secret for us that this aggression has been prepared, organized, and conducted with logistics support of parties and structures from Macedonia’s northern neighbor. We refer to the political structure from Kosovo. We cannot agree with some assessments that developments in Macedonia are not a result of a spillover of the Kosovo crisis, an aggression from Kosovo against Macedonia. The reason [for this assessment] is very simple: if the international community admits that there is an aggression from Kosovo, then its Kosovo policy for the last two years has been wrong.”

On March 23, at the summit of the European Union heads of state in Stockholm, Russia President Vladimir Putin gave his support to his Macedonian counterpart, Boris Trajkovski. The KLA attack must be faced “in a robust manner,” said Putin, comparing the Macedonian situation to Chechnya. When, in 1996, Russia withdrew its troops from Chechnya, the rebels attacked Dagestan. “Had we not taken adequate measures of reaction, we would have faced much wider problems these days,” he said. If unchecked, the KLA terrorism “will create the conditions for shaking Europe in its very heart.”

More recently, on May 24, Macedonia began to react to the second KLA “shock,” the invasion of a group of villages just north of Skopje in the region of Kumanovo. The terrorists used several thousand civilians as “human shields.” And what is Kumanovo? One of the main centers for the Kosovo mafia; an area where the mob traditionally enjoys a high level of social control. Reportedly the area has hosted one of the most modern heroin-processing facilities.

### **The IMF and the Mafia**

To conclude this overview, it is necessary to emphasize one point: Though the KLA operation had been prepared for many years, and, as we see, its connections are international, the trigger element was represented by the financial, political, and social collapse of Albania in 1997, following the explosion of the infamous financial pyramid scheme. Many Albanians who were told to invest all they had in these cancerous speculation schemes — presented as the epitome of the “free



market” — had lost everything in a matter of days.

It was a gigantic looting operation of the poorest country in Europe. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had provided the *coup de grâce* when it demanded that the Albanian government and Parliament not pass an already finalized bill, requiring a “safety” deposit, before engaging in “pyramid” speculation. The crash was mercilessly destructive.

Reportedly, the loot ended up in the safe of some very prestigious Western banks. The consequence was an explosive rebellion, the collapse of the state, and the criminalization of a high percentage of the population. Many Albanians became, from one day to the next, refugees, black marketeers, cannon fodder for the mafia clans, ready to do everything to survive. The organized-crime groups (with close links with the Italian Mafia) rapidly took over the pieces and fed on the misery and destruction of a whole country.

So, nobody should pretend to be surprised at the expansion of the organized-crime activities, at the sight of the escalation of prostitution, smuggling, trading in refugees, at the sight of the mass of human beings degraded and sold, as in the darkest days of feudalism. The cause of that degradation is to be found in those “foreign investors” and those “financial institutions.”

One of the consequences of the resulting uprising was the looting of the Albanian armories. A UN study reveals that at least 200,000 Kalashnikov automatic assault weapons from Albania ended up in the KLA arsenals. A large number of them ended up in the black market, sold or exchanged for drugs. At that point, in the opinion of many observers, the situation became irreversible.

But the 1997 explosion had deeper roots. The “free-market” reforms imposed on Albania in 1992 by the IMF and the World Bank had weakened its economic system. It is symptomatic that the financial pyramid schemes, a legalized form of gambling, were strongly “suggested” by the foreign creditors, which grew like mushrooms following the “loan-shark” policy of the IMF. After having devoured the Albanian assets privatized by the government under the IMF’s prod, they demanded more.

In Albania and in Kosovo, many youth and teenagers, surrounded by an upside-down world dominated by fear, rage, and an abysmal injustice, were easy prey of the KLA recruiting. From a few hundred men, the KLA became rapidly an army.

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## In Belgrade, a Way Out of Bloody Warfare

by Elke Fimmen

On June 7-8, a German-French delegation of the Schiller Institute was invited to Belgrade and Novi Sad, Serbia, by the Institute for Economic Sciences. Jacques Cheminade of France and Elke Fimmen of Germany, spoke at a seminar on the theme, “The World Financial System in the process of Globalization — Is There Only One Solution?” chaired by the director of the economics institute, Prof. Mile Jovic.

Thirty guests, including university professors, government representatives and parliamentarians, as well as several press and institutions, attended the seminar. The following day, a conference took place, under the aegis of the Belgrade institute, together with the university’s Department of Technical Sciences in Novi Sad. Radio Belgrade, which is broadcast nationally, aired an interview with Cheminade and Fimmen.

Great interest was shown, not only in their detailed analysis of the systemic collapse of the world financial system, and the economic situation of the United States, but also in the strategic alternative proposed by Lyndon LaRouche, in the New Bretton Woods system and the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Yugoslavia, which joined the Bretton Woods agreements in 1948, had played an important role in the Non-Aligned Movement, under Josip Broz Tito. And, historically, an important alliance with countries like India and China, as well as, of course, Russia, has grown up.

What attracted enormous attention, on the part of the participants in the seminars, was the Schiller Institute’s manner of dealing with the devastating International Monetary Fund (IMF) shock therapy, privatization, and deregulation policies, and counterposing to them, the reconstruction and development of the real economy, particularly around infrastructure. Equally interesting, was the financial instruments required for this, in terms of credit creation, reflecting the historical precedents of Franklin Deland Roosevelt’s New Deal, Charles de Gaulle’s dirigistic economic planning, or the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (Credit Bank for Reconstruction).

### **No Reconstruction, Except for the Mafia**

The economic condition of the country is devastating: With the hyperinflation of 1992-93 and the economic embargo during the war against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegov-