

## NATO Reaches Nadir: Protects Ethnic War in Macedonia

by Umberto Pascali

One of the most cherished religious and artistic treasures of Macedonia and the whole Balkan region, the 13th-Century Monastery of St. Athanasia (Sveti Atanasi), was bombed and demolished on Aug. 21. The Monastery, located in Lesok near the martyred city of Tetovo, had fallen into the hands of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) narco-terrorist gangs, as has a large area immediately north of the capital, Skopje. In the days following, it was discovered that another Macedonian Orthodox treasure, the Ninth-Century Church of St. George, just at the outskirts of Tetovo, had been destroyed. Immediately after the blast, the ethnic cleansing of the ethnic Macedonians escalated. In the North of a country with 2 million people, it is calculated that 100,000 refugees have fled.

The shock for the Macedonians, and in fact for any rational citizen, was that even more than the massacres committed by the KLA, the destruction of the monastery gave Macedonians a sense that they were facing forces determined to commit ethnic cleansing. Macedonian officials again compared the KLA to the Taliban of Afghanistan, not only for the heroin connection between the two, but also for their propensity to destroy the revered religious monuments of the “enemy.” What’s more, the crime was conducted under the eyes of NATO, just at the end of the day in which NATO deployed the vanguard of its British-led 3,500-strong “Operation Essential Harvest” mission.

On Aug. 20, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (Saceur), Gen. Joseph Ralston, visited Macedonia, amid uncontrollable enthusiasm from the KLA gangs. Ralston had stated that in his opinion, the situation was under control, and the KLA was behaving, so the deployment was to take place. Capt. Gareth Hicks, the British Army liaison officer from the 16th Air Assault Brigade—the special forces military body that led the operation—visited the top KLA leaders that day,

assembled in the village of Nikustak. Reportedly they assured him that NATO had nothing to fear; they would “protect” it! As the *Guardian* of London reported, the attitude of the narco-terrorists was triumphalist. “For the [KLA] it was a day to savour. The Macedonians were routed; NATO was on its way. They had pulled it off. They had won.”

It was at the end of the KLA day of “victory” that the monastery was destroyed. The KLA brushed the bombing off, saying that it was committed by people “outside” their jurisdiction. And NATO diplomatic officials told reporters the same thing: Indeed, it was an act committed by those who “do not want the NATO deployment, do not want peace.” One NATO official stressed his surprise, because “never before” had the KLA hit any religious symbol. But in fact, the KLA had attacked, defaced, and bombed several churches previously, and had taken over Macedonian Christian Orthodox monasteries, using them as headquarters and arsenals. The narco-guerrillas, based in Kosovo under NATO jurisdiction, have the known habit of scribbling their organizational initials on ancient precious frescoes.

### ‘We Will Draw From Our Suffering’

“If some psychological warfare center would have studied a way to hit our religious and national identity, to undermine our spirit of moral resistance, I don’t think they could have done better than this,” an informed Macedonian source told *EIR*. In fact the Macedonian population felt increasingly abandoned, after the government in Skopje was not able to react to the terrible act, committed in what had just become “NATO’s area.”

On the contrary, the Defense Ministry announced that all armed forces and police were being withdrawn from the area de facto occupied by the KLA. The official reason? “In order to create the necessary conditions to launch [NATO’s] Opera-

tion Essential Harvest.” As a further step to increase “confidence-building,” the Macedonian government decided to avoid any flight of its fighter planes and gunship helicopters over the “frontline areas.” This “no-fly zone” was, incredibly, a self-imposed limitation of sovereignty. The northern part of the country was left to NATO and the KLA. It seems that this was an unspoken condition imposed on the government.

Prof. Nestor Oginar, a leader of the Macedonian diaspora in North America, told *EIR*, “They want to destroy history; they want to strike at our Macedonian Christian Orthodox soul. They want the Macedonians to react in some uncontrolled way to justify an increased presence of NATO, the partition of our country, the end of our national sovereignty. But despite our pain, we are not going to do it. *They want to push us into a religious war*, into a clash of civilizations. It will not happen! We will not fall prey of irrational rage or hysteria as the puppet masters of the KLA want. We will draw from our suffering a greater strength and a greater virtue.”

“When a work of art is savagely destroyed, it is not just a loss for us,” said Oginar, “it is a loss for the many generations before us who contributed to leave us this testimony of greatness and beauty; and it is a loss for future generations. . . . This is most certainly the nadir of NATO, and I urge the world to wake up and ask NATO to stop their obnoxious posturing, as the guardian of peace in the Balkans.” He appealed to Macedonians, “We have to redouble our efforts. We have to keep a spirit of resistance. . . . There is a greater law, there is a divine law; that law will give the strength to resist and overcome these horrors.”

## Fight Inside NATO

That the KLA is attacking Macedonia from within Kosovo, where it is under NATO’s wing, is so obvious as to have now become a commonplace of international media reports. Given the powerful drug-running mafias involved in the KLA (see *EIR*, June 22, 2001), NATO is, in effect, protecting the expansion of the heroin trade into Europe. As Lyndon LaRouche has stated, today’s NATO has little to do with the NATO of the Cold War. It is dominated by an Anglo-American group that is determined to realize the Armageddon-style strategy of Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel Huntington, the “clash of civilizations.”

Some NATO-member countries are showing increased signs of resistance to this insanity. According to observers, the many discussions held behind closed doors at NATO headquarters in Brussels, are a symptom of growing uneasiness with the Brzezinski doctrine. Another, was the London *Times* Aug. 22 commentary by Simon Jenkins, denouncing the KLA as “a NATO puppet” and Essential Harvest as “the craziest mission British soldiers ever endured at the hand of politicians.”

“Political leaders of many countries know how suicidal this support for the KLA can be,” said another Balkan observer. “The whole NATO apparatus, with its mystique, is much more fragile than people think.”



*Frescoes in the nave of Macedonia’s 750-year-old St. Clement’s Church. Another Orthodox Christian church from the same 13th Century, St. Athanasia in the city of Lesok, was bombed and destroyed by the KLA on Aug. 21, after NATO assumed “control” of the area.*

Essential Harvest is supposed to collect weapons from the KLA in 15 collection centers. NATO’s Lord Robertson has already decreed that the Macedonian government disappear from the areas of “NATO competence.” However, there is no guarantee (actually the opposite) that the KLA will deliver all its weapons. KLA spokesmen have declared they have an arsenal of 2,000 weapons, while the estimates of intelligence agencies range to 100,000! Furthermore, the KLA is part of the broader apparatus of the Albanian Mafia, dealing with weapons traffic estimated in the billions of dollars. In the purely theoretical case where the KLA were to give up its weapons, they could rearm from their base in Kosovo in days.

Macedonia’s government is under pressure from NATO, U.S., and British organizations, to request a longer NATO presence to “protect” Macedonia from the KLA. NATO’s mandate is 30 days, but can be prolonged at Skopje’s “request.” NATO’s International Crisis Group is publicly pressing this. “I read in the *Washington Post* that \$250,000 is being pumped from the U.S. to Macedonia to finance a campaign, and ‘convince’ political representatives and the public to support the constitutional changes in the framework agreement, as condition for NATO to deploy,” says Emilija Geleva, a government adviser. “I consider this an obvious interference in our domestic affairs. Imagine if the Russian government would finance a similar campaign in the U.S.! We had our problems, normal problems, but they escalated. . . only because of the Kosovo disaster.”