

'Bloody Sunday' Jackson wants ground forces now

by Umberto Pascali

Recently, a popular radio station in Macedonia dedicated a song to Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Jackson, the head of the NATO Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) who has been stationed in the Macedonian capital, Skopje, since February, waiting to be deployed in Kosovo. The song was "Sunday, Bloody Sunday." It commemorated the massacre in Northern Ireland committed by Her Majesty's 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment on Sunday, Jan. 30, 1972. On that day, the men of the Special Force battalion fired upon an Irish republican demonstration, killing 14 people.

This was not just a horrible massacre of unarmed people; in the broader scheme of things, it sparked a devastating series of reactions and counteractions, bringing Northern Ireland back to the *status quo ante* of violence upon violence. And, this strengthened the British military presence and intervention — what many Irish call, by direct experience, *occupation*, in the area. It took many years, in fact, until the recent efforts sponsored by President Clinton, to pull Northern Ireland away from the unending spiral of violence that inflamed both the Catholic and the Protestant communities.

At the same time as "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" hit the airwaves, the May 14 issue of the Macedonian weekly *Fokus* published a report informing their readers in neighboring Kosovo of the details of Sir Michael's official record. On Jan. 30, 1972, Jackson, at that time a captain, was the deputy commander of the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment. The article also drew a parallel between the violence in Northern Ireland and the present situation in Macedonia, noting in particular the feared potential for violence between the Albanian community and other Macedonian ethnic communities. Such a potential explosion, sparked by small groups undertaking provocative "actions" in order to get a "reaction," is believed by observers to be what could trigger a social explosion in Macedonia, which could lead to fracturing the country and to an attendant spiral of war. After all, they note, the first Balkan war started with the partition of Macedonia.

"The next piece of information," *Fokus* wrote, "is very important for both the Macedonians and the Albanians. . . . It is reported that the Commander of the NATO troops in Macedonia, besides being an expert in psychological warfare and having an intelligence background, has a very specific experience in his career." After describing the events of "Bloody Sunday," the weekly stressed: "After that incident, the relations between Catholics and Protestants grew worse

and worse. . . . Two years afterward, Captain Jackson was promoted to . . . commander of all British troops in Northern Ireland." Jackson started his military career at age 19 in the Intelligence Corps, and in 1995 and 1996 commanded the UN troops in Bosnia, when Bosnia became a de facto NATO protectorate.

Cheerleader for ground war

The story's publication — whose details are public, but were not known by most Macedonians — coincided with a renewed campaign by Jackson to solicit a NATO ground intervention in Kosovo, of course, under his command. Jackson warned, as reported by the European media, that the NATO ground operation must be "prepared" within the first part of June, or it would be too late to bring back the Kosovar refugees before the October snowfall.

Clearly the timetable supplied by Jackson is fraudulent, because it is impossible to foresee a reconstruction of Kosovo — now destroyed by the Serbian forces and by three months of unrelenting NATO bombings on infrastructure, including communications systems, roads, bridges, and energy supplies, and cities and towns — unless it is begun *immediately*. But, Jackson's "warning" corresponded with the timetable announced by one of his greatest admirers, British Prime Minister Tony Blair. At the end of the NATO Washington summit, after the resounding defeat of his demand that NATO decide for deployment of ground troops, Blair had made an revealing statement. Barely hiding his animosity toward President Clinton, Blair shrugged that "it does not matter anyway," because months of air bombings were needed before being prepared to launch ground troops. The deadline for ground troops was *June*.

In the first weeks of May, the dogs of ground-war came out with another assault, especially the U.S.-based British media machine. Zbigniew Brzezinski and his group in the Balkan Action Council (BAC) went on all-out campaign against Clinton and whoever else wanted to stop a military invasion, not only of Kosovo, but also of Serbia itself. For example, James Hooper, the Executive Editor of the BAC, published an commentary in the Reverend Moon-owned *Washington Times*, on April 29, headlined, "Calling for President Blair." It reads: "How can we get the leadership it will take to turn the air campaign into a winning ground war? The simplest way is to revoke the Declaration of Independence and reunite with Britain to avail ourselves of Tony Blair's firm and principled leadership."

The pressure apparently led to the NATO decision to prepare 50,000 ground troops, allegedly for policing Kosovo after an agreement. London is sending to Jackson three military units that can hardly be qualified as "peacekeepers." The 1st Royal Irish Regiment (experience in Northern Ireland), the 1st Royal Gurkha Rifles (generally considered ruthless), and the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment, Sir Michael's old regiment of "Bloody Sunday" infamy.