

THE KOSOVO LIBERATION ARMY

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INTRODUCTION

The Kosovo Liberation Army must rank as one of the most successful guerrilla movements in modern history. In the nineteen months following its first public appearance, the KLA (or UCK in its Albanian acronym) had all but fulfilled its aims – having managed to subcontract the world's most powerful military alliance to do most of its fighting for it. After all, it hardly matters how the Serbs were ejected from Kosovo, what matters is that they have been – and if it had not been for the existence of the KLA they would still be there.

Barely one year after the end of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and its deployment of troops in what remains in law, if not in fact, Serbia's southern province, it is possible to begin to tease out the main lines of the history of the KLA. However, it is also clear that, at this juncture, what we have is simply a 'first draft of history'.

What is most curious about the story of the KLA, is just how haphazard much of it is. It rose to prominence, not only thanks to its

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own efforts but, perhaps even more so, thanks to the political and military errors of others. That is to say, had the Serbian leadership and the international community both handled the Kosovo issue differently over the last decade, then the KLA might never have come into existence, let alone seized the initiative from the province's established Albanian leadership, which believed that independence for Kosovo could be won by gradual and non-violent tactics.

ORIGINS

The roots of the KLA can be traced to Kosovo's years of political upheaval in the early 1980s, which centred on Pristina University. These were, of course, the years of substantial Albanian political autonomy in Kosovo, which were dominated by the ethnic Albanian majority of 80 percent of a population of up to two million.

According to the Yugoslav constitution of 1974, Kosovo, like Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina, had real autonomy within Serbia, which itself was one of the six republics of the old Yugoslavia. Kosovo had always been recognised as a special case in post-1945 Yugoslavia and had always had, officially at least, an autonomous status, albeit one which was, in the early years, more declaratory than real. The reason for this – apart from the previously centralising tendencies of communism, was that the issue of Kosovo was particularly sensitive in Yugoslavia. It was sacred in terms of Serbian history, full of rich churches and monasteries, but now overwhelmingly populated by Albanians who resented their incorporation into, as its name suggested, the state of the south Slavs.

Throughout the post-1945 period, there were two streams of thought amongst Kosovo Albanians. Dominant however was the Titoist stream, which recognised the political reality of Kosovo's situation within Yugoslavia and reckoned it was better to work within the state recreated by Josip Broz Tito during the Second

The Kosovo Liberation Army

World War. A minority however looked to Albania, run in the post-war years by the Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha. They dreamed of the day when Albania and Kosovo would one day be united in one country. Of course, they recognised that this was something for the future, but they, like many others too, felt that Kosovo's Albanian leadership in the post-1974 years should not rest content with Kosovo's status as an autonomous province. Specifically they wanted republican status for the province, because, at least in theory, Yugoslav republics, as opposed to Serbia's two autonomous provinces, had the right to secede.

Amongst those who agitated for republican status during the 1980s were the so-called Marxist-Leninist groups, also known as the Enverists, after Enver Hoxha. Daut Dauti, the former London correspondent for the Pristina magazine, *Zeri*, sums up the Enverists succinctly: "The Marxist-Leninists were for an armed uprising in the 1980s. They had no idea what Enverism was – they just wanted to get rid of the Serbs."

The university centred demonstrations of 1981 were put down and many of its Enverist organisers were jailed. In the years that followed, as they were gradually released, many of them went abroad. Bardhyl Mahmuti, who was jailed for seven years for telling Macedonian television that he wanted a Kosovo Republic and subsequently went into exile in Switzerland says of Enverism: "It was not a question of ideology, rather Leninist theory on clandestine organisations." Not to mention the fact that making the right revolutionary noises secured at least a little help and money from Tirana.

Most Kosovo Albanians sympathised with calls for a republic but, during the eighties, the idea of an armed uprising seemed ridiculous, especially as the Serbs were not even running the autonomous province. Still, on the fringe of Kosovo Albanian politics,

there were those who plotted and conspired, and even a handful who went to the hills to train for war. On 17 January 1982, three of Kosovo's militant activists were assassinated in Germany. They were the brothers Jusuf and Bardhosh Gervalla and the journalist Kadri Zeka. For the tiny group that espoused the armed uprising, it was the defining moment of their lives, especially as they assumed that the killings had been ordered by the Yugoslav secret services.

Following the assassinations, those who had been close to the Gervallas and to Zeka founded their own party. It was called the LPRK, or Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo. Inside the province, it operated with a secret cell structure, members being called upon to help produce and distribute radical leaflets.

Throughout the 1980s, the LPRK remained a marginal, extremist and underground organisation. In terms of the history of the KLA however a turning point came in 1989 when Slobodan Milosevic, then president of Serbia, using the sensitive issue of the Kosovo Serbs, who felt persecuted by the province's Albanians, abolished Kosovo's autonomy. Demonstrations again shook the province and, just as 1981 had been the formative moment for one generation, the renewed unrest forged the political outlook of new crop of young activists, including, the then 19-year-old Hashim Thaci.

Despite the unrest, the majority of Kosovo Albanians continued to regard the LPRK and its calls for a violent uprising against Serbia and the Yugoslav state as ridiculous. This was certainly the case when, following the ending of communist one party rule in Serbia in 1989, Kosovo's political vacuum was filled by the new Democratic League of Kosovo, the LDK. It was led by Ibrahim Rugova, an academic who preached non-violence and wore a trademark silk scarf. Believing that the tide of history was turning their way many members of the LPRK and other underground groups loosely known as the 'the movement' left their secret

The Kosovo Liberation Army

organisations to join Rugova. So, only the hardest of the hard remained; men who said it was beneath their dignity to be members of a party *legal in the eyes of the Serbian state*.

As Yugoslavia crumbled, Rugova restrained his people. War would bring disaster he argued. "We would have no chance of successfully resisting the army," he said in 1992. "In fact the Serbs only wait for a pretext to attack the Albanian population and wipe it out. We believe it is better to do nothing and stay alive than be massacred." In 1990, the deputies of the by-then-abolished Kosovo assembly declared Kosovo a republic and, in 1991, an independent state. Under police repression, these remained mostly declarations of intent rather than statements of fact. Mostly, that is, because some institutions were set up. Parallel education and health systems were formed. A government in exile headed by Bujar Bukoshi, a former surgeon, was also dispatched to live abroad. These acts seemed to hold the promise that, one day soon, independence really would come.

Kosovo Albanians were now told to contribute three per cent of their income to Rugova's republican coffers. Even more importantly though the *gastarbeiters* in Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and elsewhere gave money too. The tax was not compulsory but in this close knit society anyone who did not contribute risked being ostracised and, even worse, there were vague threats about who would be 'called to account' once independence became a reality.

Horrified by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, most Kosovo Albanians thought that Rugova, 'president' of the phantom republic, had got things right. Independence could wait a few years especially if that meant avoiding the horrors of ethnic cleansing. Not everyone agreed. In the Albanian clubs of Stuttgart, Zurich and Malmo, members of the LPRK denounced Rugova as a Serbian agent. They argued that the Serbs only understood the language of force and that the quicker the Albanians realised this the quicker they would

achieve their liberation. They argued that independence needed sacrifices and that during the time that most LDK leaders had been members of the old communist party *they* had been in prison.

As Yugoslavia slid ever further into war, most Kosovo Albanians continued to regard the LPRK as a fringe organisation that did not deserve to be taken seriously. However, what was taking place on this fringe of Kosovo Albanian politics was eventually to transform the southern Balkans. In exile, people like Bardhyl Mahmuti and Jashar Salihu, another Swiss-based exile, began to solicit money for their campaign amongst the *gastarbeiters* and to prepare for war. From 1990, small numbers of men were also sent for training in Albania, many at a camp in Labinot. The exiles were also now linking up with the new generation of radicals inside Kosovo – such as Hashim Thaci.

Secret meetings were held in Macedonia, and in Kosovo itself, the most important being in August 1993 in the Drenica region, which had seen rebellions against Serbian and Yugoslav rule after both world wars. At the Drenica meeting, two things happened: the LPRK split into two organisations, the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (LKCK) and the Popular Movement for Kosovo (LPK). The LPK now set up a ‘Special Branch’ of four men including Hashim Thaci whose job it was to prepare for a guerrilla war.

At a further meeting in December 1993, the name of the KLA was decided upon but it was only in 1996 that anyone within the LPK, who was not directly involved, began to be aware of what was being prepared. In Kosovo itself, organising the KLA consisted of recruiting a network of sleepers – secret sympathisers ready to fight and take command of their village or town when the time came.

Arms were an enormous problem. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the Serbian police, bolstered by a network of informers, were constantly raiding houses and surrounding villages in search of

The Kosovo Liberation Army

weapons. Secondly, being landlocked, there was no way to import significant quantities of guns into the province.

From 1993 to 1995, the odd policeman began to be shot down and the KLA claimed responsibility, as did, at various times and legitimately, the LKCK. Still, hardly anyone knew who these people were and, besides, Rugova was telling anyone who would listen that not only did these gunmen not exist but that these attacks were in fact being mounted by the Serbian secret police in a bid to discredit his campaign of peaceful resistance. By November 1996 though, it was clear that local Serbian officials did not share this view. They had begun to take fright. Then in January 1997, the KLA took its first casualties – the police gunned down three men. Showing its more ruthless side, the KLA also now took to killing Albanians whom it deemed to be collaborators although many of them held the humblest of civil service positions.

By now, the war in Bosnia was over. In November 1995, following a NATO bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs, they had caved in and signed up to a peace agreement at a US Airforce Base in Dayton, Ohio. In Kosovo, though, despite the slowly increasing numbers of KLA attacks, what was not yet clear to outsiders was that Kosovo Albanian society, both at home and abroad, had gone into deep shock. Dayton had dealt with Bosnia and the great powers had stated unequivocally that since Kosovo had not been a Yugoslav republic, but a mere province, it had to remain part of Serbia, or at least part of Yugoslavia. Worse was to come. The EU states recognised the rump Yugoslavia of Serbia and Montenegro and, of course, Kosovo too as an integral part of Serbia. Rugova's passive resistance had come to nothing.

In Kosovo, some Albanian politicians began to argue that Rugova should step up the pressure, call for demonstrations, do something, *anything*, to get the attention of the world – but he did nothing. He

Tim Judah

appeared to have gone in to a form of political paralysis. He drove around Pristina in his presidential Audi and simply *did nothing*.

At last, after all those years in the wilderness, the LPK sensed things were going its way. Jashar Salihu, his friend Bardhyl Mahmuti and the rest of the exiles, the men who had passed through Serbia's jails, could tour the clubs and meetings of Kosovo Albanian *gastarbeiters* and asylum seekers and say: "We told you so." Still, there was no way around the fundamental problem: how to import large quantities of arms and ammunition into Kosovo.

The answer to the arms question would come in the most bizarre way imaginable. In the spring of 1997, out of the blue, Albania, as a state and country, simply imploded. Hundreds of thousands of people had invested their savings in fraudulent pyramid banking schemes, which the government failed to stop. Inevitably, they collapsed. Outraged, Albanians took to the streets and rose in anger against their president, Sali Berisha. Arms depots were broken open, the army dissolved, the police ran away – and suddenly Albania was awash with hundreds of thousands of Kalashnikovs. The significance of this could hardly be lost on the Kosovo Albanians: Hundreds of thousands of guns going for \$10 each – and no more central government in Albania.

Abroad the LPK began stepping up its campaign. Slowly but surely money began flowing into the *Homeland Calling* fund, managed by Jashar Salihu, and Kosovo Albanians began buying up guns from their impoverished Albanian brothers. Disillusion with Rugova and the notion that the armed struggle was, for the first time, a real possibility meant that recruitment at home and abroad proceeded, but still, slowly, because of lingering respect for Rugova and, of course, the fear of the consequences of war. At the end of November 1997, the whole of Kosovo was electrified when masked KLA men turned up at a funeral. Still, even at this point, the number

The Kosovo Liberation Army

of active KLA members on the ground is reckoned to have been small, perhaps no more than a couple of hundred.

By January 1998, the revolt was maturing. In the Drenica region, famous, as we have noted for its *kacak* brigand cum freedom fighter uprisings, the most recent having been against the Serbs after the two world wars, police cars began to be ambushed and so-called collaborators shot dead. Abroad, contacts were being made with ethnic Albanian former Yugoslav Army officers, in a bid to get them join the KLA.

All that was needed now was the spark to light the fire. The KLA men thought they had things under control, but the first lesson of the Balkans is to expect the unexpected. Foreigners always forget this. This time even the Kosovo Albanians were taken by surprise.

WAR

By February 1998, the police had been forced to withdraw from much of Drenica. In one village, Donji Prekaz, lived a local tough called Adem Jashari. Several years before he had killed a Serbian policeman and been convicted, but the Serbs were frightened to get him because he would shoot at them from his house. They had tried in January but were forced to retreat. Jashari was a maverick. He hated the Serbs, and although he was one of the KLA's early recruits, he was no ideological guerrilla. In the words of one source: "He liked to get drunk and go out and shoot Serbs." In this sense he was a true, dyed in the wool, Drenica *kacak*. Maverick though he was and associated with the KLA, the police decided they had had enough. Foreign journalists had been hunting for him and policemen were still being killed. On 28 February 1998, after a fire fight with the KLA, they took their revenge on some other Drenica families who, they believed, were involved in, killing twenty-six people. Then, on 4 March, they moved on the Jashari compound. Jashari

resisted fiercely, so they shelled his and other Jashari family houses, killing fifty-eight people, mostly members of his extended family.

Kosovo Albanians were seething and so the KLA, which had only anticipated beginning major action in 1999, began to move. Rapidly they began to despatch arms and uniforms over the border from Albania. The sleepers 'awoke', village militias began to form and clan elders, especially those in Drenica decreed that now was the time to fight the Serbs. Whether they were KLA or not, they soon began to call themselves KLA. In this way, a small guerrilla movement that was preparing for war suddenly found itself welded to a far older tradition of Kosovo Albanian *kacak* uprisings.

The KLA made a series of lightening advances: it punched through a supply corridor from the Albanian border, close to Tropoja, in northern Albania. The Kosovo Albanians were shocked by how easy everything seemed. The Serbs hardly fought back so the Albanians proclaimed more and more 'liberated territory'. Milosevic seemed uncertain what to do and so the uprising, which had begun in Drenica, spread like a brushfire. But, the KLA was hardly prepared. Things were moving too fast for them, their military structures were not complete and they had not lain in stocks of anything other than Kalashnikovs, grenades and other light weaponry. In fact, they were winning territory because the Serbs were barely fighting back.

Hearing that the KLA had set up rear bases around Tropoja, young men began to trek across the countryside, up over the mountains and into Albania to collect arms. It was chaotic. Some had to buy their own guns while others were given supplies for their villages. By July 1998 though, Milosevic's period of indecision was over. Orders went out to the police to roll up the rebellion. The police swept through Drenica and other areas held by the KLA, burning the villages as they went. But, chaotic as its command

The Kosovo Liberation Army

structures were, the KLA made the eminently sensible decision not to fight. In this way, the Serbs fell into a trap. The KLA's fighters withdrew to the hills, ready to fight another day, while the Serb offensive created some 200,000 displaced people. Their plight, played out nightly on television across the world, galvanised the international community into action.

In October, Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton Accords and the one man deemed up to doing business with Milosevic, was drafted back into the diplomatic frame. In a deal, which averted threatened NATO air strikes, Milosevic agreed to the pullback of his forces and the deployment of 'verifiers' from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. As the Serbs pulled back though, the KLA simply reoccupied territory. Both sides talked openly about a spring offensive.

The presence of the OSCE monitors helped calm the situation but it was not enough. The KLA stood accused of kidnapping and killing Serb civilians while the Serbs stood accused of massacres themselves, the most notorious being of some 45 civilians from the village of Racak on 15 January 1999. This spurred the diplomats to renewed action. For months Chris Hill, the US Ambassador to Macedonia, had spearheaded a diplomatic shuttle mission between Kosovo and Belgrade, in a bid to find some middle ground. On the KLA side, Hill had problems identifying exactly whom he should speak to and who was in charge. What this proved, above all, was that despite the fact that there was a theoretical high command, in fact, much of the KLA's organisation came from the grass roots. That is to say, it was local and, hence, loath to take orders from unknown superiors.

Another complication arose with the formation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo (FARK). These were units established under the aegis of Bujar Bukoshi, who was anxious that the government in exile should not be marginalised. However, on 21

September 1998, Colonel Ahmet Krasniqi, Bukoshi's Minister of Defence, was gunned down in Tirana. Three days earlier, the KLA had issued a communiqué accusing a FARK commander of treachery. It said: "One day these kind of people will pay for the damage they have caused to our nation".

After this, FARK units ceased to operate under their own name, but, confusingly began operating as the KLA, though their chain of command remained unclear as they co-operated with other KLA units on the ground but still had their own Minister of Defence.

Following the Racak massacre, the Western powers, plus the Russians, working together in the Contact Group for the former Yugoslavia, decided that the situation had become so critical that the parties should be forced to accept a compromise based on the work done by Chris Hill. Discreet threats were issued to the KLA in a bid to make sure it sent representatives to Rambouillet, a chateau outside Paris, which was chosen for the meetings, which began on 6 February 1999. The Kosovo Albanian delegation included Rugova and Bukoshi but, significantly, it was led by Hashim Thaci, who was by then the head of the KLA's 12-man political (as opposed to military,) directorate. This signified two things: first that Rugova's power and influence had definitively been eclipsed and, second, that the internal wing of the KLA – as opposed to the émigré LPK-dominated wing – was in the ascendant.

At Rambouillet, Thaci dithered, uncertain what to do. The deal on offer was an interim proposal for the next three years and, although it did not include a promise of a referendum on independence at the end of that period, it did not rule out independence either. Neither the Serbs nor the Albanians signed. Thaci and the others returned to Kosovo, where the Albanians discovered that the overwhelming majority of their people were in favour of the deal. Thaci agreed to sign.

The Kosovo Liberation Army

Milosevic decided to reject the deal. Although, towards the end of Rambouillet, his negotiators had been upbeat, convinced that a way could be found to bridge various differences, Milosevic made clear that he was not going to accept an agreement which involved the deployment of foreign troops on Serbian soil. When a second round of talks convened in Paris on 15 March, the Serbian delegation obstructed any progress and the talks collapsed. In a bid to prod the Serbs on, Western countries threatened air strikes and, when the Serbs still refused to deal, these began on 24 March.

The NATO bombing campaign lasted 78 days. During the first few weeks of that period, a massive Serbian offensive came close to eliminating the KLA. However, the situation soon stabilised. This was not thanks to the KLA's own strength but rather to the debilitating effects of the NATO raids, which helped pin down the Serbs. In the interior of the province, bands of KLA men roamed the countryside and, in larger concentrations, held patches of territory, some filled with refugees. Along the Albanian border, the KLA held a foothold but, despite what amounted to aerial support from NATO, it was unable to punch through a corridor to re-supply troops in the interior.

Just before the bombing campaign began, the KLA appointed General Agim Ceku as its chief of staff. Ceku was a former Yugoslav Army officer who defected to the embryonic Croatian Army in 1991. He was involved in Operation Storm in August 1995, which saw the elimination of the self proclaimed Republic of Serbian Krajina from the map of Croatia and the effective cleansing of its 200,000 strong population.

On 9 June, NATO and Yugoslavia signed what was called the Military-Technical Agreement in Kumanovo in Macedonia. This amounted to an effective Serbian capitulation. Ironically, it had been at the Battle of Kumanovo against the Ottoman Turks in 1912, that Serbia had regained Kosovo, lost to them some five hundred years

earlier. On 10 June, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1244, which mandated a UN mission, to be known as UNMIK, to run Kosovo while NATO troops were authorised to enter the province. The resolution foresaw the complete withdrawal of Serbian police and Yugoslav Army forces and the demilitarisation of the KLA.

POST-KLA?

In the aftermath of war, several things happened. Serbian forces pulled out of Kosovo as the NATO-led Kosovo Force, KFOR, entered on 12 June. Serbian administrative structures instantly collapsed across all but a few Serbian majority areas of the province. The KLA now moved to fill the power vacuum, installing not only its own people in town halls, but also institutionalising a provisional government led by Hashim Thaci and dominated by KLA and LPK men.

At the same time tens of thousands of Serbs and others fled, fearing the vengeance of the 850,000 returning Kosovo Albanian refugees, who had been cleansed or fled during the bombing, and the KLA. Many KLA men, including some commanders, were now involved in revenge attacks against Kosovo Serbs. Some commanders talked openly of their 'zero tolerance' policy, which meant that they would not allow any Serbs to remain in their areas.

At first, UNMIK, coexisted uneasily with both the KLA and the KLA-dominated provisional government and its other so-called parallel structures. However, by the end of 1999, UNMIK and KFOR had succeeded in securing a formal dissolution of both the provisional government and, from 20 September 1999, of KLA itself.

In what amounted to a compromise deal, much of the military high command of the KLA transferred to the Kosovo Protection Corps, the KPC, which was supposed to be a purely civil emergency force absorbing some three thousand ex-fighters on a permanent basis plus another two thousand in reserve. It was headed up by

The Kosovo Liberation Army

General Ceku. Thousands of weapons were also handed in. Although the KPC was supposed to shovel snow and help out in the aftermath of things like earthquakes, it was clear that most Kosovo Albanians regarded it as the nucleus of their future army and it was an open secret that it still possessed large quantities of arms, both within Kosovo and across the border in Albania. Every week, KFOR reported new finds of stashed weapons which, by the summer of 2000, was beginning to lead to tensions between KFOR, formerly hailed as liberators, and the Kosovo Albanians.

The KPC was also involved with setting up and supplying a small guerrilla offshoot just over Kosovo's eastern border, in Albanian populated areas of Serbia proper.

On the civilian front, UNMIK, headed by the flamboyant French humanitarian activist, Bernard Kouchner, had secured the formal dissolution of the provisional government and the agreement of Thaci and other leading figures, by involving them in a joint administration with the UN. Parallel structures lingered on though. Thaci and others formed a successor political party to the KLA, the Party of Democratic Kosovo, the PDK, although there were others, such as former commander Ramush Haradinaj's Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, the AAK, which also emerged from the old guerrilla movement.

Lacking the institutions of law and order, many former KLA commanders used their power and influence to seize property and businesses. This led to a significant diminution in the popularity of the former KLA, as did the growing reputation of many former members for having close links to organised crime. Indeed a spate of assassinations of former KLA commanders was, in the aftermath of the war, widely assumed to be connected with a struggle to control the spoils of war. Of course, thanks to the nature of Kosovo's clannish society, it was impossible to disentangle political, business

and criminal affairs. One of the results of this has been that many in Pristina now resent the dominance of a new élite they see as having emerged from the rural hick hinterland of Drenica.

It is not only the association with crime that has battered the reputation of those who claim the post-war mantle of the KLA. While the organisation, as such, no longer exists, its secret police continues its operations, intimidating amongst others, politicians from Rugova's LDK. Ironically, since Rugova's policy of passive resistance failed, opinion polls, rough and ready though they may be, have continually shown that, in the post-war period he and the LDK would defeat any electoral challenge from Thaci and his party. Still, the true test of this will only come when the first polls are held – municipal elections that are scheduled for the autumn of 2000.

While the links between the KLA, criminality and inter-Albanian intimidation hurt the reputation of the KPC and the KLA's post-war politicians domestically, it was the persecution of the remaining Serbs and others, including ethnic Turks, which was to have a disastrous impact on international sympathy for the Kosovo Albanians. Although it is hard to pinpoint the KLA and its successors as being *directly* involved in the murders of hundreds of Serbs and others in post-war Kosovo, the burning of Serbian houses and relentless attacks on Serbian Orthodox churches, it was clear that, despite muted appeals to end the violence, prompted by international pressure, from Thaci and other figures, no serious effort was made by politicians who emerged from the KLA's ranks to end this persecution. One reason for this was that Thaci and others felt their positions to be insecure and feared that any serious effort to stop the violence would be used by their political enemies to undermine them politically.

Another reason why former senior KLA figures made little major effort to stop the attacks was that they reckoned that the short-

The Kosovo Liberation Army

term opprobrium of the international community was a burden that should be borne for the long-term political benefit of the Kosovo Albanians. With every Serb that leaves Kosovo, Serbia's claim to restore its rule to the province becomes weaker.

On 23 July 2000, Thaci and others, Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, signed the Airlie Declaration in the US, which called unequivocally for an end to violence. It remains to be seen whether this will amount to more than rhetoric.

Although the political status of Kosovo is yet to be decided and thousands have died since the KLA made its first public appearance in November 1997, there is little doubt that, as far as the organisation was concerned, its strategy led to triumph. Poorly organised, it only just managed to hold its own on the battlefield. However a combination of short-sighted moves by Milosevic, his track record in Croatia and Bosnia and the fear of war spreading to the rest of the region meant that the KLA were effectively able to lure NATO into waging war on Serbia on its behalf. Few believe that Serbian power will ever return to Kosovo, which means that, from being an organisation of perhaps 200 men in November 1997, the KLA managed to achieve what can only be regarded as an extraordinary political feat, if not one of arms. As far as the men who made up the KLA are concerned, the ends have more than justified the means.