



dp *special*

No.9

Supplement to journal Deutsche Polizei 1/2000

ABRIDGED ENGLISH VERSION

POLICING KOSOVO

Mission Impossible?

POLICE MISSION IN KOSOVO



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Photos: dpa, hol, GdP

Kosovo, 29 November 1999. An aggressive crowd attacked a Serb family in the Kosovo capital Pristina during celebrations for Albanian independence day

and killed the father, according to a ZDF report. The 62-year-old man was dragged from his car and shot dead, while his wife and mother-in-law were seriously injured. This murder took

IMPRINT:

**dp special supplement no. 9 to
DEUTSCHE POLIZEI 1/2000
Journal and organ of Gewerkschaft
der Polizei**

Publishers:

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Design: Rembert Stolzenfeld

Publishing and advertisement management

VERLAG DEUTSCHE
POLIZEILITERATUR GMBH
Forststrasse 3a, 40721 Hilden, Germany
Tel. (0211) 7104-183
Fax (0211) 7104-174

Advertisement manager

Michael Schwarz
Advertisement prices list no. 26
of 1 January 2000 is valid.

Production:

Wölfer
DRUCK • VERLAG • WERBESERVICE
Schallbruch 22, D-42781 Haan/Rhld.
Telefon 02129 / 94 01-0
Telefax 02129 / 94 01 10

Translation from the German:

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place a few minutes after midnight on a principal road junction in Pristina. According to eye-witness reports, around one hundred Albanians surrounded the dead man and the injured on the road and continued their festivities.

This is no isolated incident. A few weeks previously a UN worker was stopped on the street and asked the time in Serb. The 38-year-old American, a native of Bulgaria, replied in that language. He was immediately set upon and lynched on the spot. The explosive climate of violence in Kosovo is almost palpable. Approximately 3,000 policemen from an international police contingent have for some months been on a United Nations assignment to try to restore some order and safety to this country which has seen so much destruction and "ethnic cleansing". This contingent includes 210 officers from Germany. From 28 to 31 October 1999, a delegation from the German Police Federation visited them in their assigned region.

From Skopje in Macedonia to the frontier to Kosovo is a distance of around twelve kilometres. From the Vardar valley, the two-lane road winds up the mountains towards Kosovo. We are all packed tightly into our gas-driven taxi, a Fiat, that

we hope will bring us to Pristina: the car contains our Macedonian driver, the chairman of GdP (a German police federation) Norbert Spinrath, federation spokes-

belonging to the 120 international aid organisations currently operating in Kosovo and in Serbia. Our driver turns a melancholic gaze in their direction. "In Kosovo



man Rüdiger Holecek, and Adalbert Halt, editor-in-chief of the federation journal DEUTSCHE POLIZEI.

Shortly after Skopje we see a Macedonian police patrol directing trucks onto a dirt track running parallel to the road. We pass a seemingly endless line of trucks, that have been grouped into convoys. It is still dangerous to drive alone in Kosovo, especially at night. There are regular reports of attacks and robbery.

Several kilometres before the border the traffic on the road starts to grind slowly to a halt. We see private vehicles, taxis, busses, trucks. There are, of course, also the ubiquitous military vehicles of the international peacekeeping force KFor as well as trucks

Symbol of the Kosovo conflict: Houses not quite totally destroyed, but burnt out and without roofs

they get everything, we get nothing", says the man from neighbouring Macedonia, a country also beset by unemployment and the general effects of the Kosovo conflict. The Pristina airport is still closed at the time of our visit. All transport of families of the KFor troops and the international police contingent has to pass through the airport of Skopje, and puts an impossible strain on the only road running from the airport to Kosovo.

Our driver lines up behind a KFor truck transporting Danish soldiers, which as a military

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vehicle is authorised to overtake other traffic, provided oncoming traffic permits. The driver has luck with this risky overtaking manoeuvre and we save some valuable time. Our journey from Skopje to the border crossing at Blace takes about one hour. When the driver picks us up in Pristina four days later, he will require approximately five hours for the same distance.

While still on the Macedonian side of the frontier we meet Klaus Mahrt, a colleague from the German police contingent. We are all relieved to see him. The fact that this meeting, arranged and co-ordinated back in Germany, actually worked here appears to us to be scarcely imaginable, and we greatly appreciate the efforts

made by our colleagues. This saves us the time-consuming formalities at the border that we later had to endure on the return trip.

There are still 80 kilometres to go before we reach Pristina.

The ravine in which we are driving gets narrower. After a few kilometres, in Kacanik, the first major town in Kosovo after the frontier, we see the first destroyed houses, four bare walls and in the middle a standing chimney. We will later learn that this is a typical picture of the destruction of Albanian houses, blown up by Serbs during the conflict. Their method: a burning candle is left in the first floor and the gas mains turned on

in the basement. After approximately twenty minutes the force of the explosion destroys everything around it, only the outside walls and the chimney survive. Sometimes the residents were tied to the floor of their house and thus forced to await their terrible end.

We can also see some houses that have simply been burned down, the charcoal beams still pointing towards the sky. These are houses formerly inhabited by Serbs, burned by ethnic Albanians on their return from banishment. Each ethnic group has its own method of destruction, and the hatred is still very much alive. Scarcely a night goes by without some Serb house going up in flames. On the fourth day of our visit we pass three burning houses one late morning.



Beside burned-out refuse containers a “mobile shop” for cigarettes, as can be seen at every street corner in the city. The origin of the cigarettes remains a mystery.

The refuse accumulating at the side of the road gets worse as we continue. Household waste is simply dumped anywhere along the street. Within a short time this gives rise to mile-long dumps. Rubble from burned buildings – scorched furniture, burned-out refrigerators and cookers – can also be seen everywhere. Returning ethnic Albanians have now begun to clean up their ruined houses so that they can commence with rebuilding as early as possible – winter is approaching.

There is a penetrating stench, especially where piles of waste have been ignited.



Piles of rubbish accumulate everywhere on the streets of the towns and villages of Kosovo, as here in Pristina. Whenever they block the way they are simply set on fire. The smell of fire hangs over every district and town.

Later, in Pristina, we get a feeling of the situation following a total collapse of all civil administration: the entire city is covered by a pungent smell of burning. Everywhere you see burning heaps of refuse, scorch marks creep up the walls of houses. But what else can these people do, since nobody is prepared to pick up the garbage? Our reluctance to inhale is heightened by the presence of a coal-fired power plant discharging its exhausts into the air without any filter. So this is where our colleagues have to stay for six months?

The refuse attracts stray dogs, both famished and overfed mangy brutes. One does not even dare guess how and what they find to feed. All over Kosovo the streets are strewn with dead dogs, fresh



A checkpoint in the German KFOR sector. Soldiers have to search people and vehicles for weapons, of which a large number are still in the hands of the civilian population.

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cadaver, as well as animals run over by cars and creatures so flattened that only the contours of their fur allow you guess what it once was.

The relatively short journey to Pristina is enough to instil the fear of God into us. In the approaching darkness, tractors without lights and their two-wheeled trailers – the kind familiar to all of us from TV images of refugee treks – become almost impossible to recognise and make accidents inevitable. Scarcely anyone, however, is deterred by this from overtaking, even in the most risky situations. In the area around Pristina there were 30 fatalities from road accidents in just two months. Kosovo's road traffic also claimed the lives of two infan-

in police circles, would have a intimidating effect on other road users! Quite the contrary: some even give a friendly wave while performing their overtaking manoeuvres. The Albanians otherwise have great respect for the UN police, although that could easily change as soon as the police really begin to exercise the executive powers that have recently been entrusted to them, which they shortly will.

Not many of the cars on these roads would pass a standard MOT test, nor their drivers get through a routine driving license or papers check. Vehicle lights are complete and adequate in only the rarest cases, to say nothing of the fact that about every second vehicle on the road has no registration plate,

Germany for checking. The results were 100% positive – all vehicles had been stolen!

The centre of Pristina lies in darkness. The street lighting system has broken down once again. Mercifully, our hotel has electricity, thanks to its own generators. It bears the proud name "Grand Hotel" and is swarming with journalists and UN personal and "security guards" of the KLA. The hotel is said to belong to the KLA leader Hassan Thaçi, "... just like everything else in Pristina that brings in money", we are told. We are also told how "during the war, paramilitaries and the notorious weekend killers were regulars here and moved freely through this hotel."

The boulevards and bars are packed with people. Street traffic is chaotic. Somewhere we hear an explosion, then the sound of shots. "Shootings take place here every day, or rather, every night. We are normally unable to establish exactly what is going on or why. And nobody is prepared to help the police in their enquiries", we hear from a colleague who we meet that evening at police headquarters in Pristina. Up to June 1999 this grey building in the city centre was home to the Serb special police unit, the MUP, which played a central role in the terror against the Albanian community. The night was going to be very long.

After many discussions and a patrol lasting several hours through the city, the night finally ended at 4 a.m. in the cellars of the Pristina police station, a building in which the Serb secret police carried out their infamous deeds right up to the very end.

We are taken to the former torture chamber. A partly rusted metal chair stands in the corner, butcher's hooks hang from the



Around midnight in the briefing room of the police headquarters in Pristina: (left to right) Norbert Spinrath, chairman of the German police federation GdP in discussion with Udo Rühle and Eginhard Hofmann.

trymen from the German Bundeswehr.

We are grateful to have a police vehicle ahead of us. But it would be a mistake to think that the police jeep, with its conspicuous white and red paint which has given it the name "the Coke Can"

including some top automobile types. It is not difficult to guess how these have entered this country. One policeman told us of a spot check his unit recently carried out. They simply noted all registration numbers, if the car had one, and sent these back to



The situation in the German sector is explained to Norbert Spinrath by the superintendent of the Prizren police station, Alexander Schubert.

ceiling. Boxes of files are scattered around, photographs of prisoners spill out from a folder. Our colleagues then lead us to the next room, the "rape cellar": "This room was soundproof. There was a couch here, and when our people were clearing up afterwards they found photographs. The beasts had actually taken pictures of each other carrying out these rapes, and when the KFor moved in they found corpses in the cellar that were still warm."

Stationing of the KFor troops did not mean a total end to the violence, the difference is that it is now being carried out chiefly by Albanians. Just recently some Albanians – our guides told us – broke into a house somewhere in Pristina where a large Serb family was living. The father was abducted; the grandfather wasn't executed, no, he was butchered. His assailants stabbed him several times, cut off his hands and then beat him to death. The nine-year-old granddaughter, a Serb girl, was forced to look on. Our guide continued: "I saw the little girl, and never in my life did I look into such sad eyes." The child was flown to Serbia with the help of international aid organisations.

The first interview in the lobby of the "Grand Hotel" in Pristina. Adalbert Halt and Rüdiger Holecek listen to Klaus Mahrt.

Every night houses and apartments in Pristina are occupied as part of the strategy: Serbs out, Albanians in. No mercy is shown to the occupants! Three days ago UN police investigating such an operation arrested three KLA men who had occupied the house. An eight-member Serb family, six children and two women who had lost their husbands in the war, had moved into this apartment when the bombing had finished. But then the men of the KLA turned up and drove the Serbs from the apartment so that it would be free for their own people. After they were arrested they admitted to

being KLA members. When they searched the place the UN police found signed orders stating that certain people had to surrender the keys of their houses by a certain date so that these could be handed over to the KLA. Winter is approaching!

We drive to the headquarters of the former guerrilla army, which has now officially been disbanded. Snipers are positioned on the roof of the administration building in the centre of the district capital. "They have us in their sights now", we are assured by a colleague, who is very wary of the UN's present flirtation with the "reformed" rebel army. "We are pretty certain that there are secret KLA police stations here, around five in all. The KLA is currently developing a shadow administration. This fact can be most easily verified by the number of new registration plates increasingly seen on cars on the roads and which are issued by the KLA. The



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registration plates for Kosovo, which is officially still part of the Serb republic, are already adorned with the symbol of Albania, the black eagle on a red background.

Many of the KLA men speak perfect German. Some members were found to have notebooks – crammed full with telephone numbers and contact addresses in Germany. Some German officers in Kosovo are now afraid that their families in Germany are in danger. They have long since removed the mandatory name tags from their uniforms and petitioned the German authorities to impose an information blackout. It cannot be

Certainly, few German policemen here have any illusions about the criminal energy of certain Kosovo Albanians living in Germany. But the wheels of German bureaucracy turn slowly, as we often hear many officers here complain.

One German senior official in Pristina was even threatened that something unfortunate would happen to him if he did not send a certain unpopular officer back home. For days the force debated the question of whether they should bend to this criminal pressure in order to guarantee the safety of their personnel. But in the end the decision was clear: If they

black-marketeers prosecuted.

It can be assumed that the present sympathy of the ethnic Albanians will then wear thin. However, travelling across the country and through villages over the next few days, we were encouraged to see people, especially children, still wave to the police in their “Coke Cans”. One thousand of these police vehicles are now in use in Kosovo. They represent Japan’s contribution to the UN mission. It is, however, only a question of time and the murderous potholes on Kosovo streets before these brand-new Toyotas are no longer



Among the international staff of the UNMIK headquarters in Pristina: GdP chairman Norbert Spinrath

ruled out that the contact persons maintained by ethnic Albanians in Germany could find out the home addresses of certain officers.

were to give in to this form of blackmail, there would soon be no UN police force in Kosovo worthy of the name. Especially when the executive authority just recently transferred to the UN begins to be impartially enforced: When traffic offences are punished, vehicles taken off the roads, thieves and

roadworthy. The international peace contingent and the UN police force have also stopped using regular street names. The main road links now have picturesque titles such as “Duck Route”, “Lion’s Route” or “Hawk Route”.

The road to Prizren, approxi-

In the cellars of the present police headquarters in Pristina police officers found rooms in which the crimes of torture and rape were committed. This building formerly housed the infamous Serb special unit MUP.

mately 75 kilometres south-west of Pristina, on this late autumn day passes through a beautiful landscape, provided one manages to ignore the villages in which every second house has been blown up. Sun-drenched autumn beech forests on the slopes of ravines are interspersed with broad views over valleys in which rising mist hangs gently. A landscape to linger or wander in.

But beware!

"Don't touch the green!", reads the warning at the side of the road! The danger of mines is everywhere. If you have to answer the call of nature, you must stay close to your car! A rusty can on a stick at the side of the road will indicate to the trained eye the presence of mines, as can an easily overseen red-white ribbon. And of course this does not mean that land not marked in this way is free of mines either!

One is always uncomfortably aware of this scourge. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit of the German Bundeswehr under the leadership of Captain Heino Knebel in Suva Reka assumes that there are still up to 30,000 unexploded splinter bombs in Kosovo. The scatter bomb CBU 87/B contains up to 200 small explosives in a metal casing. In addition, there are the duds dropped by NATO and booby-traps set up by the retreating Serbs, as well as over 800 minefields. Topographic documentation is available for 80 percent of the 500 minefields laid by the Serbs, but none is available for those laid by the KLA.

The plastic mines that, when dropped from the air, scatter like butterflies over the land look just like plastic toys. Only a few days previously



three brothers and sisters aged between eight and ten sustained horrendous injuries when playing innocently with such a mine. Their arms and legs were torn off by the blast. An officer quickly came to the scene and, with a courageous disregard for his own safety, ran to help them. The helicopter he summoned took one hour to arrive and by then all three children had bled to death. The colleague had been forced to look on helplessly.

Mines and road accidents, these are the two great dangers in Kosovo today. The exact number of people killed or injured in road accidents will never be known. Often by the time UN police arrive at the scene of an accident in response to a call, all participants have disappeared, including the injured who are quickly loaded into passing cars and carted off to the nearest hospital.

Burned-out or dismantled cars line the streets. Houses and land

is often not fenced in by hedges but by car wrecks.

A nice landscape!

It is already night – much later than we planned – when we finally arrive in Prizren to visit our colleagues on duty there. They refuse to hear of us returning to Pristina that night, not even in a patrol car. That's much too dangerous after dark, they tell us! We therefore spend hours and hours discussing anything and everything they have on their minds until the early morning.

The party responsible for the police mission in Kosovo, and thus also for supply of materials and operation equipment, is the UN. The list of shortages is almost endless. They have no office equipment, such as paper, pens, printers or ink cartridges. When German police officers return from home leave, they always take

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back with them equipment they contribute themselves or have received in the form of "donations" from their local police authority. Personnel taking up duties in Kosovo often have to move into offices and rooms that in some cases have been partly destroyed or fully cleared out by the former Serb occupants.

Police work is greatly handicapped by the fact that almost all technical equipment necessary for

possession of a car took the initiative and set up his own small business. He removed the passenger's seat and rear seat of his vehicle and the result was a functioning hearse.

The creation of databases must be given urgent priority.

Officers of the traffic police will have a difficult task in establishing rudimentary order in road traffic. They

have not yet been provided with their own protective uniforms with reflecting material, a must for work on roads and streets that are for the most part unlit, nor with equipment for securing the scene of an accident or even hand-held signals for ordering cars to halt. UN police vehicles are not even provided with the basic first-aid utensils.

Personnel equipment must also be urgently improved. This also applies to the uniforms and equipment of the other interna-

tional contingents, as patrols are without exception mixed and differences in the forces' equipment therefore represent a considerable potential for risk when joint action is to be taken. The fact that German officers

obtained pull-overs and warm underwear for their colleagues from warmer countries in the Far East, because their superiors at home clearly did not realise just how cold nights can become in Kosovo, says, on the one hand, a lot for the international comradeship that can be felt in all police stations, but on the other hand also shows how slow UN bureaucracy can be.

According to Ulrich Dugas, chairman of AG IPTF: "The German federal government and state governments help with equipment and fittings wherever they can, and also in the knowledge that the United Nations is ultimately responsible, simply because assistance is urgently necessary".

You get used to constant power failures. Candles and matches are always readily at hand in all apartments to cope with this regular nuisance. Our meetings late in the evening in the private apartments of some colleagues in Prizren thus take place by candlelight. Interruptions to the water supply make personal hygiene somewhat difficult in certain areas for weeks on end: one bottle of mineral water wets the body and a second rinses it after washing. However, winter is now approaching and that season can be particularly cold in this part of the world. Because most houses are heated by electricity, some colleagues look forward to the festive season with a certain amount of trepidation. But all these problems are still not enough to dampen the good mood and commitment of the officers on duty. What causes them most headaches is bureaucracy and administrative hindrances.

For instance: German police personnel are now prohibited from using the facilities of the German Bundeswehr. They may now no longer telephone or shop or dine at these centres, although formerly



A record of human suffering piled up in a safe of the present UNMIK station in Prizren. The German police found files left behind by their predecessors and realised that "until now nobody has bothered to read them".

investigation of serious crime, or protective clothing for officers when handling corpses, has not been provided. Even transport of dead bodies was an unsolved problem until in one region an enterprising individual in

this was no problem. The background needs to be explained a bit here: The Bundeswehr flies in all its own food supplies. KFor soldiers, we are told, are expressly prohibited from eating locally. The reason for this order is the general fear of contaminated food. One of us actually experienced this first hand recently, and immediately afterwards received the well-intended but belated advice of his colleagues: never eat meat in a country where power failures are a daily occurrence!

Medical services are also considered to be inadequate. Every visit to an army doctor – as was reported to the delegation from the Federation – must be settled personally.

Telephone calls home are only possible to a limited extent and are extremely expensive. Any family problems, for example, that may arise at home can therefore be discussed only with great difficulty and at high cost. This is another grievance for those on service in the mission.

Despite these quite unfavourable conditions the level of enthusiasm for the assignment and commitment to the task at hand, which often amounts to great personal sacrifice, is surprisingly high. This special motivation is also quite obviously not based on the financial remuneration for this foreign assignment. Anybody volunteering for work in Kosovo on the basis of the financial incentive will not survive long in the place. It is, however, entirely incomprehensible why officers taking part in the mission now have to accept cuts in the foreign bonus paid. Additional payment for the cost of two households and compensation for the straitened conditions in the mission justify payment of the foreign bonus in full.

Incidentally: The Kosovo



Pictures went around the world of the roadblocks preventing Russian KFor troops from entering their designated sector. Because Russian volunteers are believed to have been involved in Serb atrocities, the Albanian people around Orahovac fear that evidence will be destroyed. People manning the roadblocks presented the police federation delegation with empty artillery shells they had found.

mission is one example where differences in the treatment of officers from the east and west of Germany can be seen at their most absurd. Although officers from the states of the former East Germany have to undergo the same dangers and living conditions as their western colleagues, they still do not receive the same salary for what is certainly the same work.

Each day brings its own uncertainty and dangers for every personnel in the mission. Officers must moreover also consider what is in store for them when their assignment here

is complete. Unfortunately during vacation visits to their senior police authority at home, officers were forced to the conclusion that their assignment in Kosovo is not rated very highly, obviously due to the lack of proper information. There was also not much evidence of a publicity campaign in these centres to ensure a better picture of this foreign mission. In civilian life, on the other hand, experience of working conditions abroad is always considered a plus point in your career prospects. This should not be any different for police.

This is all the more true because German officers, both male and female, already showed in the first months of their difficult mission in Kosovo that they are making an indispensable contribution to peace and stability in the region, and that while doing this they also greatly enhance their country's reputation in the region and the rest of the world.

A few hours after our arrival in Pristina the Police Federation delegation was handed a petition

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containing numerous signatures in the briefing-room at police headquarters. This petition was in fact a demand by local personnel of the new civil police force CIVPOL and members of other police contingents for an increase in the number of German police officers in Pristina, as their professional competence and human acceptance meant that they were considered absolutely indispensable in training as well as for daily policing duties. The level of the reputation enjoyed by German

us about their situation. Their principle fear is that they will be accused of a lack of professionalism due to any shortcomings, whereas the real problem is that they have not been provided with sufficient technical resources for completing their task. Being able to send forensic evidence back to their technical centres at home to help them in their investigations would be laborious, but nevertheless a great help.

The cases they have to investigate are difficult enough, so much

off limbs. They tell of the corpse of a pregnant woman, from which the unborn foetus had been removed and replaced with a dead cat. They want to tell more and more of such stories ...

Several times in the course of our visit we asked the officers for their opinion on how long this mission to Kosovo would continue.

Do they see any prospect of the international security forces, army troops and police, being able to leave this country step by step in the foreseeable future?

The reply given by one colleague is typical of the opinion of many: "In the short term I see absolutely no chance of that happening, and not in the medium term either. Things must first grow together here. The people here must first become aware that violence is no way to regulate a civil society. The people must finally understand that they have no choice but to live together in peace. And that's why this mission will be a very long one for the international community."

Our next question: "The job of the police here is to restore safety and the rule of law. If you imagine a scale from zero to ten, where would you grade the amount of safety and order that has been achieved so far?" The reply: "According to my estimate it wouldn't be higher than two."

A question to another officer: "Do you see any chance of the mission being finally successful in the end, and what has to happen before this success can be achieved?"

His reply: "This mission cannot succeed the way it's organised at the moment. This country must first of all be pacified, the crime rate must be reduced drastically. We have had some successes in this and we will have some more. But we must get away from the notion of us being able to create a democratic civil police force. That's completely impossible. The



Late in the evening at the Prizren police station. Criminal investigation officers Frank Mischke and Albert Werner tell Norbert Spinrath of the gruesome details of their work.

police expressed in this petition was confirmed again and again in the course of discussions with members of other contingents: "The best briefings in the international police force are provided by the Germans."

It is now late in the station at Prizren. Two colleagues assigned to criminal investigation there have a lot to tell

so that one hesitates to write some of them down. One case was an ambush that resulted in the murder of 14 Serb farmers. "Murder" is an inadequate term to describe this crime; the descriptions colleagues give of the bodies they found would make "butchering" more appropriate.

They tell of the body of a girl found nailed to a board. They tell of children's bodies with chopped



Around 30 bodies from a mass grave close to Orahovac (approx. 20 kilometres north-east of Prizren). In this area around 850 bodies have been exhumed, in some cases horribly mutilated. This picture was taken on 11 September 1999, the crimes committed in late March 1999.



task is simply too difficult. The future local police force is supposed to be made up of 50 percent former KLA men, ten percent women and ten percent Serbs. How can that ever be achieved? Nobody even wants to see a Serb around here any more. Anybody even speaking the Serb language, as we recently saw in the case of a UN worker, is simply shot dead."

And the same officer reports of a female Polish journalist who lives in the same house as he does. She met another Polish colleague in a bar and they began to speak together in their native language. Unfortunately for Albanian ears Polish sounds very similar to Serb, and they were very quickly asked by the waiters to leave the bar. Their safety could no longer be guaranteed. This bar is located directly across from UN headquarters in Pristina, i.e. this happened directly under the eyes of the UN police ...

"Anyone hoping for a multi-ethnic society here, is truly a dreamer. The Albanians want to

Medical personnel and other officers of the German Criminal Investigation Bureau (BKA) at an autopsy. Probably cause of death: perforation of the chest with a bayonet. The stab wound went through the heart. Three large stab wounds were found at the rear of the thorax. The bayonet was probably withdrawn briefly three times and driven in again. When the person was lying on the ground, a salvo from a machine gun was fired into the lower torso. This led to a fracturing of the pelvis.

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be among themselves", a colleague tells us.

We see one small ray of hope when a young ethnic Albanian police cadet says to us: "This revenge must stop, as otherwise we will have absolutely no chance of surviving!".

From Prizren to Pristina we drive several hours on a gravel road that gives us and our vehicle a good shaking. It is one of the better detours from the main road which has been blocked by the ethnic Albanians using trucks placed across the road. Since mid August the residents of Orahovac have been blocking all approach roads. They want to prevent Russian KFor

the civilian population, and people there now fear that Russian soldiers could destroy the evidence of crimes committed by their compatriots.

Peace in Kosovo?

We see whole villages composed of nothing but ruins. And again and again checkpoints manned by KFor troops, stationary and spontaneously set up – Polish, Dutch, German. A monastery in a village close by has become a refuge for around 200 Serbs: women, children and old men – surrounded and supplied with food by soldiers who are also there to prevent attacks by Albanians.

Violence is omnipresent. We are always being told that so-called normal crime has become much

the role of the international police force was not thought out well enough in advance. The idea that 3,000 policemen and women could restore and preserve civil order is simply crazy", said the president of Finland and EU commission chairman Martti Ahtissari last August. But if he were able to see the result of the work of this motley police force in Kosovo today, maybe he would also have a bit of hope.

But what will happen if the international peace-keeping force and the UN police move out one day? Will the slaughter break out once more?

In a very interesting report by the German newspaper ZEIT on 2 December 1999, interviewer

Bruno Schirra gives former Serb paramilitaries in Kosovo an opportunity to state their case. They tell of the terrible things they have done. But at the end of their report one of them tells ZEIT:

"None of us was a criminal, and none of us ever will be. I never killed children in Kosovo. At that time I didn't. But when I go down there the next time, I will not make any distinction any more. I

shall not leave anything alive", says Mirko. He says it quietly and in a relaxed, almost friendly, tone. "I'm going to go back there."

A new fuse on the powder keg of the Balkans.



Burned-out houses and freshly dug graves are to be found across Kosovo. This is where the dead, exhumed from mass graves and identified, find their final resting place.

troops from reaching the protection zone assigned to them by the UN. This is the same region where Russian mercenaries fighting on the side of the Serbs are alleged to have carried out atrocities on

more brutal in Kosovo after the war. We hear of a 13-year-old boy who cut the throat of his 14-year-old brother in an argument over which of them should drive the tractor.

Mission impossible? The title of the box-office success has become a gloomy conviction for some here in Kosovo. "I am afraid



Examination of weapons found on a suspect by UNMIK personnel from the United States and Canada.

Origins of the Kosovo Mission

The basis for the deployment of the international police force in Kosovo is resolution no. 1244 of the UN Security Council passed in 1999. The assignment covers the restoration of public security and order, as well as setting up, training, support and monitoring of a local police force (LP). The mandate commenced on 10 June 1999 and was initially scheduled to last twelve months.

The international police component in the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is intended to total 3,110 police officers from different countries.

In a cabinet resolution of 7 July 1999, the German Federal government decided on the basis of the UN resolution and a decision reached by the conference of the interior ministers of the German states on 28 June 1999 to contribute to the UNMIK by sending up to 210 German police officers from the Federal and state forces.

Their mission:

- to safeguard public law and order – including by means of executive powers for a transitional period,
- execution of border control duties at international border posts for a transitional period,
- support and advice for the UN Kosovo Forces (KFor) in the maintenance of public security and order,
- protection and promotion of human rights,
- support for the efforts of the International Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. These measures should create a framework to allow the return of refugees and people expelled from their homes to a safe environment.

The UN police force is headed by a Police Commissioner. He exercises all operational, technical and disciplinary authority over all police personnel in the international police contingent acting in UNMIK. He in turn reports to the

Special Envoy of the Secretary General.

The police force of the United Nations for Kosovo (UNPK) is made up of four sections:

- UN PK Civpol (regular police and criminal investigation),
- UN PK Special Police/Constabulary Unit,
- UN PK Border Police,
- Police school under the guidance of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The UNPK headquarters are in Pristina. There are also five regional headquarters in Pristina, Pec, Gnjilijane, Prizren and Kosovska Mitrovena. These in turn are in charge of 29 police stations in local towns. The border police force is stationed at border crossings and airports.

A Decade of War

The nineties will undoubtedly go down in history as the decade of the Balkan wars, in the course of which the centre of conflict moved from north to south through the former Yugoslavia: It all began in 1991 in Slovenia and Croatia, in 1992 fighting broke out in Bosnia, and in 1999 the war finally reached Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Of all the former Yugoslav republic only Macedonia has so far been spared the horrors of war.

Republic of Yugoslavia for its part consists of Serbia, Kosovo and the increasingly independent-minded republic of Montenegro. And even in Serbia there is the former autonomous province of Vojvodina and the Muslim region of Sandzak.

Macedonia could also be divided into a Slav region and an Albanian region in the west. This brings us to a total of twelve different ethnically defined regions, all of which will have to be taken into

Croatia" or "Greater Albania" would also be the political goal of many people in the region. It can be assumed in view of such complexity that peaceful co-existence and change in the Balkans will take many years, cost enormous amounts of money and will only have a chance of success if there is a long-term prospect of eventual integration in European-Atlantic structures. However, there is no alternative to this course.



Officially the former Yugoslavia has now been broken up into five independent republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. But *de facto* there are now at least nine entities, because Bosnia itself is divided into a Serb republic and the Federation, which is in turn divided into Croatian and Bosnian controlled areas. The Federal

A view over the roofs of Prizren, an attractive and historic town in the south of Kosovo. Prizren is at the heart of the KFor German sector. This seemingly peaceful picture disguises the tense situation in the town, in which one Serb enclave has to be closely guarded to protect the inhabitants. There is a general curfew at night, although this still does not prevent Serb houses from being burned.

account in any future political arrangement for the Balkans. Furthermore, many of these regions wish to link up with neighbouring states. Besides "Greater Serbia", a "Greater

Taken from: Hamburger Information zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, edition 27/1999, Hamburg, May 1999