
Recovering

Nonviolent

History

Civil Resistance
in Liberation Struggles

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Kosovo: Civil Resistance in Defense of the Nation, 1990s

Howard Clark

Each year on March 5–7, Kosovo celebrates the *Epopée* of the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA)—the anniversary of the 1998 gun battle in the village of Donji Prekaz where Adem Jashari, a founder of the KLA, and more than fifty of his family members were killed. The Jashari home is now a shrine. The *Epopée* includes the Night of Flames when fifty fires are lit and a gathering in Prekaz of Kosovo’s leading dignitaries and the uniformed successors of the KLA (at one time the Kosovo Protection Corps, now the Kosovo Security Force). The main speeches in 2010 were made by the prime minister and president—at that time Hashim Thaçi, a founder of the KLA, and Fatmir Sejdiu, a founder and leader of the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK), the party most associated with the nonviolent struggle. Sejdiu began,

On March 5, 1998 . . . the legendary Commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Adem Jashari, and his father Shaban and his brother Hamëz, fell on the altar of freedom. That day, besides these three martyrs, many other children and members of Jashari family were deprived of their lives. But, by virtue of their matchless sacrifice, they were decorated with the most precious and gilded crown in the history of our long-lasting war for freedom and independence and turned into an incomparable symbol of sublime self-sacrifice for the homeland.¹

Sejdiu’s conclusion, however, invoked the memory of Kosovo’s first president, Ibrahim Rugova, the figurehead of the nonviolent struggle and the person credited with first raising the demand for independence, praising his “Euro-Atlantic” vision.

Rugova and Jashari are contrasting figures. The urbane Rugova (Tirana denounced his “decadent modernism”) gained an image among Albanians as “the U.S.’s chosen one” as early as April 1990, addressing the US

Congressional Human Rights Caucus. He never lost this image, despite changes in US attitudes.² At the time of his death, despite everything that might have destroyed his credibility, Rugova was Kosovo's president and most trusted politician.³ Furthermore, the memory of nonviolent resistance remains largely identified with him.

Jashari, on the other hand, was a rural icon in the *kaçak* tradition, as indicated by his nephew Murat:

Each nation has a saint and story that is the foundation that forms the society, its basis. My family's story is the link of a chain . . . that goes back to the Albanian flag, Azem Galica, Shaban Palluzha and others. Albanians have always been under an oppressive foreign power, whether Turkey, Austria, Serbia, and there have been many moments of fighting for freedom: this is the Albanian national question in the Balkans.⁴

Jashari's status as a legendary warrior hero, contend Anna Di Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, provides a "hegemonic discourse" beyond public debate that sidelines Kosovo's experience of civil resistance and, in particular, the role women played in nonviolent struggle and the "parallel structures."⁵

Jashari was never convinced by the nonviolent strategy, but he himself had to flee Kosovo in winter 1991–1992. At that time people with his views could do little inside Kosovo except recognize that the nonviolent struggle was "the only game in town," as did Jakup Krasniqi—the friend who hid Jashari from the police.⁶ Although in mid-1998 Krasniqi emerged as the KLA's first field spokesperson, until that year he had been a leading activist in his local LDK, and was even voted onto the Kosovo-wide presidency of the LDK.

In this chapter, my account of civil resistance concentrates on the period until 1994—the time of maximum unity in resistance. After that, the struggle entered a phase of stagnation—the LDK was dominant and undemocratic, Rugova was remote and passive, and the horrors of war in Bosnia made all parties in the Kosovo conflict (including Belgrade) wary of escalation. I also discuss the period after the Dayton Accords on Bosnia-Herzegovina (November 1995), a time of increasing frustration in Kosovo, and how in 1997 eventually the active nonviolence of Prishtina students demonstrated some of the possibilities that a more assertive alternative strategy might have offered. The Drenica massacres of February–March 1998—not only the Jashari siege, but the slaughter of unarmed families who followed the counsel to stay nonviolent—marked the end of the nonviolent struggle in Kosovo.

The Context

Invaded by Serbia in 1912 and again after World War I, Kosovo was once more forcibly incorporated into Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito after

World War II. The largest non-Slavic group in Yugoslavia (Albanians) was subjected to discrimination, denial of rights, and periodic attempts to “transfer” them, especially to Turkey during the 1950s.⁷

The position of Albanians improved dramatically after 1966, when Tito’s League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) opted for a Yugoslav-wide policy of decentralization. For Kosovo Albanians, this heralded a cultural renaissance, with the provision of university education and expansion of publishing and broadcasting in Albanian. Politically, the province gained an autonomy, confirmed in the 1974 Constitution that made it a quasi-republic, with its own system of self-government, even a territorial defense force, and participation in the federal presidency on an equal basis with the republics.⁸ However, this brought two fundamental problems. First, while Kosovo Albanian expectations were rising, the economic gap between Kosovo, the poorest unit in Yugoslavia, and the rest of Yugoslavia was also growing. Second, Serbs in Kosovo—although still more likely to be employed, to be higher paid, and to hold management jobs—felt aggrieved at their loss of privilege and increasingly beleaguered as the minority population in Kosovo.

What distinguished Kosovo from the republics was that it lacked the right to secede. In March 1981—a year after Tito’s death—a wave of protest rocked Kosovo, spontaneous mainly student-led demonstrations, which often raised the demand for Kosovo to become a republic. Federal troops were sent to crush the rising, perhaps killing as many as 300 in the next two months.⁹ Subsequently, the whole Albanian population of Kosovo was under suspicion and the federation required the Albanian leadership of the provincial LCY—who had believed that Kosovo was progressing toward gaining republic status—to repress “irredentism.” After this, the great majority of Yugoslav political prisoners were Kosovo Albanians.¹⁰

The 1981 riots offered an opportunity for Serb nationalists to alert Yugoslavia, especially other Serbs, that Kosovo Albanians were preparing the way for secession by harassing Serbs to leave Kosovo and simply by breeding. From 1981 the ethnic polarization sharpened, especially with Serbian accusations of “cultural genocide” in Kosovo, and from the mid-1980s onward every wild allegation against Kosovo Albanians was repeated or amplified in the Serbian press.¹¹ Slobodan Milošević seized control of the Serbian LCY, presenting himself as the champion of suffering Serbs throughout Yugoslavia, but especially as symbolized in Kosovo. In 1988, he used rent-a-mob tactics to end Vojvodina’s autonomy and bring Montenegro into line. However, in revoking Kosovo’s autonomy, he met stouter resistance not from the Kosovo LCY, but from the miners.

In the first snows of winter during November 1988, 3,000 miners marched forty-five kilometers (twenty-eight miles) from the pithead in Trepça to Prishtina in defense of the constitution and autonomy. The miners were joined throughout Kosovo by perhaps another 300,000 people—20 percent of the population. With self-discipline and dignity, and without any

violence, they faced down the police. Their extraordinary protest provided powerful images that were broadcast throughout the federation.

The situation escalated. Milošević appointed new provincial leaders. In February 1989, when the Serbian Assembly was due to annul Kosovo's autonomy, the miners began a stay-in strike, many of them deep underground, some on hunger strikes. A general strike spread throughout Kosovo while in Slovenia and Croatia there were massive solidarity demonstrations. On the sixth day, the provincial LCY announced the resignation of Milošević's appointees, and the next day the miners emerged into daylight apparently victorious. They had, however, been tricked. Belgrade rejected the resignations, imposed a state of emergency, and began a wave of arrests. The strikes resumed until all strikers received a letter telling them to return to work or be fired (or arrested).

Contemporary reports of the miners' actions were optimistic about the organized power of workers withholding cooperation and paralyzing production in Kosovo's industries.¹² However, a strike's main power is usually that the opponent needs the workers' product; the Milošević regime was soon to demonstrate that it had no such dependence.

If the miners' steadfastness prefigured—and partly inspired—the later turn toward nonviolent resistance, it was in sharp contrast with both the timidity of Kosovo's official representatives and the undisciplined protests that then erupted. On March 23, 1989, the Kosovo Assembly—surrounded by armored cars, with helicopters overhead, and with Serbian security forces actually inside the chamber—voted to annul Kosovo's autonomy. During the next six days, there were clashes around Kosovo; Amnesty International reported an estimate of 140 dead.¹³

Belgrade now tried to “decapitate” the resistance through wholesale detentions. Instantly, the mainly Albanian provincial LCY crumbled and new organizational initiatives took shape. The “early risers” were groups connected with what can be broadly identified as the “Kosova Alternative,” concerned less with independence than with democratization and often in touch with pan-Yugoslav civil society networks. These Prishtina activists tended to stay outside the LDK, although two of them—Youth Parliament leaders Blerim Shala and Veton Surroi—years later became members of Kosovo's negotiating team.

A Chronicle of Nonviolent Resistance

Building Organization

Two organizations central to mass nonviolent resistance were founded in December 1989. The Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) became the main monitoring and data center on human

rights violations and police maltreatment. It set out to ensure that regime brutality would backfire. An all-party group, it involved many former political prisoners and became heavily identified with Adem Demaçi, its chair from his release from prison in 1990 until he entered party politics in 1997. A few days later, LDK was founded—the force that was to dominate Albanian politics in Kosovo. Within weeks, it had hundreds of thousands of members, including both recent defectors from the LCY and those whom the LCY had repressed since 1981.

The LDK founders considered taking up arms. When instead they issued calls for restraint, at first they were ignored: in January and February 1990, there were violent incidents throughout Kosovo, including protesters using firearms. Police killed at least thirty-two people. Increasingly Kosovo Albanians became convinced that Milošević wanted to provoke war. The most extreme provocation occurred in March 1990—the “poisoning” of schoolchildren.¹⁴ Furious mobs of Albanians immediately looked to take reprisals on Serbs: fifty personal attacks were reported. The recently formed organizations—the CDHRF, the LDK, and the Youth Parliament—intervened to prevent lynching and eventually calmed the situation. By now, it was becoming clear how high the stakes were. Somehow, in the frequently repeated words of Shkëlzen Maliqi, soon to be leader of the Social Democratic Party, “nonviolence imposed itself.”¹⁵

The pragmatic case against armed struggle at this time was overpowering. However, the early period of nonviolent struggle is remarkable for its idealism—most visible in an identity shift, instigated by civil society groups, but taken up at large. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many Kosovo Albanians aspired to become modern Europeans. Rather than hark back to nationalist traditions, in this moment of crisis they campaigned to reform their own society. Civil society leaders such as Surroi and Maliqi were well aware that ethnonationalism was waiting in the wings, but saw the opportunity to call for a new democratic culture. Others addressed unacceptable features in Albanian society—notably the blood feud, high illiteracy, and the position of women—so building a solidarity that could withstand the Serbian onslaught. At times, these modernizing elements faced rejection—Maliqi and Surroi for their desire to find allies among the Serbian opposition¹⁶ or the volunteers in a women’s literacy program for seeming to threaten the patriarchal order—but in this early phase they projected a vision of social transformation.

This identity shift went much further than the Euro-Atlanticism today attributed to Rugova, which can be reduced to the political calculation that Kosovo Albanians needed to look for support from the West.¹⁷

Naming the Violence

Surroi originated one of the most important organizing tools for establishing a nonviolent policy, the petition. Titled “For Democracy, Against Violence,”

it gathered 400,000 signatures (most of the adult population) before Surroi and Rugova presented it at the United Nations in June 1990. Its commitment “to make each death a public act” meant, first, reporting, and, second, organizing homages such as five-minute work stoppages or sounding factory sirens or car horns at set times. Avoiding street confrontation, the idea was to use what little space existed to organize low-risk actions strengthening popular morale and unity. Curfew was marked by lighting candles and making noise.¹⁸

The practice evolved that, whenever there was a violent incident, someone from the LDK or CDHRF would go to the scene to calm the situation, to record what had happened, and to explain the strategy of nonviolent action. The documentation of police brutality would then be presented internationally so that regime violence would backfire against Belgrade.

The very act of documenting violence could change a victim’s attitude. Police aimed to humiliate Albanians but then, as social psychologist Anton Berishaj found in his own experience, being interviewed by activists and posing for photos “somehow made us proud. . . . To some extent, media exposure provided an alternative to traditional vengeance.”¹⁹

Mass Dismissals

In April 1990, mass dismissals began: first Albanian police were dismissed; in July staff at Radio and TV Prishtina were locked out; and in August the medical faculty was purged (partly for lending credibility to the accusations of poisoning). Milošević soon showed that he cared little about Kosovo’s economic resources, devastating the territory’s productive capacity. He imposed emergency management, often bringing in new Serbian bosses while requiring Albanian workers to sign an oath of loyalty to Serbia. Refusing this oath became a common pretext for dismissal. At many workplaces, managers locked out workers and then posted lists of who could return. In April 1990, the founders of Kosovo’s first free trade union federation—the BSPK (Bashkimi i Sindikatave të Pavarura të Kosovës; the Union of Independent Trade Unions)—little realized that their main task would be to document dismissals: their final estimate was that 146,025 (83 percent) of the 164,210 employed Albanians in 1990 lost their jobs.

The Defense of Education

The best-known feature of the nonviolent struggle in Kosovo is the construction of parallel institutions, especially the schools and university, which were backed up by a system of voluntary taxes levied inside Kosovo and also in the diaspora. Education was a central issue partly because of the youth of the population, partly Yugoslavia’s long history of denial of the

right to education in Albanian, and partly because Belgrade viewed institutions such as the University of Prishtina as “a nest of nationalism.”

In August 1990, Belgrade imposed a uniform curriculum throughout Serbia (including Kosovo and Vojvodina). Albanian teachers decided to work on without compliance, teaching the curriculum agreed upon before Milošević annulled Kosovo’s autonomy. First, Belgrade refused to pay their wages, and by August 1991 it had dismissed 6,000 secondary teachers. At the start of the 1991–1992 school year, Belgrade moved to exclude Albanians from all schools. When Albanian children, teachers, and parents arrived at schools on September 2, they found armed police blocking their entry. In many places, there were beatings and arrests. This was repeated daily, highlighting the need for a shift in strategy. The teachers’ union compiled an inventory of premises where teaching could continue; in January 1992 the parallel schools opened, using a mixture of private premises and the buildings of primary schools (as the Yugoslav Constitution guaranteed the right to primary education).

From 1992–1998, this school system played a vital role in maintaining the Albanian community in Kosovo despite some decline in pupil numbers and a loss of qualified teachers (many went into exile, needing paid work to support families). Most teachers believed this was an emergency measure that would be needed for only perhaps two years. They also faced police harassment—and, in 1995 and 1996, the CDHRF made a special point of reporting the number of people maltreated by police during educational activities.

The prime organizers of the education system were teachers themselves through their unions and with the support of fired educational administrators and local parent groups. The full system involved more than 325,000 school pupils, 18,000 school teachers, and nearly 14,000 university students. The voluntary taxation system had 1,000 volunteer tax collectors inside Kosovo (mostly tax collectors dismissed for refusing to sign loyalty oaths).

In her authoritative study of the parallel education system, Denisa Kostovicova remarks on its role in heightening solidarity: “[Albanians] believed that, by closing Albanian schools and the university, the Serbs actually intended to incite an Albanian violent insurrection. . . . The totality of the Serbian encroachment in education was to have a mobilizing rather than demoralizing effect on the Albanian community. In the process, the Albanian school emerged as an epitome of its peaceful resistance.”²⁰ Nevertheless, she also criticizes the history taught for strengthening traditional “victim” nationalism that was ambivalent about nonviolent resistance. The truth is that once the system was established, it did not develop into a base for further activity or teach pupils to think for themselves and to develop civic values. In general, the educational methods were as moribund as those in

Serbia, with the added disadvantage that classrooms were overcrowded, facilities poor, the dropout rate rising (especially among girls), and teachers' pay continually in arrears. For these reasons, despite being a major achievement, in the collective memory there is little love for the parallel education system. For young people in their formative years, this protracted experience could only deepen their hostility toward Serbs.

Grassroots Initiatives to Reform Kosovo Albanian Society

Social anthropologist Janet Reineck devoted much of her doctoral thesis to "explaining the profound allegiance to tradition held by many Albanians prior to the events of 1989."²¹ However, the Serbian threat spurred a different type of activism. "Topics of conversation once taboo are now openly expressed. People are able to consider their own vision of the future. . . . While the masses await liberation,' others have seized the moment, concentrating on what they can do during the interim. Convinced that democracy must start at home, they have initiated grass-roots movements to right the social wrongs embedded in the Albanian social system."²² She went on to refer to two specific initiatives: Motrat Qiriazi, a women's literacy program with the slogan "To Europe with a Pencil!" and the campaign for the reconciliation of blood feuds. Nobody disputes Motrat Qiriazi's nonviolent character. However, some people have offered a traditional interpretation of blood feud reconciliation, suggesting that Albanians seek to reconcile blood feuds in order to unify in preparation for war.²³

The Campaign to Reconcile Blood Feuds is mainly associated with Anton Çetta (1920–1995), a noted folklorist but also a polyglot, social reformer, and board member of the CDHRF. He took up this issue after being approached by students from Peja. Fifteen people, including some students, had been killed in blood feuds in 1989 and, for their own safety, several thousand were confined to their family homes. In a campaign from 1990 to 1992, some 500 students volunteered to tour villages trying to locate blood feuds. Then, elders such as Çetta and his coleader, the Catholic priest Don Lush Gjergj, visited not only to talk with the male head of the family, but also to encourage women to exert their influence. Eventually, there were public ceremonies of reconciliation, the biggest on May 1, 1990, attended by hundreds of thousands of people. Behind this, a network of local reconciliation committees was set up to address disputes without turning to Serbian courts.

Blood feud reconciliation was indeed part of the national struggle—people offered the hand of forgiveness "in the name of the people, youth and the flag." However, as Mirie Rushani explains, this was a call "to unite in a general resistance without arms, with the awareness that nonviolent resistance could carry enormous suffering and a high price."²⁴ Çetta offered

a nonviolent reinterpretation of traditional Kosovo Albanian values, in the manner of Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolent reading of the Bhagavad Gita. Interviews with Çetta and eyewitness reports present him as consciously giving an impulse to nonviolent struggle, to social solidarity, and to self-organization. Gjergj has remained a consistently nonviolent voice, repeating his message to oppose postwar vengeance: "revenge is fratricide which is the same as suicide."²⁵ It was no coincidence that these two leaders also headed the Mother Teresa Association, the humanitarian network whose achievements include establishing a network of health clinics. A fuller flavor of their campaign can be gleaned from an article in the *New York Times*:

"When women took off the veil it was difficult, but now they sit among us," Mr. Çetta said to the families of one village. "Now it is difficult to make the gift of blood [make a truce], but later it will be normal. We must swear that we will not kill each other any more. We hope to enter the European Community, and we should go in without these old burdens from the ancient past," he said. "There are many things we have to become more civilized about. We will be more civilized when a grandmother says to her grandson, 'Bring me the newspaper.' We will be civilized when grandmothers know how to read and care about what is happening in the world."²⁶

Popular Unity

Two massive demonstrations of popular unity were the self-organized referendum in September 1991 when 87 percent of the total electorate voted and 99.87 percent favored a declaration of independence, and then the May 1992 elections for a parliament and president of the Republic of Kosovo. The election turnout was almost as high as that of the referendum. With twenty-four parties taking part, the LDK won 76 percent of the vote while Rugova was elected president with 99.5 percent. The sheer numbers involved in these displays of unity established the legitimacy of the political leadership. But the organizers also took care to show continuity from structures abolished by Milošević: the referendum was called by a special meeting of most delegates to the dissolved assembly.

The referendum and the elections were organized in the name of the Coordinating Council of Political Parties—a platform that included small parties (such as the Youth Parliament and the Social Democratic Party). However, not only did this cease to function after the elections, but Maliki and Surroi as leaders of small parties were marginalized.

Kosovo Albanians experienced the period from 1990 onward as an occupation, in which their very way of life was under attack—their jobs, their education system, and their physical safety—in the face of repeated police beatings and attacks. However, their conscious nonviolent strategy denied Milošević a *casus belli*. Maliki often described Kosovo as a situation of

“neither war nor peace,” sometimes adding “but closer to war.”²⁷ And increasingly, looking north to Bosnia, they could see what a war option would mean.

Internationalizing the Question of Kosovo

In view of their comparative weakness (numerically, militarily, and economically) against Serbia, Kosovo Albanians knew they had to look for alliances. Internationalizing the issue was vital, especially as Kosovo Albanians were cut off from former allies in Yugoslavia and had few hopes of (and, mostly, took little interest in) finding powerful allies in Serbia.

Initially, for a population of 2 million, they were remarkably successful—not only in organizing their own diaspora, but also in entering international networks and gaining attention for Serbia’s human rights abuses, including Demaçi’s winning the European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize (human rights) in 1991. A huge success came in December 1992 when the outgoing George H. W. Bush administration threatened to bomb if Serbia escalated human rights violations, a warning reiterated by the William J. Clinton administration in February 1993. However, by that time, the European Badinter Commission had already ruled that only Yugoslav republics, not provinces, had the right to self-determination. This set the pattern combining international complaints about human rights violations in Kosovo with insistence that it remain in rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), a stalemate in desperate need of some intermediate objectives.

During Milan Panić’s brief premiership of rump Yugoslavia (July 1992–February 1993), the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), later the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), made a futile attempt to mediate negotiations over education, lecturing Albanians on “sacrificing their children in a cause they couldn’t win.” At the same time, those in control in Serbia (not Panić) treated the negotiations with contempt, failing to show up at meetings while mildly harassing the Kosovo Albanian negotiators. In 1992 the CSCE also established a small observer mission to Kosovo, the Sandzak, and Vojvodina, a welcome if token international presence to restrain Serbian excesses. But this had to be withdrawn in 1993 when rump Yugoslavia was suspended from the CSCE.²⁸

The chief Kosovo Albanian negotiator, LDK vice-president Fehmi Agani, was clear that negotiations could bring gains other than independence such as an interim UN administration but equally clear that it would be folly to abandon the demand for independence before negotiations even began. Increasingly, however, as wars raged elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia, the West’s key goal over Kosovo was merely to contain the situation. From 1990 until 1999, Western governments were firm that Kosovo

would not gain more than an enhanced autonomy within Serbia. They sympathized that human rights were being abused, and they commended Rugova's nonviolent policy while wishing he was a little less obdurate. Otherwise their priorities lay elsewhere.

It is not clear what role international influence had in the decision of Kosovo Albanians to suspend protests. When Panić visited Kosovo in October 1992, perhaps half the population was mobilized to protest about education despite the police brutality. Subsequently, Kosovo Albanians declared a moratorium on protests. "They cost more than we can gain through them."²⁹ The parliament, voted in by almost the entire Albanian population in a resounding act of self-assertion, was not convened ostensibly because it would be too "provocative." If the elections of May 1992 were empowering, this failure to convene parliament was the reverse. Thus missed was the opportunity to present Milošević with an acute dilemma: "let our parliament function, or show the world how you deny democracy" while pressing home the message internationally that Albanians would never resign themselves to living under Serbia.

In the coming three years, criticism mounted that the LDK was seeking to "monopolize" political space while its organs behaved less and less democratically and Rugova relied increasingly on a small inner circle of advisers.

In November 1995, the Dayton Accords ended the war in Bosnia, also marking the beginning of the end of Rugova's monopoly on political leadership in Kosovo. His lack of progress in winning international support stood exposed. The Dayton Accords ended all but an outer wall of the sanctions on Serbia. The opening of the US Information Office in Prishtina (locally called "the US embassy") was some symbolic compensation. The European Union (EU), however, failed to keep its promise to do likewise.

In September 1996, Italian mediators brokered an agreement for the "normalization" of education that was signed by Milošević and Rugova. However, a year passed without further progress, thereby emboldening the (Albanian) Students Union (UPSUP) to defy Rugova and end the post-1992 moratorium on demonstrations by calling a nonviolent march to reclaim the university buildings at the start of the new academic year, October 1, 1997.³⁰

Rugova summoned the UPSUP leaders to explain why they should postpone the march. They, however, insisted that students had the right to demonstrate for their own education. As a test of support, UPSUP asked students to join the evening promenades on the main street in Prishtina and were delighted at the popular response. Diplomats, in contrast, were alarmed: the most powerful diplomatic delegation ever to visit Kosovo—twelve ambassadors, headed by the ambassadors of the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands (at the time, the Netherlands held the presidency of the EU)—came from Belgrade to beseech the UPSUP leaders not to risk this provocation. Rugova had heeded this kind of advice before by not pursuing potentially

provocative initiatives. For UPSUP, however, the delegation merely confirmed that action was the best way to attract attention. The students proceeded to prepare their march, taking care to ensure a nonviolent discipline as, for the first time in Kosovo, protesters actually courted physical violence to dramatize the underlying violence of the regime. When police blocked their way, the marchers stood their UPSUP leaders at the front, prepared to be beaten, as indeed they were.³¹

Since 1994 Rugova's critics had often urged active nonviolence, but this was the only time that anyone had given it substance by planning a nonviolent confrontation. Rugova had little choice but to praise UPSUP while Western diplomats condemned police brutality and feted the protesters that they had previously tried to restrain. Through invoking the universal right to education, UPSUP had solid ground not only to defy Rugova in the name of its members, but also to gain support internationally and even from Belgrade students—a rare instance of Serbian solidarity with Kosovo Albanians.

UPSUP planned further protests—and two more demonstrations took place in 1997—but the movement was soon overshadowed by the first public appearance of the KLA on November 28, 1997 (Albanian National Day) and the increasing number of skirmishes prior to the police offensive of February–March 1998 and the Drenica massacres. No doubt, there was new energy and international support for implementing the education agreement but, once the fighting had started, education no longer was such a central issue.

Finally, having neither helped community-level organizing nor maintained a serious international presence in Kosovo when it would have made a difference, international powers decided to take a stand when the armed strife was imminent.

The Place of Civil Resistance in History

Civil resistance in Kosovo is widely perceived as a failure. I view it as a limited success, a means of survival without surrender against an oppressor who wished to provoke war. In particular, it attained three vital objectives:

1. *Maintaining the Albanian community and way of life in Kosovo.* Despite rafts of anti-Albanian measures, the devastation of Kosovo's economy, and the onslaught on education, Albanians stayed even though many family breadwinners went abroad.
2. *Preventing war when it was most dangerous.* By the time war came to Kosovo, world leaders understood, from Bosnia as well as Kosovo, the criminal nature of the Serbian nationalist project.
3. *Winning international condemnation of the regime* (if not yet support for independence).

In extremely difficult conditions for any kind of resistance, civil resistance should at least be respected as a vital phase when armed struggle would have been catastrophic.

The nonviolent struggle identified two complementary objectives in the phase of civil resistance that were equally valid for later: (1) to convince states that Kosovo Albanians should not be expected to live under Serbia; and (2) to demonstrate that the Serbian minority in Kosovo could survive and enjoy full rights without the protection of Serbia.

There remains a strong case that the criminal character of Serbian rule, and in particular the ethnic cleansing of 1999, meant that Serbia should have forfeited any claim to Kosovo. However, this argument has been weakened by skepticism about the guarantees of the safety and freedom of movement of the remaining Serbian population. In the early 1990s, Kosovo Albanians were eager to demonstrate that they would uphold the rights of all—reserving vacant seats in the parallel parliament for Kosovo Serbs, demonstrating the ecumenism of the movement by observing Christian festivals, and explaining repeatedly that Kosovo Albanians had traditionally protected the sacred sites of all religions. However, such values have been betrayed. In addition to wartime incidents including the KLA's kidnapping and murder of Serbian civilians, since the war ended in June 1999 the Kosovo Albanian population has not successfully restrained the elements that would drive Serbs out of Kosovo or defile Orthodox churches.

Furthermore, the proposition that “armed struggle succeeded where civil resistance failed” needs to take account of the price of “liberation war” and the unsatisfactory nature of what now passes for “independence.”

The War Record

The price of war was predictable: killing, rape, destruction of homes and displacement—13,421 deaths in the conflict from January 1998 to December 2000, including 10,533 Albanians, 2,278 Serbs and Montenegrins, plus a further 1,886 missing.³² Many might respond that it was “a price worth paying for freedom” and invoke “the will of the people,” but the KLA modus operandi in 1998 was to provoke reprisals against unarmed civilians. The villagers who suffered these reprisals were not consulted about their willingness to be sacrificed and woe to those who objected that the KLA could provoke but not protect.³³ For all of today's pilgrimages to the Jashari shrine, little attention is paid to the families of the missing. Kosovo parliamentarians and the Prishtina political elite were acutely embarrassed to be reminded of this when, in 2004, the Kosova Action Network hung laminated photos of missing people on the parliament railings.³⁴

Furthermore, arguing that the KLA fought a just war against a criminal opponent, many Albanians believe that KLA soldiers should enjoy impunity from war crimes investigations. The International Criminal Tribunal for the

Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has found that the KLA was responsible for “cruel treatment, torture, rape and murder,” but—partly because of witness intimidation—has lacked evidence to convict more than a few named KLA fighters.³⁵ The majority of Serbs killed from 1998 to 2000 were civilians, including 309 women—perhaps a fraction of the numbers of Albanian civilians and women killed by Serbian forces and paramilitaries. But if there is to be any process of restorative justice, this part of the truth needs acknowledging.

The KLA had a particular responsibility for the immediate postwar violence: it was the only armed force capable of restraining it, yet some members were leading perpetrators.³⁶ In general, having been victims of Serbs for so long, many Albanians were slow to react when compatriots also violated human rights. After all, these crimes did not match the enormity of those committed by Serbian forces and paramilitaries, they were not orchestrated by a regime, and there were mitigating circumstances (perhaps collective trauma). Many Serbs fled Kosovo even before North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops entered. However, what this also means is that those Serbs subsequently driven out from mixed areas were those who planned to stay, the ones most willing to adapt to being an ethnic minority in Kosovo.

World leaders mouthed glib phrases about building a multiethnic democracy in Kosovo, understanding little of the process of ethnic polarization since 1981. Among those who still stood for human rights, it was common to hear remarks such as Adem Demaçi’s, “I know of a great number of cases where Serbs protected Albanian homes, but I also know of even more cases where Serbs looted Albanian homes.”³⁷ Subsequently, however, Demaçi and others who work for coexistence have been disappointed that so few Albanians have been willing to take personal risks to protect Serbs. In the opinion of UN officials, Rugova was the political leader least “helpful on minority issues.”³⁸

The now-disbanded Kosovo Protection Corps was also a problem. Created to channel KLA veterans into a civil emergency force, its officers repeatedly fell under suspicion for acts of armed violence, including against fellow Albanians and in neighboring territories.³⁹

Compromised Independence

While Kosovo Albanians have been celebrating independence since 2008, this is not the independent Kosovo people volunteered for in 1990 but one riddled with corruption and organized crime, where power struggles are lethal, and without the brief-lived social solidarity celebrated by Reineck (as described above).⁴⁰ Forget UN Security Council Resolution 1235 that called for involvement of women in negotiating processes—Kosovo’s postwar negotiating teams have been all male. Independent Kosova is a disappointment compared with the hopes of 1990–1992.

Postwar events have also strengthened Serbia's hand in campaigning for partition. The formation of Serbian enclaves has established on-the-ground conditions for partition while the municipal reorganization currently under way as part of the international plan furthers this possibility by enhancing the powers of Serbian majority municipalities able to form a horizontal federation (with each other inside Kosovo) and to link vertically to Belgrade.

Conclusion

In view of Kosovo's significance in the history of humanitarian military intervention and the development of the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), it is necessary to discuss the international failure to prevent war. The R2P doctrine maintains that, when a state cannot protect its citizens from human rights violations or is itself an active violator (as was Serbia), then that protection becomes an international responsibility.⁴¹ This is what eventually happened in Kosovo. However, R2P misses the key lesson of failure of prevention. Urging states to respond to early warnings, including through support to civil society, the doctrine fails to mention civil resistance. If states are ultimately prepared to intervene militarily against criminal regimes, surely they should help those citizens who nonviolently challenge that regime's legitimacy. The states that now promote Kosovo's independence—and that in 1999 reconciled themselves to allying with an armed group recently considered terrorist (the KLA)—spent most of the 1990s urging Kosovo Albanians to relinquish the goal of self-determination and to further soften their already nonprovocative nonviolent strategy. Only at Rambouillet, in February 1999, did international powers admit the possibility of the separation of Kosovo from Serbia.

This failure to respond adequately to civil resistance campaigns is likely to be repeated elsewhere until international powers are prepared to act on the recognition that nonviolent struggle—even with secessionist goals—is an appropriate reaction to persecution and is far more desirable than armed struggle and the negative consequences that flow from it.

Notes

1. *The President's Activities, No. 12, March 2010* (Prishtina: Republic of Kosovo—Office of the President) at www.president-ks.gov.net, accessed April 5, 2010.

2. The activities of the US Information Office in Prishtina (established in 1996) sought to end Rugova's monopoly on leadership, including by promoting the leaders of the 1997 student protests, while in 1998 the KLA, previously listed as terrorists, received US training.

3. A short list includes the widening discrepancy in the 1990s between what was said in Rugova's meetings with diplomats and what he reported at home; his denial of the existence of the KLA and subsequent political paralysis; his craven appearance on television shaking hands with Milošević in Belgrade during the 1999 NATO bombings; his ineffectual postwar leadership; and collusion with the corruption that has infected Kosovo.

4. Anna Di Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, "The Legendary Commander: The Construction of an Albanian Master-Narrative in Post-War Kosovo," *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2006): 513–529. Kaçak is a general term for rural bandits, but also refers specifically to the Kaçak rebellions after 1918 that were led by Azem and Shota Galica. Shaban Palluzha became the leader of post-World War II resistance to pacification after his Yugoslav Partisan unit refused to be posted outside Kosovo.

5. A step toward including women in the historical narrative has been taken with the publication of Nicole Farnsworth, ed., *History Is Herstory Too—The History of Women in Civil Society in Kosovo, 1980–2004* (Prishtina: Kosovo Gender Studies Center, 2008).

6. Jakup Krasniqi, interviewed by the author, Prishtina, October 21, 1999. Jashari's firing at police provoked a raid on Donji Prekaz on December 31, 1991.

7. Under Minister of the Interior Ranković, Yugoslav Albanians were so terrorized that 195,000 were convinced to accept repatriation to Turkey in 1954–1957. Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albania: A History of Kosovo* (London: Christopher Hurst; New York: Columbia University, 1998), 157. The demographic balance in Kosovo was a permanent problem for Serbs. The only time in the twentieth century that census figures indicate the Serb-Montenegrin population of Kosovo reached 30 percent was in 1939 after a concerted settlement drive.

8. Rather anomalously Kosovo and the other autonomous province, Vojvodina, also remained represented in Serbian institutions. Yet together their votes on the presidency could outweigh Serbia.

9. The official death toll was 11, but Amnesty International cited an internal LCY report suggesting that more than 300 Albanians were killed. Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1991), 60.

10. See Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), for a more detailed survey of this history.

11. The most authoritative study addressing the controversies of 1974–1989 is Momilo Pavlović, "Kosovo Under Autonomy, 1974–1990," in *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholars' Initiative*, ed. Charles Ingrao and Thomas A. Emmer (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2009).

12. See Branka Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia* (London: Verso, 1993).

13. Amnesty International, *Yugoslavia: Police Violence in Kosovo Province—The Victims*, EUR 70/16/94 (London: Amnesty International, September 1994), 4.

14. This is the fourth and final of the "myths and truths" examined in detail by Julie Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 187–198. In the period March 18–23, 7,600 pupils in thirteen places complained of symptoms of neurointoxication, perhaps caused by a chemical agent such as Sarin (manufactured by the Yugoslav People's Army). Serbian officials tended to dismiss this as "politically-induced mass hysteria."

15. Shkëlzen Maliqi, *Kosova: Separate Worlds—Reflections and Analyses* (Prishtina/Peja: MM Society and Dukagjini, 1998), 101.

16. I first met Surroi and Maliqi on December 25, 1991, when they visited Belgrade to appeal to the "democratic opposition." Surroi looked at my War Resisters'

International broken rifle badge and said, "I'm a war resister too." He had just arranged for conscripts from Kosovo to find shelter in Croatia while Maliqi referred to Kosovo Albanians as "the biggest peace movement in Europe."

17. The Slovenian and Croatian treaties of secession from Yugoslavia included a commitment to noninterference in Yugoslav affairs (including Kosovo).

18. See chapter 3, "The Turn to Nonviolence," in Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*.

19. Anton Berishaj, "Violence Following Violence," *Psychosocial Notebook—Archives of Memory: Supporting Traumatized Communities Through Narration and Remembrance*, vol. 2 (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, October 2001), 79–86.

20. Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 90–91.

21. Janet Reineck, "The Past as Refuge: Gender, Migration, and Ideology Among the Kosova Albanians" (PhD dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1991), 201. Also, "Seizing the Past, Forging the Present: Changing Visions of Self and Nation Among the Kosova Albanians," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 11, nos. 1–2 (1993), 100–109.

22. Reineck, "Past as Refuge," 202.

23. Tanya Mangalakova, *The Kanun in Present-Day Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro* (Sofia, International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 2004).

24. Mirie Rushani, "La vendetta e il perdon, nella tradizione consuetudinaria albanese," *Religioni ee Società*, no. 29 (1997): 150.

25. Nexhat Buzuku, "Attacks Harm Those Who Carry Them Out," *Koha Ditore*, August 20, 2000.

26. Chuck Sudetic, "Prishtina Journal; Albanians' New Way: Feuds Without Blood," *New York Times*, April 7, 1990.

27. Shkëlzen Maliqi's invaluable commentaries were collated in *Kosova: Separate Worlds—Reflections and Analyses 1989–1998* (Peja: MM Society, 1998). His postwar article, "Why the Peaceful Movement in Kosova Failed," was published in Robert Hudson and Glenn Bowman, eds., *After Yugoslavia: Identities and Politics Within Successor States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 43–76.

28. See chapter 4, "Two Sovereignties," in Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*.

29. Teachers' union leader Agim Hyseni, interviewed by the author, Prishtina, February 7, 1993.

30. Women in Prishtina had defied the LDK leadership in 1996 to protest the killing of a student by a Serbian sniper.

31. For a fuller discussion of the student move, see Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, 151–157.

32. Humanitarian Law Center press release, "Belgrade Presentation of the Interim Results of the List of Killed, Dead and Missing Serbs, Roma, Bosniaks, Montenegrins and Other Non-Albanians in Kosovo," October 7, 2009, <http://hlc-rdc.org/Saopstenja/1799.en.html>, accessed October 6, 2010.

33. One documented example was in the early "KLA stronghold," Malisheva. When Serbian forces overran Malisheva in July 1998, the KLA "lost much territory but few fighters." James Pettifer, *Kosova Express* (London: Hurst, 2005), 190. When they returned, some villagers objected. A Statement of KLA Military Police Directorate, November 1, 1998, announced the "arrest" of two local LDK activists later released—for spreading anti-KLA propaganda and for "colluding" with two "collaborationists," now "executed." (The full statement is included in the transcript of the ICTY open session of the trial of Fatmir Limaj on February 14, 2005,

3396–3397, at www.icty.org/x/cases/Limaj/trans/en/050214IT.htm, accessed November 5, 2012.

34. Kathryn Harakal, *Haunted by Images: Photography as Witness and Evidence: Kosovo's Missing Persons* (Berlin: Irmgard Coninx Stiftung, 2009), http://www.irmgard-coninx-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Memory_Politics/Workshop_1/Harakal_Essay.pdf, accessed April 5, 2010.

35. For instance, when the ICTY Appeals Chamber upheld the acquittals of Fatmir Limaj and Isak Musliu, it also noted that the Trial Chamber's "factual findings . . . show that KLA soldiers systematically committed cruel treatment and torture in the camp." ICTY Appeals Chamber press release, The Hague, September 27, 2007, reference CVO/MOW/PR1184e, www.icty.org/sid/8841, accessed November 5, 2012.

36. Belgrade's Humanitarian Law Center reports instances where Albanian human rights activists, including KLA officers, intervened to end the abduction. Humanitarian Law Center, *Abductions and Disappearances of Non-Albanians in Kosovo*, Spotlight Report No. 30 (Belgrade: Humanitarian Law Center, 2001).

37. Quoted in Shkëlzen Gashi, *Adem Demaçi, a Century of Kosovo's History Through One Man's Life*, trans. Elizabeth Gowing (Prishtina: Rrokulia, 2010), 186. One of the most consistent promoters of coexistence in Kosovo has been Igballa Rogova, cofounder of Motrat Qiriazi and now director of the Kosova Women's Network. Her sense of betrayal by Serbian neighbors is expressed in Igballa Rogova, "I Am Alive!" in *Women's Side of War*, ed. Lina Vušković and Zorica Trifunović (Belgrade: Women in Black, 2008), 347–355.

38. Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace at Any Price: How the World Failed Kosovo* (London: Hurst, 2005), 207.

39. The KPC was finally dissolved on the recommendation of UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari. Many senior officers were accused and some convicted of offenses, including murder, kidnapping, intimidating witnesses and judges, gun-running, and various forms of corruption. See Naser Miftari and David Quin, "Policing the Protectors," in Institute for War and Peace Reporting, *Balkan Crisis Report* 440, June 30, 2003.

40. Avni Zogiani, the head of Çohu! (Wake Up!), Kosovo's coalition against corruption, suggests that the three largest political parties all "have had their parallel structures and intelligence services: gangsters basically, who control part of the economic resources in Kosovo," and that at one time the strongest of these was the LDK. See John Rosenthal, "Corruption and Organized Crime in Kosovo: An Interview with Avni Zogiani," *World Politics Review*, February 2, 2008, www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/print/1559, accessed November 5, 2012. International institutions in Kosovo have also been corrupt: the most egregious act of embezzlement was by UN official Joseph Trutschler who stole €3.9 million from the Kosovo Electric Company.

41. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001).

Appendix:

Conflict Summaries

This appendix has been compiled by the book's editor, Maciej Bartkowski, based on the information presented in the corresponding chapters of the book. Cases are arranged alphabetically. (Any omissions in the tables are either of the editor's own making or the information was not available.)

Key

Method and Type of Nonviolent Action

Nonviolent intervention

Disruptive

Creative

Noncooperation

Political

Economic

Social

Protest and persuasion

Length of the Campaign

Short: 1 day up to 4 weeks

Medium: 1 month up to 1 year

Long: More than 1 year

Level of Participation of People

Low: 1–100 people or less than 20 percent of the population

Medium: 100–1,000 people or between 20 percent and 50 percent of the population

High: More than 1,000 people or more than 50 percent of the population

Kosovo

Main Campaigns	Action	Method/Type	Date	Length	Level of Participation	Direct Impact	Long-Term/Overall Impact of Civil Resistance
	Miners march in defense of the constitution and autonomy	Protest and persuasion; Noncooperation/ <i>Political</i>	November 1988	Medium	High	An estimated 300,000 people—20% of Kosovo’s population—joined the miners Their peaceful protest was broadcast throughout the Yugoslav federation	Helped maintain the Albanian community and way of life in Kosovo Prevented war when it was most dangerous Won international condemnation of the Serbian regime Helped convince the international community that Kosovo Albanians should not be expected to live under Serbia Ensured that the Serbian minority in Kosovo could survive and enjoy full rights without the protection of Serbia
	Miners went on hunger strike and used stay-in strike underground	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Disruptive</i> ; Noncooperation/ <i>Political</i> , <i>Economic</i>	February 1989	Medium	High	Resignation of Slobodan Milošević’s appointees, but the government in Belgrade did not accept it	
	General strike	Noncooperation/ <i>Economic</i>	February 1989	Short	High		
	Solidarity demonstrations in Slovenia and Croatia	Protest and persuasion	February 1989	Short	High	State of emergency introduced and a wave of intimidation and arrests of strikers followed	
	Founding of Democratic League of Kosova (LDK)	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	December 1989 onward	Long	High	Hundreds of thousands of people joined LDK that dominated politics in Kosovo in the following years Mitigated violent response to repression and explained the need for strategic nonviolent resistance	
	Establishment of the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF)	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	December 1989 onward	Long		Made brutality of the regime backfire by presenting documentation about torture and killings of Kosovars to foreign media and officials Mitigated violent response to repression and explained the need for strategic nonviolent resistance	
“For Democracy Against Violence”	Petition with a commitment to make each death a public act	Protest and persuasion	1990		High	Ensured that the regime’s brutality backfired on it	
	Homage to those who were tortured and killed with five-minute work stoppages	Protest and persuasion; Noncooperation/ <i>Economic</i>	1990		High	Strengthened popular morale and unity of the resisting population Avoided vengeance by publicizing through media and international officials the crimes committed on Kosovars	
	At set times, factory whistles or car horns sounded	Protest and persuasion	1990		High		
	Lighting candles or making noise at the time of curfew	Protest and persuasion	1990		High		
	Photos of bruised and beaten people handed to foreign visitors at the CDHRF offices and distributed internationally	Protest and persuasion	1990		Medium		
	CDHRF and LDK went to the scenes of committed atrocities to mitigate violent responses to repression and explain the need for nonviolent discipline	Protest and persuasion	1990		Medium		
	Self-organized referendum	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	September 1991	Medium	High	87 percent of the total electorate voted, 99.87 percent in favor of a declaration of independence	Helped maintain the Albanian community and way of life in Kosovo Prevented war when it was most dangerous Won international condemnation of the Serbian regime
	Self-organized elections for a parliament and president of the Republic of Kosova	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	May 1992	Medium	High	LDK gained 76 percent of the vote and Ibrahim Rugova was almost unanimously elected president Such displays of unity established the legitimacy of the political leadership	
Reconciling blood feuds	Volunteers toured villages to locate blood feuds for respected elders to intervene and for public ceremonies of reconciliation to be arranged	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1990–1992	Long	High	Gave an impulse to social solidarity, to self-organization, and to a feeling of being a European	Helped convince the international community that Kosovo Albanians should not be expected to live under Serbia
Education	Protests by teachers and parents against Belgrade-imposed curriculum in the schools	Protest and persuasion	1991–1992	Medium	Medium	Led to the creation of parallel education institutions	Ensured that the Serbian minority in Kosovo could survive and enjoy full rights without the protection of Serbia
	Formation of parallel education institutions, schools and university, supported by a system of voluntary taxes in Kosovo and among the diaspora members	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	January 1992–1998	Long	High	Played a vital role in maintaining the Albanian community in Kosovo Strengthened a “victim” nationalism	
	Launching a women’s literacy campaign with slogan “To Europe with a Pencil!”	Protest and persuasion					
	Massive protests organized by teachers’ union during the visit of the Yugoslavian/Serbian prime minister	Protest and persuasion	October 1992	Short	High	Brutal repression by police Kosovars introduced a moratorium on protests	
	Nonviolent march organized by students at the University of Prishtina	Protest and persuasion	October 1997	Short	High	Brutal repression of the nonviolent protesters by the regime Helped internationalize the student struggle; Western diplomats condemned police brutality and invited protesters to visit their countries	