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Igor Ordev

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ERASING THE PAST: DESTRUCTION AND PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Part II (Continuation from the Previous Issue)

By Igor Ordev

Igor Ordev received the MA in Southeast European Studies from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece. Previously he worked on projects like the World Conference on Dialogue Among Religions and Civilizations held in Ohrid in 2007. He lives in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia.

III. THE CASE OF KOSOVO AND METOHIA

Just as everyone could sense that the end of the horrifying conflict of the early 1990s was coming to an end, another one was heating up in the Yugoslav kitchen. Kosovo is located in the southern part of former Yugoslavia, in an area that had been characterized by hostility and hatred practically 'since the beginning of time.' The reason for such mixed negative feelings came due to the confusion about who should have the final say in the governing of the Kosovo principality. The Albanians, who constitute the majority of the population, now felt that it should be their right to be the leaders and decide for themselves about their future Kosovo while the Serbs felt they should have a major role because of their history in the province. Their connection to Kosovo is very deep and sensitive. Both sides had different perspectives on Kosovo's history and who should be the rightful successor after the fall of Yugoslavia. This ethnic frontier between Slavs and (non-Slav) Albanians is reinforced by the old religious gap that divides them, namely that Albanians are predominantly Muslims while the Serbs are predominantly Orthodox Christians.¹

Kosovo and Metohija (the preferred Serbian name for the province), which was the southern province of Serbia, ranks among the European regions rich in cultural monuments.² This is what makes Kosovo distinct. There are Orthodox churches built during the medieval period that have great historical, cultural, and religious value. The war that took place in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999 brought about the destruction of a lot of these priceless objects. The loss was great for humankind in general as well as for Serbian Christianity.

Kosovo became known as a conflict-ridden and segregated society in which Albanians and Serbs live completely divided in two "parallel" societies. The region is often seen as a kind of frontier ever since the famous Battle of Kosovo was fought between the Ottoman Turks and Balkan Christian forces in 1389 in which Muslims and Christians clashed. In the 1980s these divisions turned the province into one of the most dangerous hot-spots of Eastern Europe. Since the end of the war in Bosnia and the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (in November 1995), the situation in Kosovo has escalated, especially since the Albanians started a guerilla war after years of political stalemate. In light of these recent developments it is logical that the rift between Albanians and Serbs is perceived as being definitely divisive.³

As in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the total damage done is irreplaceable and the number of destroyed churches and mosques is very high. This time, however, the situation was reversed, the Serbs were the ones that were mostly suffering the destruction of their heritage. Unlike Bosnia, a lot of books were written by Serb authors very shortly after the conflict about the despair and terror that the Serbs suffered in the loss of their churches and cultural and religious heritage. Of course, the Serbian Orthodox Church also played an essential role. If they were very active during the crisis in Bosnia, now, in this case they were even more concerned.

The international community was more concerned than before because of the poor results they achieved by trying to intervene in other situations in the region. This time they were eager to find a solution as quickly as possible. That of course meant the involvement of NATO forces and

¹ Duijzings, Ger: *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, Hurst and Company, London 2000, p. 8.

² Krstic, Branislav: *The Endangered Cultural Heritage of Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija and its Preservation*, Yugoslav Survey, Vol. XLIII, Jugoslovenski Pregled, Belgrade 2002, p. 95.

³ Ger Duijzings, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

other international factors in the fight against the genocide that took place in Kosovo.

The bad relations among Serbs and Albanians is not a recent notion; it goes back to the Yugoslav days. Massive unrest took place between March 11 and April 30, 1971, accompanied by repeated demands for transforming Kosovo into a republic and by vandalism against Serb cultural and Christian symbols.⁴

There is an interesting story of how the events unfolded and took on ominous proportions. At lunchtime on March 11, 1981, in the eating-hall of the University of Pristina, an Albanian student found a cockroach in his soup. Disgusted, he hurled his tray of food on to the floor. Other students felt equally fed up with their conditions of life at the University, and quickly joined in the protest.⁵ Before anyone noticed, there were thousands of students in the center of the city chanting: "Food!" and "Conditions!" These protests escalated and the demands changed. The desire for better living conditions turned into a desire for independence. This was not taken lightly by the Serbs. It was a serious threat for the stability of the region.

Albanians organized demonstrations in Podujevo, Vucitern, Gjilan, Gjakova, Ferizaj and Mitrovica. and people were chanting different slogans, such as: 'Kosovo – Republic!', 'We are Albanians – not Yugoslavs!' and 'Unification with Albania!'⁶ So the idea of independent Kosovo is not something new; quite to the contrary, it seems that the idea has lived in many people's minds for a long time.

III. 1. A Short Historical Overview

To understand the present situation in this region we have to know at least a little about Kosovo's history. The province is important to both sides.

The fact that the Christian Orthodox Church has long been settled there in the past supports the contention that Kosovo and Metohija are very important for the Serbian people. In 1284, Pec became the seat of the Serbian archbishop, making Metohija one of the most important Serb lands.⁷ The most beautiful examples of architecture were built in that area at the time. However, the most valuable are the monasteries of the Serbian medieval state, which mark the zenith of Byzantine architecture of the time.⁸

With the beginning of the long domination by the Ottoman Turks, the situation in Kosovo began to escalate. This region has been a place of constant fighting and slaughter from three sides, the Ottoman Turks, the Serbs and finally the Albanians. Over time, people were converted into other religions either because of the tremendous pressure from the other religious groups or the high taxes that had to be paid. Muslims, under Ottoman rule, didn't have that same obligation so a lot of Christian believers became Muslims because that was the best way to survive those difficult times. Andreja Bogdani, archbishop of Shkup, wrote to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide on 10 August 1670, complaining that the Albanian Catholics suffered more from the Orthodox Serbs than from the Turks, to the extent that they would finally be compelled to convert to Orthodoxy.⁹ People have often changed their ethnic identity or converted to another religion without completely abandoning and forgetting the legacy of previous identities.¹⁰ So this is where these mixed religious feelings were born and were active until the separation during the wars in the nineties.

Since the first Serbian uprising against Ottoman rule (1804-13), the infant Serbian state and the Serbian church developed a relation of close co-operation and symbiosis.¹¹ At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, a border between the Ottoman Empire and the independent Serbia was established

⁴ Zivota Dzordzevic, *Cultural Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija*, (Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Serbia), p. 25.

⁵ Noel Malcolm *Kosovo: A Short History*, (London: Papermac, 1998), p. 334.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 334-335.

⁷ Dzordzevic, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

⁸ Krstic, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

⁹ Mark Krasniqi, "The Role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Anti-Albanian Policies in Kosova" in *The Kosova Issue-A Historic and Current Problem* edited by J.Bajraktari, (Tirana 1996), p. 78.

¹⁰ Duijzings, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

and this resulted in large population movements and a considerable rise of ethnic and religious tensions. Serbs massively expelled Albanians from Serbia to Kosovo, while many Kosovo Serbs fled to Serbia as a result of that. Even though these recent movements have made the percentage of Albanians in Kosovo higher, Serbs still had deep commitment to this region.

It is the lost battle between the Christianity (mainly Serbian) and Ottoman forces which has gained mythical proportions in Serbian history. The Kosovo myth had played an important political and ideological role from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Serbs started to stand up against Ottoman rule, and even more so after the country became independent in 1878.¹²

Serbia regarded political and cultural hegemony in Kosovo as an inalienable and sacrosanct Serbian right and treated the Albanians as a hostile element that needed to be pacified and neutralized, or even expelled. In short, these years between 1878 and 1914 were crucial for Kosovo's recent history, turning the division between Christians and Muslims into an ethnic divide between Serbs and Albanians.¹³ We can conclude that both sides had a different vision about the region. The Serbs were not going to give it up considering it as a place of great historical significance. On the other side, the Albanians were gaining in numbers until they constituted about 90% of the population in the second half of the twentieth century. According to the 1961 census, Serbs and Montenegrins accounted for 27.5 percent of the Kosovo and Metohia population, dropping to 14.9 percent in 1981 and to an estimated 10 percent in 1989.¹⁴

The desire by the Serbs to "clean up" the area reached the point that drastic measures were being prepared. In the second half of the 1930s, there were plans and elaborate schemes to expel all Albanians from the then Yugoslavia through brutal means including the burning down of Albanian villages and city quarters where they lived.¹⁵ Also included in the planning was an extensive church-building campaign in Kosovo; this campaign led both to the reconstruction of ruined Serbian Orthodox churches and the construction of new ones.¹⁶ During World War II the situation was reversed as Serbs became the victims.

The actual turning point came after the end of World War II when Kosovo and Metohia became more autonomous. After the war ended in 1945, Kosovo and Metohia remained within the framework of Serbia, but this time with a status they had never held before—that of a separate autonomous region. Serbs and Montenegrins expelled from Kosovo and Metohia during the war by Albanians were banned from returning home by Yugoslav authorities, who decided to leave in the region Albanians from Albania, especially from northern Albania, who settled there during WWII by occupational forces and their Albanian quislings.¹⁷

After the riots that happened during the 1980s in Kosovo, migration out of the province intensified. Mostly Serbs abandoned their homes because of the threat of instability. More than 50,000 Serbs left in a very short time. Thus, the Albanians were brought closer to their goal of an independent Kosovo. As it seemed, an autonomous Kosovo was the first step and the next logical step would have been independence.

It's very important to mention that after the death of Tito in 1980, the Serbian church became very active in the construction and reconstruction of churches and monasteries in the region as a way of presenting Kosovo as belonging to the Serbs. Construction often was deliberately situated on land where, according to medieval documents, a church once stood, so the activity was cleverly couched in terms of Reconstruction.¹⁸

¹² Ibid., p. 172-73.

¹³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴ Dzordzevic, *op.cit.*, p. 24. [Currently that percentage is even smaller.]

¹⁵ Hivsi Islami, "Democratic Problems of Kosovo and other Ethnic Albanian Territories" in *The Kosova Issue-A Historic and Current Problem* edited by J.Bajraktari, , p. 142.

¹⁶ Andras Riedlmayer, *Monument and Crime: The Destruction of Historic Architecture in Kosovo*, Grey Room, No. 1 (Autumn, 2000), 108-122, Retrieved 31 August 2006 from the http://www.bosnia.org.uk/bosrep/report_format.cfm?articleID=796&reportid=151

¹⁷ Dzordzevic, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁸ Riedlmayer, *op.cit.*

The most significant year for the Kosovo province was 1989, before the break up of Yugoslavia, when Kosovo's autonomy, the one granted by Tito, was eliminated. It was a part of the election campaign for the future president, Slobodan Milosevic, and his "ace" was Kosovo. Knowing that Kosovo brought patriotic feelings to the Serb people, he used that to gain their trust by giving his promise that Kosovo would never be separated from Serbia.

This wasn't taken well by the Albanian people; quite to the contrary, other solutions and outside allies for independence were looked for. The war in the north of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s, between Croatia and Bosnia, postponed the plans that maybe would have taken place earlier. At the end of the nineties came the moment when the "cup spilled over."

III. 2. Serbian Propaganda About Kosovo

One cannot overstate the proposition that Kosovo became a very influential argument for the strengthening of people's nationalism in Serbia. The propaganda created by various intellectuals in the society spread the knowledge about and the interest in the Kosovo myth and telling the "truth" to the people. Kosovo became the substance for songs.¹⁹ Not only songs, but all kinds of propaganda were used to make people feel a part of that story. Serbian bookstores filled their shelves with books about Kosovo. Musical artists dedicated their works to Kosovo.²⁰ There are also some theater plays dedicated to that subject. A lot of effort has been made in order to achieve a simple goal of putting a piece of the land in the heart of people. The power of this epic literature is in its strong moral overtones and its compelling story lines that have had a great impact, particularly among the (illiterate) peasant masses.²¹

III. 3. The Albanian Factor

For many years the Serb media referred to Albanian "terrorism" usually meaning students throwing stones; now, for the first time since the Serb clampdown of 1989-90, there were signs of genuine terrorist activities. Several attacks took place from summer of 1996 onwards, including the shooting of two policemen in Mitrovica, a bomb blast in Podujevo, and an attack on the Serb Rector of Pristina University. No organization claimed responsibility, and many Albanians assumed that these were artificial acts of provocation.

By the summer of 1997 a spokesman for something calling itself the 'Kosovo Liberation Army' was giving interviews in Switzerland, in which he said that his organization was responsible for several recent shootings of Serb policemen, and declared: "This is the movement people support now."²²

The key roles in this conflict were played by the Serb forces on one side and KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) on the other. KLA is an organization that was founded to fight primarily for the cause of achieving the dream of "Great Albania" but also for the right of the Albanians and their interests. Their goal was the connecting of all the Albanians who live in the three separate but adjacent states (Albania, Macedonia and the Serb province of Kosovo) in creating a Great Albania. This is where the vision of the Serb and Albanian people clashed—both sides wanted enlargement of their countries, as they thought they deserved. The difference is that after the war in Bosnia the Serbs didn't have that dream as much as before; on the other hand the Albanians felt that it was a good moment to start the process of connecting the "Albanian" states into one big country. This dream wasn't supported by the international community so the motives changed as did the motto. Instead the fight for "Great Albania" they turned it into the fight for the Albanian rights...which made much more sense to the external institutions.

III. 4. The "Cultural Cleansing" in Kosovo

After the end of the wars in the other parts of Yugoslavia, when it was up to the

¹⁹ Duijzings, *op.cit.*, p. 182.

²⁰ Ramet, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

²¹ Duijzings, *op.cit.*, p. 195.

²² Malcolm *op.cit.*, p. 355.

international community to decide the future of Kosovo, the Albanian minority (majority in Kosovo) was disappointed. More concretely, the European Community requested a formal demand for the recognition of the six Federal Republics of Yugoslavia, but excluded the two autonomous provinces. Recognition came on January 15, 1992. Neither the United States nor the European Community applied its recognition criteria to one of the most troubled and repressed Yugoslav regions, the Serbian province of Kosovo, populated largely by ethnic Albanians.²³ Not then, nor later, during the signing of the Dayton agreement for Bosnia, did anyone from the international bodies mention the troubled province of Kosovo. This was a historical error that took many innocent lives and people's dreams. The feelings of anger and betrayal were in the minds of the Albanian population. It was an explosion waiting to happen, and it did. The KLA was the driving force of the population.

Serb forces initiated a counterinsurgency campaign in March 1998, directed against the KLA and Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population. The architecture was systematically targeted for destruction. Mostly the great numbers of mosques have suffered from these attacks. Professional experts in the field coming from outside the country to check and count the number and the kind of damage that these priceless objects suffered reported that at least 207 out of the approximately 609 mosques in Kosovo sustained damage or were destroyed during the fighting of that period.²⁴ Some of them are the Village Mosque, Lismir; Mosque of Halil Efendi, Dobrcane; Market Mosque, Vucitrn, and others.

Only by going through the material written by foreign writers can we see how much was really damaged and destroyed. In many books written by Serb writers, the accent is on the damages caused by the KLA, the Albanian population, and NATO which is obviously a logical attribution of blame from their perspective. The time that these destructions took place is also significant. The destruction of mosques and many other Islamic shrines took place during the campaign of expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo to Albania in 1998. The mosques were used by the Albanian population to hide from the Serb forces and that's how some of the destruction of this heritage occurred.

On the other hand, the destruction of the many churches and monasteries took place in the aftermath of the war in 1999, when the refugees returned to their homes in Kosovo. Having the back up of the external factors on their side, they felt ready to act. It certainly was a destructive act, both in quality and quantity.

The Serbian monuments were not destroyed in the course of armed conflicts or incidents but rather after the end of the war. One third of all the registered monuments in the Serbian heritage in Kosovo and Metohija were demolished, damaged or endangered, as well as more than half of churches holding active service. This leads to a conclusion that the destruction of Serbian monuments, which were mainly religious, was not accidental, but deliberate.²⁵

This is a list of 76 destroyed and desecrated Serbian Orthodox Churches in Kosovo and Metohija (June-October 1999)²⁶

1. The Holy Trinity Monastery, Musutiste near Suva Reka
2. The Church of the Holy Virgin, Musutiste
3. St. Mark's of Korista Monastery, near Prizren
4. St. Gabriels Monastery, Binac
5. Devic Monastery, near Srbica
6. St. Uros's Monastery, Sarenik, G. Nerodilje
7. The Monastery of St. Archangels, Gornje Nerodimlje
8. St. Nicholas of the Summer Church, Donje Nerodimlje
9. St. Stephen Church, Donje Nerodimlje
10. The Church of the Holy Virgin, Dolac near Klinia

²³ Same Repishti, "Self-Determination and the Present Status of Kosova" in *The Kosova Issue-A Historic and Current Problem* edited by J.Bajraktari, p. 182.

²⁴ Riedlmayer, *op.cit.*

²⁵ Krstic, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

²⁶ Zoran Stefanovic, ed. *Crucified Kosovo: Destroyed and Desecrated Serbian Orthodox Churches in Kosovo and Metohija (June-October 1999)*, Second Edition, The Voice of Kosovo and Metohia, Media and Publishing Center of Raska and Prizren Orthodox Eparchy, n.p., 1999, pp. 1-3.

11. St. Nicholas Church, Slovinje near Lipljan
12. The Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Suva Reka
13. The Holly Trinity Church, Petric near Pec
14. The Holy Virgin Church, Belo Polje near Pec
15. St. Urosh's Cathedral, Urosevac
16. St. Elijah's Church, Vucitrn
17. St. John the Baptist Church, Samodreza near Vucitrn
18. St. Parasceva's Church, Drsnik near Pec
19. The Holy Virgin Church, Naklo near Pec
20. The Holy Trinity Church, Velika Reka near Vucitrn
21. The Church of the Holy Apostles, Petrovac near Kos. Kamenica
22. The Church of the Holy Virgin, Podgorce, near Vitina
23. St. John the Baptist Church, Pecka Banja
24. The Church of the Holy Virgin, Dzurakovac near Pec
25. The Holy Trinity Cathedral, Dzakovica
26. St. Nicholas Church, Osojane near Pec
27. St. Elijah's Church, Bistrazin near Dzakovica
28. St. Demetrios Church, Siga near Pec
29. St. Elijah's Parish Church, Zegra near Gnjilane
30. The Church of Holy Cosmas and Damian, Novake near Prizren
31. The Church of the Holy Virgin, Veliko Krusevo
32. Zociste Monastery & The Church of Holy Cosmas and Damian
33. The Parish Church, Grmovo near Vitina
34. St. Nicholas Church, Kijevo near Klina
35. St. Marks Church, Klina
36. St. Nicholas Church, Ljubizda near Prizren
37. St. Elijah's Church, Ljubizda near Prizren
38. Parasceva's Church, Dobrcane near Gnjilane
39. The cathedral Church of Christ the Savior, Pristina,
40. St. Elijah's Church, Smac near Prizren
41. The Church of St. Basil the Great, Srbica near Prizren
42. St. Parasceva's Church, Zaskok near Urosevac
43. St. Nicholas Church, of Gatnje near Urosevac
44. The Church of the Holy Virgin, Donje Nerodimlje
45. St. Elijah's Church, the Nekodim near Urosevac
46. The Church of the Holy Peter and Paul, Talinovac and Urosevac
47. The Holy Trinity Church, Babljak near Urosevac
48. The Church of the birth of the Holy Virgin, Sovtovic near Urosevac
49. The Church of the Holy Prophet Elijah, Kacanik
50. The Church of the Holy Virgin, Korisa near Prizren
51. St. Jeremiah's Church, Grebnik near Klina
52. The Church of the Holy Knez Lazar, Kos near Istok
53. The Holy Trinity Church, Zitinje near Vitina
54. St. Parasceva's Church, Klokot near Vitina
55. St. Lazar Church, Belica near Istok
56. The Church of the Holy Prophet Elijah, Pomazatin
57. St. George's Church, Rudnik near Srbica
58. The Holy Trinity Church, Donja Ratisa near Decani
59. The Church of the Holy Apostle Luke, Vitimirica near Pec
60. St. Elijah's Church in Podujevo
61. The Church of the Holy Apostles, Gornja Pakastica near Podujevo
62. A paracclasion at the Srb cemetery, Kosovska Mitrovica
63. The Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Istok
64. St. Nicholas Church, Prizren
65. The Church of the Holy Savior, Dvorani near Musitiste
66. St. Elijah's Church, of Lokvice near Prizfen
67. The Church of the Holy Knez Lazar, Piskote near Dzakovica
68. St. Parasceva's Church, Binac near Vitina
69. St. Parasceva's Church, Gojbulja near Vucitrn
70. St. Nicholas Church, Stimlje
71. The Church of the Holy Archangel, Stimlje
72. The Church of the Holy Savior, near Musutiste
73. St. Parasceva's Church, near Musutiste
74. The Church of the Holy Archangel, Musutiste
75. The Kosovo Battle Memorial

Even though most of these monuments were built in the twentieth century, there are some that were built in the medieval period and have (had) a great value.

History seems to be repeating itself. The same self-conscious destruction that happened in parts of Bosnia, Republika Srpska and Herzegovina, was also a part of this Kosovo conflict. Only now, the sides have changed, and it looks like the Albanians learned something from their neighbors, the Serbs. There are different views from both sides about the rights of property of this land. In many research materials the opinion changes whether the author is of Albanian or Serbian ethnicity. The issue is mostly connected to the question on who were the first ones to settle in the region of Kosovo.

There are a lot of questions now whether these old medieval buildings should belong to the Serb side. The ethnic Albanian author Krasniqui claims that it is well known that the Serbs began to descend into Kosova from the state of Raska for the first time toward the end of the 12th century, after the war against Byzantium of 1189, while these religious monuments were built long before the arrival of the Serbs in this area, which had always been inhabited by Albanians, but was governed by Byzantium until 1180, when emperor Manuel Komneni died.²⁷ According to the Albanian point of view, these places of worship were built long before the Serbs were part of this area and so they have no right to claim them. They emphasize that the Nemanjic dynasty had restored the monasteries, but was NOT the one who built them. According to Krasniqui there are even some Serbs historians who agree with that point of view. He quotes the Serbian historian Pero Slijepcevic: "It has been proved that only a small number of the many old Serbian monasteries were really founded by the Serb who lent his name to the church... The Serbs had no tradition of their own in either building or painting."²⁸

But there is another "truth" that says the Serbs are the ones who first came and took over. They even gave their name to the place. According to Dzordzevic the name Kosovo is Serb and was derived from the word *kos* meaning blackbird (Kosovo Polje meaning a field of blackbirds). The name Metohija is derived from the Greek and Serb word *metoch* meaning a monastery estate.²⁹

These are the different views from both sides that make the situation even harder to get a handle on. This puts an interesting perspective on the whole situation since the cultural heritage of Kosovo is one of the key reasons before the international community as it considers why the Serbs are unwilling to give up their rights to that land. No one thought that there would be a fight about whose heritage it is, since until recently, all inhabitants lived in a peaceful environment. Not only Serbs, Croats and Albanians, but also others like the Roma people, celebrated holidays in the same monasteries without incidents during the Tito era. After 1991, things changed and separation from the "others" was staged. The relations among other ethnicities became more hostile. Only the Serbs were allowed to be a part of the monasteries during the celebrations.

III. 5. The End of the Conflict

The ending of the actual fighting in the conflict came with the intervention of the NATO alliances in March 1999. It came after the unsuccessful negotiations that were held with the two sides, Slobodan Milosevic on one and the Kosovo Albanians on the other. The peace negotiations were held by the Contact Group in Rambouillet in France and the agreement as expected wasn't signed by the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. The American president, Clinton, wanted to demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's response to aggression. Although NATO bombing succeeded in grounding the Yugoslav air force, it didn't succeed in destroying its air defense, did relatively little damage to the ground forces, and did not stop the expulsion and killings of civilian Albanians.

Besides the ambiguities of the intervention of NATO forces, they also made additional errors concerning the destruction of the cultural heritage of the region. Deliberately or not, no one

²⁷ Krasniqui, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Dzordzevic, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

knows other than the leading figures in NATO, there are some unique objects which were destroyed in Serbia as well. These priceless objects are considered irreplaceable and had special part in the history of the region. On April 27, NATO bombs collapsed the ramparts of the 15th century Zindan Gate portion of the Belgrade Fortress. Repeated NATO bombings collapsed the ceilings and fissured the walls of Prince Milos' Residence, erected in 1831, now housing the Historical Museum of Serbia.³⁰ Also the Museum of Genocide and Memorial Park in Kraguevac (dedicated to the victims of Fascist executions during WWII, ironically) was badly damaged.

This is a list of churches and monasteries destroyed or damaged by NATO:

1. The St. Paraskeve Church built in the 16th Century. – destroyed.
2. Voilovica Monastery in Pancevo, built in 1405 – suffered damage.
3. The Visitation of Virgin Monastery, founded in 16th C. – suffered cracked walls.
4. The St. Trinity Monastery – cracks in the walls and damage to the roofs.
5. St. Mark's Church in Belgrade, built in 1930s – damage to the windows, facade and domes.
6. Rakovica Monastery built in 16th C. – suffered damage to the walls.
7. Church of Descent of the Holy Spirit, 1818 – suffered repeated damage.
8. Vrdnik Monastery on Fruska Gora Mountain, built in the 16th C. – repeatedly bombed.
9. Staro Hrpovo Monastery, 15th C. – bombed and damaged.
10. The Virgin Ljievka Cathedral in Prizren, built in 1306 – repeated bombing.³¹

Not only had the cultural heritage of the Serbs suffered collateral damage, but the Albanian one also. NATO bombs damaged the Hadum Mosque, built at the end of the 16th century. NATO's bombs also weakened the wall stability and structural integrity of the Bairakli Mosque, 15th century, which houses the sarcophagus of Hairi-bey Miralai.³² This shows that the bombs were not deliberately pointed at the property of the Serbs but that these are accidental cases where both sides suffered because of the lack of precision of the NATO forces. Of course this can not be said with certainty because there is always the possibility that some of the targets were deliberately destroyed for strategic purposes. For example the bridge in Novi Sad which was hit during the bombing was damaged for a certain reason because no army was targeted from there. There are a lot of conspiracy theories that usually peoples from the Balkans like to have, mostly directed towards US; it is yet to be proven if any of these theories are close to reality.

"In August 2000, UNMIK adopted the Regulation on Self-Government of Municipalities of Kosovo, which was the first step in establishing a legal framework for substantial autonomy in Kosovo and the beginning of the transfer of administrative responsibilities to the local population."³³ Now, since the UNMIK took Kosovo under its jurisdiction and the war has come to an end, things have calmed down but the Albanian population is still the privileged and dominant one. Intimidation and harassment resulting in sales of property and further exodus of Serbs continues unabated throughout the first phase of the international administration in Kosovo.³⁴ This is leading to a clearance of the land and creating a cleansed environment in which the Albanians are the only nation. All this made it increasingly probable that a state where independence is the only solution is developing. And, indeed, Kosovo declared its independence and was recognized by a number of countries while others are withholding recognition.

III. 6. The Role of Religion in the Kosovo Conflict

Religion was for centuries the driving force of the Ottoman Empire. It was very important for the status of the individual in the society. Prosperity was possible only for the ones that were devoted to Islam. That may be why religion has this tremendous power now, in the Balkans. Every division between people in these wars has been made primarily on religious basis. It was Serbian Orthodoxy that was trying and somehow managing to find its way in the society, unlike Roman Catholicism, which was not pleasantly accepted by the other religions. The Serbian church took an

³⁰ Nina Posidelow and Athanasia Mantzouranis: *Destruction of Cultural and Historical Sites in Yugoslavia*, Chapter 9 Retrieved 25 Sept 2005 from http://www.iacenter.org/warcrime/9_cultur.htm

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid

³³ Yannis, Alexandros: *Kosovo Under International Administration: An Unfinished Conflict*, ELIAMEP/PSIS, Athens 2001, p. 44

³⁴ Yannis, Alexandros, op.cit., p. 37

important role in the sphere of politics. Under the Serbian constitution of 1903, Orthodoxy was proclaimed the official state religion and all state and national holydays were celebrated with church ritual. This intimate link between state and church has induced the Serbian Orthodox church to adopt a direct political role, especially in times of crisis, ever since.³⁵ The main ace that the church has used is the strong sense of victimization and suffering which we already mentioned in the case of Bosnia, which is traced back to the Kosovo battle when the Serbs were defeated by the Ottoman Turks. Since then the church has seen itself as the suffering church and trying to transform the suffering of the church into the suffering of the nation. It was the Serbian Orthodox Church which took the lead in revitalizing the Kosovo myth after Tito's death. Church dignitaries started to criticize Serb communists for giving up Kosovo to the Albanians, and they later gained the support of Serbian intellectuals, and eventually, even communist hard-liners.³⁶

As for the Albanian side of the population, not too many people know that Albanians are not just Muslim, but Roman Catholics and Orthodox also. Albania was under the communist system for a long time just as most of the Balkan countries were. The famous leader in that period was Enver Hoxha and he made some drastic changes concerning the religious aspect of Albanian life. Enver Hoxha took Pashko Vasa's motto (The faith of the Albanians is Albanianism) literally and made Albania the first "atheist" state in the world.³⁷ This achieved great results and had great influence on the people. It was a solution for the religious intolerance that existed between Albanians themselves. Even though people dare to think that Islam is the strong link that connects Albanians and that's why they try to fight it, they were mistaken. It's the sense of being Albanian that makes them stick together, no matter which religion they are. This however, does not mean that religion nowadays doesn't play an important role in the lives of the Albanian people, whether they live in Macedonia or Kosovo.

A lot of aspects of life were shaken after the Kosovo crisis, its history, the present and the future. Everything that was good in the relations among the various ethnic and religious groups is no longer remembered by any side any longer, and the evidence is destroyed by the destruction of everything that belonged to the "other" side. The present is a world where no interaction exists among these two major ethnicities and the future doesn't seem to bring anything promising. It looks as it always will be "them" against "us".

III. 7. The Role of Leadership

Among the leading figures in the Kosovo conflict, one person stands out from the rest and that is Slobodan Milosevic, the former Serbian President. He was the leading figure in the Bosnian crisis and he was the one who initiated the Kosovo question. Slobodan Milosevic sky-rocketed to power when he stood up to protect Kosovo Serbs against further suffering, making his famous declaration to Kosovo Serbs, "nobody should dare to beat you..." during a visit to Kosovo in April 1987.³⁸ He was widely supported throughout Serbia for his actions on that matter. As the time passed his fame was fading away because the Serbian people began to suffer for his expansionistic visions. Milosevic was on trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in connection with the atrocities committed in the Balkan conflicts of the 1990's. He was charged with genocide, crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war, and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. Unfortunately he was never found guilty because of his death during the trial. He died in his cell in March 2006.

On the other side we have the Albanian politicians with their leader Ibrahim Rugova who didn't have any power in their hands and were begging the international community to intervene and give them the power to operate this province. Their desire has been an independent Kosovo. Rugova was different from any other leader in the region. His way of dealing with the problems was quite pacifistic and unique considering that everyone else felt that war was the only solution.

³⁵ Duijzings, *op.cit.*, p. 177.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

He was very active politically in the province and quite popular among the Albanians. Unfortunately, he passed away in January 2006, without seeing the end of the negotiations concerning Kosovo.

The third side would have to be the KLA organization and its perceptions on the future of the Albanian population in the Balkan region. They have been present in the area for the past ten years and quite influential in their quests. Their means of achieving those quests have been seen as terrorist activities by many people. For some they have been terrorists, and for some heroes.

The fourth side is the external factor including NATO, UN and OSCE which have tried to control the situation by taking the role of diplomatic agent. They have been persistent in calling for dialogue between the Kosovo resistance and Belgrade. They resolved the situation by supporting Kosovo's independence. But against Russia's vigorous objections and the misgivings on part of a number of other states.

III. 8. Preserving the Cultural Heritage

Preservation is difficult to discuss in the context of cultural heritage since every side in this war has made great contributions in destruction rather than preserving the architecture of the other ethnicity, no matter how valuable it was and how cruelly it was cast away. Even though the international community was present after the end of the war, the safeguarding of these objects was in the hands of individuals.

UNMIK and KFOR have posted over 40.000 armed officers and military personnel and despite their efforts they have not been able to stop or prevent destruction of cultural monuments. There is no explanation why the member states of the NATO alliance, signatories to The Hague Convention, have found it unnecessary "to plan or establish in peace-time, within their armed forces, services or specialist personnel whose purpose will be to secure respect for cultural property and to cooperate with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding it."³⁹ It is a fact that all of the parties involved in this critical situation for the well being of the world heritage have been ignoring their responsibility and have had no eagerness to provide the means and personnel in the restoration process.

Recently there are certain activities connected to finding donors for the projects concerning the cultural heritage in Kosovo and the driving force of these actions is UNESCO. In 2005, a conference organized by UNESCO in collaboration with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Council of Europe and the European Commission, brought together more than 50 Member States and 15 foundations and nongovernmental organizations. All together, about 10 million US dollars were gathered for the restoration of the cultural heritage in Kosovo.⁴⁰ The important thing is that the participants agreed to consider Kosovo's cultural heritage as a whole and not to fund its conservation on the basis of religious or ethnic criteria.

This came after the horrible destruction of 25 churches and monasteries in March 2004 when the Albanians repeated the 1999 cleansing of the Kosovo territory. After that, the alarm was on and the international community realized that something had to be done. The Serbian side, not satisfied with the outcome and the non involvement of any Serb in the latest negotiations, has taken actions by the proposal of establishing a Serbian Orthodox Monastic Community (SOMC), endorsed by ELIAMEP, and will try to intervene in the preservation process as much as it can. This would function like in the case of Athos, monastic community in Greece, as a self-administered district with restriction of movement and residence of unauthorized persons within the confines of the monasteries.⁴¹

Other participants in the process of saving the cultural heritage of province are the non

³⁹ Krstic, *op.cit.*, p. 108.

⁴⁰ Jasmina Sopova, (editorial contact), *Donors meeting at UNESCO pledge US10\$ million for the restoration of cultural heritage in Kosovo*, Press Release No. 2005-57, 13 May 2005 Retrieved 08 June 2006 from http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27457&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁴¹ Evangelos Kofos, A "Monastic Orthodox Community" as a means of Preserving the Orthodox Christian Monastic Establishments and Sites in Kosovo", Paper read by Dr. Evangelos Kofos at the workshop on "Kosovo: Seeking a Sustainable Status" organized by ELIAMEP, Thessaloniki, 5-6 March 2005.

Governmental institutions. Europa Nostra, the Pan European Federation of Cultural Heritage NGO's, has shown a consistent interest in the protection of the endangered cultural heritage in Kosovo. Its actions during their visit to Kosovo and Belgrade were in close consultation with the Council of Europe as a civil society contribution to the Council of Europe/European Union joint action with regard to Kosovo.⁴²

UNMIK and UNESCO shall define who must provide resources, professional personnel and documents for the protection and regular maintenance of the property belonging to the cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, as it is done in the case of natural and other property, for the period of suspension of Serbia's sovereignty in Kosovo and Metohija imposed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244;⁴³ If this responsibility is left to the Albanian side, and its Kosovo government then we can say that one might fear that these medieval buildings and churches will not exist in a years' time not because they will get destroyed as the others but they wouldn't be taken care of as they were until recently. The heritage of any local or minority community runs the risk of being either ignored or appropriated by the dominant group in society, or by higher levels of government and bureaucracy.⁴⁴ If there are difficulties in the normal functioning of the Serb people in the province, what happens to their heritage?

For the Serbs, the prime issue of concern since the arrival of UNMIK and KFOR was the very survival of their community in Kosovo.⁴⁵ Facing those difficulties in having a normal life doesn't leave them much space for providing safeguarding for their cultural monuments or to visit them frequently.

One of the most urgent problems is the lack of a democratic political culture, both among the Albanians in Kosovo and the Serbs in Serbia.⁴⁶ As soon as both ethnicities make some progress in changing their mentality, by which I mean fully respecting and understanding the needs of the others, the sooner the problems will be solved. The visions of "Great Republics" are past and we hope that it will stay like that. The next step would be the further development of the country. It seems that this situation will only be overcome when conditions of economic stability and existential and legal security can be established in all parts of the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁷

IV. THE CASE OF MACEDONIA

As the war in Kosovo was coming to an end no one thought that a new, third conflict was about to begin. However, it did happen in the country which is also multi ethnic in its character and lies in the southernmost point of former Yugoslavia-Macedonia. It was almost the same as before, one side was looking for an expansion of its territory on the other country's behalf. Other resemblance is that again two different religions meaning Islam and Christianity have clashed against each other. The only difference is that the international community for the first time didn't take one side. They were eager to resolve the situation the quickest way possible.

The difference between the two previous cases and this one is that it can certainly be called a conflict because it was not a war as in the case of Bosnia and Kosovo. Besides the lesser intensity, the conflict wasn't so much product of inner intolerance as it was presented by the foreign observers but an import from outside.

Having had more-or-less peaceful coexistence among different nationalities, attempting to make the situation better and solving the problems which came up because of sporadic ethnic tensions, the Republic of Macedonia succeeded in not taking a part in the war that followed with the fall of Yugoslavia, and getting its independence by peaceful means. Macedonia was considered by the international community as a unique example of conflict resolution in the Balkans because of avoiding the interethnic conflict during the crisis in Kosovo 1999 when 360.000 Kosovo

⁴² Europa Nostra, *Cultural Heritage as an Essential Element of any Future Status of Kosovo*, n.d.

⁴³ Krstic, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

⁴⁴ Aplin, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

⁴⁵ Yannis, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

⁴⁶ Duijzings, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Albanians came into the country as refugees, simultaneously threatening its ethnic balance.⁴⁸

However, after 2001, when the Albanian fighters invaded Macedonia from Kosovo, as well as with the other violent conflicts in the region such as Tetovo, Kumanovo and Skopje, ethnic, religious and cultural intolerance took place in the whole country.⁴⁹ In situations like these, it is just a matter of time before someone realizes that something has to be done. The actions can be of different kinds, either political and democratic or hostile and painful.

The hostility started in the beginning of the 1990s when a police crackdown on smuggling activities in the Bit Pazar led in November 1992 to the arrest of ethnic Albanians and reports that one young Albanian from Ljuboten had been beaten to death in the police station, angry crowds proclaiming their innocence and protesting government discrimination threatened to explode in violence. The situation intensified fears that there would soon be armed confrontation.⁵⁰ This was the beginning of the division of the two largest ethnicities that had, thus far, been living side by side in the country. The Albanian community in Macedonia is only one of more than twenty-five ethnic groups, but it is the largest, composing approximately 23 percent of the population.⁵¹ The largest communities are in Tetovo (29.5 per cent), Skopje (25.5 per cent), Gostivar (15.7 per cent) and Kumanovo (10.3 per cent), thus forming a continuous territory bordering Albania and Kosovo.⁵² This shows the colorful image that the Republic of Macedonia has when it comes to different nations and ethnicities gathering in one place. Any diversity of cultures, traditions, or identities that exist when a nation-state is formed, becomes, with the creation of a national culture, a threat to national unity.⁵³

In February 2001 in the Republic of Macedonia physical force was being used as a kind of pressure towards constitutional changes. Acts of violence were continuously performed by members of ONA [also known as Kosovo Liberation Army]-an organization led from Kosovo which also had training camps in Albania. The activities of ONA started from another country, they were financed out of the country, trained out of the country by using foreign troops and mercenaries, with their base out of the country and a command structure (network) of foreigners paid out of the country.⁵⁴ This sounds more or less like a highly organized project by an Albanian organization which had been prepared for a longer period.

The destruction of the cultural heritage in this country has been relatively small if you look at the numbers, but the churches that have suffered damage are very old and important for the people who live in Macedonia. The facts showing how these priceless objects were damaged are not very different from the ones that we have already described in the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo. The case of Macedonia is important because it rounds up this terrible series of incidents and puts an end to the process of destruction.

IV. 1. The “Cultural Cleansing” of Republic of Macedonia

The case of Macedonia is the same and at the same time very different from the other two cases. The similarities are there: the same peoples and the same religions fighting time after time in persuading the other side that it's their fault that the situation is like this and that it would have been much nicer if they were someone else. Even if they were someone else, some other ethnicity, some other nation, the problems that are normal and appear in every society would be present in any case. The difference is that here, people could not just separate as in the case of Bosnia and

⁴⁸ Vladimir Ortakovski, “Spreading of the Conflict from Kosovo and the Constitutional Changes in R. Macedonia in 2001” in: *Annual Edition for the School of Security* edited by Bachanovic Oliver, Centre for Educating Personnel in the Field of Security, (Skopje 2002), p. 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, (Washington, DC The Brookings Institute, 1995), p. 342.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 341.

⁵² Sophia Clement, *Conflict Prevention in the Balkans: Case Studies of Kosovo and the FYR of Macedonia*, (France: Institute for Security Studies of Western European Union, 1997), p. 17.

⁵³ Loring M. Danforth. *The Macedonian Conflict; Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 20.

⁵⁴ Ortakovski, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

Kosovo and start a new life without yesterday's neighbors. The people are mixed in residence so much that such land separation is just not possible. Even though the majority of Albanians live in the towns and villages close to the border with Albania, or the western part of the country, a separation like that is not productive because there is a Macedonian population as well as other minorities living in those areas also, not to mention the Albanians living in other parts of the country. The best way of solving the problem was by discussion. The reason that the conflict of 2001 occurred was perhaps that the Macedonian government did not know how to listen to other people's needs or because of the lack of solutions in the minds of the Albanian peoples. This remains an open question.

The fact is that Macedonian authorities had been absent in western Macedonia for ten years. The Macedonians stood off from the invisible borders of Albanian territory, allowing it slowly to become a state within a state. In that area, gun running, drug trafficking, and people smuggling flourished.⁵⁵ It's a fact that it has been difficult to keep this part of the country under control. Unfortunately, this is where some of the great works of art had been built centuries ago. Some famous churches were built in the 6th and 7th century in these parts of Macedonia that were a target of the so called "Liberation Army" in their desire to change something within the state.

Since February 2001, when armed Albanian soldiers from Kosovo entered Tanusevci and some other villages near the northern border of Macedonia, the so called ONA in its statements openly expressed that its final goal was occupation of territory (and creating Great Albania). In the later phase according to statement no.6 the so-called Liberation Army changed its goal from forming a "Great Albania" into asking for more human rights and more rights for the Albanian minority in Macedonia through some changes in the constitution.⁵⁶ When we mention the constitution we have to say that everything started with the bringing of the new constitution of the Republic of Macedonia when it declared independence from Yugoslavia. It stated: "the nation state of Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent coexistence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia." This replaced the previous formulation, which described Macedonia as "the state of the Macedonian people and the Albanian and Turkish minorities." There is a difference in the emphasis in those statements.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, there are other authors that think that the real cause for the conflict was the marking of the border between Yugoslavia and Macedonia. As Medzimorec says, the agreement on borders, to which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia agreed in the treaty signed by presidents Vojislav Kostunica and Boris Trajkovski in Skopje in February 2001, triggered the clashes that began between the Macedonian police and Albanian rebels.⁵⁸ There is also a third view, that what happened in 2001 was only a struggle for power between the two Albanian parties, the one that already existed and the ones that were fighting in the hills of Macedonia and were about to be a part of the future government.

Whatever the reason for the beginning might be, the danger lies in the ease by which legal demands for greater national rights can also be called terrorist demands; but from the other point of view, terrorist acts are also those of freedom fighters. Once that distinction is made, one embraces the terrorist (or freedom fighter) and condemns the freedom fighter (or terrorist).⁵⁹ We'll never know about the real reason for the war, but something we know is that the loss of the great architecture dating back from the past centuries is a loss to all humankind, it doesn't matter from which religion, race, ethnicity, gender or any other factor. According to the information that was collected from the National Conservation Center, more than 30 churches and monasteries were demolished by the Albanian soldiers during the crisis in 2001. There are cases where churches were

⁵⁵ Miroslav Medzimorec, "The Macedonian Crisis--Terrorism, National Movement, or Struggle for Self-Determination?" in: Miroslav Tudzman, *National Security and the Future*, Vol. 2, Number 3-4, (n.p.: St. George Association, 2001), p. 3.

⁵⁶ Ortakovski, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ Kate Hudson, *Breaking the South Slav Dream: The Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*, (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 150.

⁵⁸ Medzimorec, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 110.

burned or blown up in the air, but also in a lot of the cases the doors, windows and other parts of the interior were destroyed and everything else from inside stolen.

This is a list of places destroyed during the fighting:⁶⁰

1. St. Atanasij, Lesok village;
2. Monastery St. Atanasij, Lesok village;
3. St. Atanasij, old monastery, Brezno;
4. St. Holy Vergin, Lesok village;
5. St. Georges church, Mala Recica;
6. St. Nicholas, Slatina village
7. St. Atanasij, Baltepe on Tetovo's Kale
8. St. Elijah, Neprosteni village
9. St. Archangel Michael, Neprosteni village
10. Monastery St. George, Neprosteni village
11. St. Kuzman and Damian, Jedoarca village
12. St. George, Otunje village
13. St. Holy Vergin, Setole village
14. St. Holy Vergin, Brezno village
15. St. Elijah, monastery, Brezno village
16. St. Parasceva, Varvara village
17. St. Holy Virgin, Tearce village
18. St. Marena, Tearce village
19. St. Dimitrij, Tearce village
20. St. John the Baptist, Outsiste village
21. St. Holy Vergin, Jelosnik village
22. St. George, Lavce village
23. St. Naum Ohridski, Popova Sapka
24. St. Atanasij, Dolno Palciste village
25. St. Nicholas, Dolna Lesnica village
26. St. Holy Vergin church, monastery Matejce, Matejce village
27. St. George, Matejce village
28. St. Savior, Matejce
29. The tombstone of Kiril Pejcinovic
30. St. Nicholas, Celopek

As was to be expected, this conflict created a great step back in the relations between the Macedonian and the Albanian population. The two different worlds were even further away from each other after this. The most horrifying thing is that the way the Albanians expressed their dissatisfaction and thus, created a sense of hatred towards the Albanians and the religion they represent. That's why there were cases where Muslim Mosques were also attacked by the Christian population in various towns throughout the country during the conflict.

The intriguing question is the actual number of mosques that were targeted during that period. According to the Islamic Union this number is much higher than the one given by the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Macedonia. In the booklet published by the Islamic Union, some government circles and part of the media were being accused of trying to reduce the number of damaged objects. According to the Islamic Union, the number goes as high as 57 damaged Mosques and teke (Islamic shrine).⁶¹ As for the report from the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Macedonia the number of damaged Islamic shrines is much smaller. The differences in the reports are that the Institute researched only the area where the fighting took place, concentrating on the objects which were protected by law, while the Islamic Union's research was conducted throughout the country, in places where no fighting took place. In any case, the loss of these unique works of art with an outstanding spiritual and cultural value is far more important than the precise number of damaged and destroyed churches and mosques. Whatever the reason might be for these actions, the damage is too expensive for the next generations of both ethnicities.

IV. 2. The End of the Conflict

⁶⁰ According to the data received from the National Conservation Center, Macedonia.

⁶¹ Behixhudin Shehapi, *The Destruction and Damage of Mosques during the War in Macedonia*, (Skopje: Islamic Union in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002).

Under the influence of the international community, the conflict ended a few months after it began. It did not last as long as the two previous cases, but as expected, there were consequences. The forced political negotiations that took place in Ohrid were finished successfully. Under the EU pressure the Ohrid Agreement\ Framework Agreement was signed in August 2001.⁶² The result of the Agreement is peace and stability that were brought back to the quiet little country in the south of Former Yugoslavia. The people are still divided in two communities, and mixed marriages are unfortunately extremely rare. Again there is a satisfied and unsatisfied side, but at least things are getting back to normal. It is like Danforth says: "In order to save the state, it is often necessary to sacrifice the nation."⁶³

IV. 3. Preserving the Survived Cultural Heritage

Even though the number of damaged and destroyed objects in this case has been significantly smaller than the previous cases of Bosnia and Kosovo where hundreds of religious shrines were targeted, the restoration process has been quite slow. The accent has been put on the more significant churches and mosques which were protected by law.

Two important examples of both religions were reconstructed after the conflict because they were protected by law and were among the oldest in the region. The list of monuments that were seen as being the most important ones by the Monitoring Mission that was conducted by the EU, OSCE and NATO representatives included:⁶⁴

1. Kumanovo region:

Monastery St. Holy Virgin Matejce, near village Matejce;
St. George Church, in the village of Matejce;

2. Tetovo region:

Arabati Baba Teke, Islamic Monastery of Ottoman architecture, Tetovo;
Aladja (Sarena) Mosque, Tetovo;
Archeological site Kale, Tetovo;
St. Athanasius Monastery, village Lesok;
St. Athanasius Church, near the village Lesok;

The Matejce Monastery, the Church St. Athanasius in Lesok, and the Mosque in Neprosteno village were in the focus of the National Conservation Center. The European Union and the European Agency for Reconstruction also took part in the process of rebuilding the last two. The European Union financed the project and the European Agency for Reconstruction managed the operation. The project included clearing of the ruins, creating a plan for reconstruction, preservation and restoration of the parts that were left undamaged, reconstruction of the parts that were destroyed. and fresco painting.⁶⁵

There were other donors that took part in the process of reconstruction. Sponsored by foreign investors such as the Netherlands through the Royal Netherlands Embassy and other donors the Matejce Monastery was brought back to its previous condition. This Monastery is priceless because of its 14th Century Byzantine paintings. On behalf of the Dutch Minister for Development Co-operation a contribution was made to the costs of these activities,⁶⁶ There are other objects that are in the process of reconstruction also, but they are sponsored only by the National Conservation Center.

Even though these places were restored and brought back into their previous shape, the big question is can they survive for a longer period, knowing that most of the Macedonian population has fled to the other cities in Macedonia and sold their houses to the Albanian buyers. This has created a situation where these great monuments are a part of a community that doesn't recognize itself in them. That's why international organizations such as OSCE were patrolling the

⁶² Medimorec, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

⁶³ Danforth. *op.cit.*, p. 22.

⁶⁴ National Conservation Center

⁶⁵ Melita Mihajlovska, European Agency for Reconstruction, phone call information, 28 July 2006.

⁶⁶ National Conservation Center, Letter from Royal Netherlands Embassy addressed to the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Macedonia, archive, 14 July 2006.

sites once in a while until the situation stabilized. Now, as I have witnessed, the life in these places is turning back to normal but we will see what the future brings. The important thing is the involvement of the foreign investors in helping to bring back the authentic image that this region had with its historical sites. Only few places were seen as important, but it's a start of the process that will last for a longer period.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this sad but at the same time very real story we have to conclude that the outdated way of fighting that has taken over again seems to be erasing the traces of any old existence that lived in this region. As we have seen in the case of Bosnia, the three sides were involved in the process of mass destruction and it caused a lot of architectural casualties. Mostly the Islamic religious places such as mosques have suffered substantial damage even though Roman Catholic churches were also a regular target. Religion has played a very important role in the war, sometimes taking on primacy. Nationalism and religious awakening have been reinforcing one another in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Many historically important places have been destroyed and evidence of their existence burned. This was the case in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia with a much smaller intensity. The religious monuments of every ethnicity had been a permanent target and the reason is the hostile relations among different groups.

It's like suddenly some people decided to have a fresh start filled with different memories than the ones they had years before. This is how the new generations will be brought up, and there will always be different views about the history of the place. No architectural objects will be present to prove the claims of any side. This cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, has been repeatedly harmed and destroyed.

This paper sought to prove that what happened in the Balkan region in the past fifteen years has played a crucial role in creating many small countries with a territory cleansed from the past. Even though international organizations such as EU and NATO have tried to control the situation by different means, the outcome has been quite similar at the end. An essential piece of the history is now missing to support the facts and myths about this area. It has been a great lecture for everyone to learn, and, indeed, a painful one. This lecture can be used in educating young people especially in regions such as the Balkans, where there is a variety of cultures and traditions. We need to concentrate on the future and leave the past behind us. Many new projects and ideas have come forth and this is something we should be concentrating on. The current projects seeking to reconstruct Bosnia's, Kosovo's and Macedonia's cultural heritage can contribute to a better understanding between groups and reestablish the collective memory of a people diminished by war. Hopefully, there will be understanding from every side in the desire to reconstruct and preserve the heritage of the others. This requires emotions to calm down in order to make some rational decisions..

When we speak about the legal aspect of the preservation we have to mention that every category has been examined and mentioned in Hague Convention. Scholars have dealt with it more and more. Fortunately there are a lot of organizations and individuals who are interested in taking a part in the process of preserving the heritage in the endangered regions.

The Balkan countries have proved that they do not understand and cannot manage having a multi-ethnic state where every side has full respect for the others who live in it. The exception may be Macedonia where the influence of the Albanian minority in the government is large. Bosnia and Kosovo are a clear case of divisions. This way of thinking, or the mentality of the people may be a big part of the problem causing terrible crimes. Yet, every country in the region is EU oriented and sees its future as an EU member. This is probably because of inadequate knowledge about what the future of these countries would be after joining the European Union. Open-mindedness about different religions, races, ethnicity and sexuality should be a normal way of living if we are to be part of that Europe one day. That is what we should be striving for.