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IBPP Research Associates. Serbia

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This perspective was contributed on April 25, 1999 by Aleksandar & Nikola Radulovic of Belgrade, Serbia through Global Network Initiative staffer Gil Grein. The IBPP Editorial Board engaged in very minor editing of the following material.

Perspective. Gil, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to express our perspectives on this situation. We are glad that there are people in the West (especially in the US) who are concerned about what is really going on in our country and the other countries that are affected by Western policy.

First of all, here is some basic information on myself (Aleksandar) and my brother (Nikola). Our family name is Radulovic. I am 22, and my brother is 16 years old. We are Serbs and Orthodox Christians. I am a student at the School of Electrical Engineering at the University of Belgrade (<http://www.etf.bg.ac.yu/>) course/major-electronics. My brother goes to the First Belgrade Gymnasium (<http://www.beograd.com/prva>), but I think that the web site still isn't available in English). As you know, we are from Belgrade, the capital of FR (Federal Republic) of Yugoslavia. And now, let's deal with the subject...

About our president Slobodan Milosevic... Of course, I support him. Nowadays, he has full support from an enormously great majority of Yugoslav citizens, even from those who didn't vote for him on the elections. He does what every patriotic president of a sovereign country would do, he gives his best in saving Kosovo and Metohija from being separated from Yugoslavia by Albanian terrorists (with NATO's assistance).

About my anger... Our anger isn't towards the people of the West. Both my brother and I were in Canada a couple of years ago. We spent two months there and had an opportunity to meet various kinds of people who live there. We know that there are very good people who live in the West and we also know that there are those who sympathize with us. I am a little bit disappointed that there is not a great number of people like you. The anger we feel is towards NATO and Western governments (especially the US Government) because of the crimes they've committed even before this aggression started. In the early 90's they tore our former country apart, and directly made about 1,000,000 Serbs flee Croatia and Bosnia even though their ancestors inhabited that land centuries ago. My grandparents also used to live in Croatia and I know the suffering they had to go through. Western media did not present it as a humanitarian disaster which it really was.

As a cover up for this exodus, they mostly accused Serbs of war crimes and they demonized our people. After everything, they put UN sanctions against our newly formed country, FR Yugoslavia. NATO didn't bomb Croatia because of that disaster and now NATO does it here without any valid reason. In media, you can see that they do it in order to prevent humanitarian disaster in Kosovo and Metohija. They do not say that there weren't any refugees before March 24th when the NATO aggression started.

It is obvious that NATO doesn't care about human lives. Instead, what they really care about are the strategic interests in this area. They hit a civilian train and more than a dozen people died in flames; a

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

strictly civilian convoy of refugees going back to their homes "looked" like a military convoy to their pilots; they bombed a small mining town of Aleksinac and killed many people, and most of them ended up in the ruins of their own homes. And do you know what they say about this in NATO daily briefings? It's all "collateral damage" to them! These words make me sick. Isn't it necessary to mention that our people die every day? They destroy our bridges, monuments, homes, schools. NATO's targets are our factories and as a result of this, hundreds of thousands of workers are now without jobs and have no chance of supporting their families.

The latest target for these villains was our national television RTS. Their excuse was that the Serbian television didn't show the "truth". So, is this Western democracy and freedom of speech? Those are just some examples of their deeds and I'll let you decide whether it is all a war crime or not.

Once again, I will stress that my anger is only towards the western governments and NATO. I think that your people aren't informed properly and I don't blame them too much because it's all part of the powerful Western propoganda.

About our army and police...You have to understand that the Albanian terrorists that are organized in the so called KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) started committing crimes about a year ago. They began to terrorize Serbs and Albanians who were loyal to our country. They murdered a lot of our security forces (police and army) from ambushes. When the NATO aggression started, they increased their attacks which turned into a war. If there is a war, you know what it means. For example, if Albanian terrorists attack our forces from a civilian house using rocket and grenade launcher, it is normal to fire back, and there is a great possibility that the house will be damaged. But most of the houses got destroyed by NATO bombings. I have to underline that our federal policy is not to burn down homes and kill civilians, especially not raping because it's not in our nature to be so destructive. CNN informed the audience that Serbs had created a camp for massive raping of young Albanian girls. What I must say is that this is a dirty lie and if it wasn't so horrible I would laugh at it. Your media hasn't got any evidence for everything they claim is true. They consult the terrorist KLA leaders who are hundreds of miles away from Kosovo and Metohija and what these notorious criminals say about the situation can't be valid.

About Albanian refugees...There were no refugees in Kosovo and Metohija before NATO began with the bombings. Hundreds of bombs fall there every day. Would you stay at home while the hard rain is coming down? The refugees that you can see on TV every day are trying to find a shelter from NATO bombs and that's why they flee Kosovo and Metohija. In your media you can only see Albanian refugees who went to Macedonia and Albania. And what you can't see are the thousands of Serbs who became refugees in their own country. Not only Serbs, but also Albanians and other nationalities who fled to other parts of Yugoslavia. NATO just wants more refugees because they will have an excuse for what they do and the excuse is the humanitarian disaster they had made. You can't see men among the refugees because they were recruited by the KLA and not by the Yugoslav army, as the Western media had said.

About going to school...Neither me or my brother go to school at all. Do you know that more than 300 schools in Yugoslavia have been damaged by these bombings? What would have happened if the students had been in schools at that time? So, that's why we have a delay which is lasting for more than a month now.

About bombings near our home...So far, there have been several bombings which were not more than 1 mile away, and not to mention that I can hear very well every bomb that falls in radius of approximately

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

7 miles and it happens every night. A lot of our friends had much worse experiences with bombings than we did--it was even less than hundred meters away from them.

About our daily life...Our life has radically changed since all of this began. We are not able to go to school, we can't learn, we can't go out safely, we haven't seen much of our friends lately...We spend every night down in our basement listening to radio and expecting what will happen. You can't imagine how hard it is to stand all that pressure.

About shortages...We don't have any shortages now because our city services work superb by now, but I can't say what will happen if NATO continues to destroy the infrastructure in Yugoslavia.

About joining the army...In Yugoslavia there is a military obligation like in many other countries. It means that every full-aged man has to serve the army for twelve months. In case of war every man who served the army before has to join the army if he gets called (like Americans who had to go to Vietnam). I haven't served in the army yet because I'm still a student. Nobody has approached me to join the army. If it is necessary I will join it immediately because defending my fatherland is a matter of honor to me.

About nationalism...I have always loved my country like the others in my family. We have always been proud of our ancestors who had fought for freedom and who had defeated a great number of conquerors. Nowadays we have a special reason to be proud of our people, because the most powerful military force ever, has attacked us. They thought they could break us down in a few days, but they were wrong. We fight back and stand in a dignified way and we're ready to look into their eyes.

About ending this conflict...What I think is that problems cannot be solved by using any kind of force, especially by bombings. The only way to achieve something is by negotiations and without interference of western forces who started with this. Serbs and Albanians have to sit together and make agreements about their common life. You probably don't know that our government has already had talks with Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova and they have agreed on some important issues--e.g., Albanians coming back to their homes, etc. Our government is willing to offer them wide cultural, religious, and educational autonomy according to the highest democratic standards. That excludes the right of secession which no country would allow to any national minority. We don't hate Albanians. We want to live with them in our country, just the way we do with more than 20 different nationalities. Of course, the first step in ending this problem is that NATO must stop bombing and allow us to negotiate in peace.

Additions...You may wonder why I say Kosovo and Metohija instead of just Kosovo. Kosovo is only a part of our southern province Kosovo and Metohija. Metohija is the other part. In our language "Metohija" means "the land of monasteries". There is a great number of our ancient monasteries which are many centuries old. Every Serb will say that Kosovo and Metohija is our holy land and it is the Serbian Jerusalem. That is the oldest part of our country and that's where our roots are. Our state is about a thousand years old and it was formed in Kosovo and Metohija. Taking away Kosovo and Metohija is like taking away our hearts and souls.

We just want to thank you for showing interest in what is really going on here. I hope that we will be of some use to those who want to know the truth. We would like you to show our address to anyone who is interested in this topic so we could reply. (radulo@beotel.yu) You can visit some of web sites where you can find some information. I would like to recommend these: Truth in media--an American web site concerning not only current crisis in Kosovo and Metohija, but its roots. Academic information network--this one is created by my colleague students of University of Belgrade.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

We would like to keep in touch not only during this aggression, but when peace comes to our country.

We will endure! Stop the bombs! Stop the lies!

Sincerely,

Aleksandar and Nikola (Keywords: NATO, Serbia, Yugoslavia.)