

universities resulted in a mass exodus of children from the official school system. A new quota system at the University of Pristina guaranteed a disproportionately high number of places for Serb and Montenegrin students.

The reassertion of Serb nationhood and authority in Kosovo was accompanied by widespread human rights violations. The 55,000 strong Serb police force eliminated any perceived expression of Albanian nationalism. Between 1981 and 1991, about 60,000 Serbs and Montenegrins fled the ethnic turmoil in Kosovo.

The Albanian Kosovars responded to the loss of their institutions by building a parallel society within Kosovo, but completely outside Serbian jurisdiction. In 1991, Kosovo leaders declared the region a sovereign and independent state. The decision was overwhelmingly approved in a regional referendum. The following year, Kosovar Albanians elected a shadow parliament, president and prime minister which then created a parallel state system and state structures for taxation, health, education and elections by Albanians for Albanians.

Under the political and moral leadership of Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo and President of Kosovo's shadow government, Albanians employed a strategy of passive resistance to achieve their objectives. But over the course of five years this strategy did not result in any substantive steps forward towards greater autonomy or diminished repression. When the 1995 Dayton peace accords failed to include a settlement on Kosovo, Rugova began to lose ground to more militant voices. A year later, the Kosovo shadow government leaders admitted that passive resistance had failed and called for active resistance through peaceful civil disobedience.

In 1996, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged with separatist ambitions and terrorist tactics, attacking Serbian authorities, in particular the police force. It has one demand—the complete independence of Kosovo. What started out as an ad hoc band of guerrillas grew in strength as Serbian repression intensified.

In late 1997, KLA attacks and Serb police brutality escalated; the situation became increasingly out of control in 1998. Serbia moved armoured units and Interior Ministry troops to the perimeter of the province. On March 2, a clash between ethnic Albanians and paramilitary Serbian troops in a small village left more than 20 people dead. Tens of thousands of ethnic Albanians rallied in Pristina in peaceful protest. Then on March 10, about 1,000 heavily armed Serb police and special armed forces launched a three-day assault on the village of Donji Prekaz, leaving at least 45 dead. This time between 60,000 and 100,000 people gathered in Pristina, a city of 200,000, to demonstrate against the violence.

For eight months, Serb special forces and the Yugoslav Army systematically destroyed KLA strongholds, using tanks, aircraft and scorched earth tactics in village after village. The Serb political leaders consistently maintained they were merely responding to the threat of a well-armed terrorist group. In September 1998, the Serb parliament announced publicly that its Kosovo operation had been successful and was ending, but only days later, the international community learned of new massacres.

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