2.5 Course and interventions: The actions of the KLA, the Serbian government, the police and the military

Conceptual understanding
Key concepts
- Causation
- Significance
- Perspective

Key question
- Why did diplomacy break down and result in war?

A chronology of key events in Kosovo and the Balkans, 1999

The Racak massacre: Serb forces kill 45 Albanians

15 January

February

The Rambouillet peace talks begin in France

Operation Allied Force: the Kosovo air war begins

24 March

Central Belgrade is hit by NATO missiles

Operation Horseshoe (Potkovo): Serbian plan to expel ethnic Albanians

3 April

8 April

NATO planes accidentally bomb a column of Kosovar Albanian refugees, killing at least 50

21 April

14 April

NATO bombs the Socialist Party headquarters and television stations in Belgrade

22 April

21 April

NATO's 50th anniversary celebrations take place in Washington

US Senator Jesse Jackson secures freedom for three US soldiers captured in Macedonia

2 May

7 May

NATO planes accidentally bomb the Chinese embassy in Belgrade

24 May

27 May

The International War Crimes Tribunal indicts Milošević

NATO attacks destroy Serbian power stations

10 June

NATO head Javier Solana requests suspension of NATO bombing
CHAPTER 2.5: COURSE AND INTERVENTIONS

The war started in Kosovo and it will end in Kosovo.
— Shheizan Maliqi, 1998

The Dayton Accords of 1995 temporarily resolved the Bosnian conflict, but failed to address the issue of Kosovo’s status, and many Kosovar Albanians began to look for other solutions. This was a crucial shift for Kosovo, and allowed the development of a more radical approach. Members of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) represented some moderate opinion but their desire for a peaceful solution lost support among much of the population and was replaced by the greater militancy of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

The slide into war, 1996–98

The KLA (or, in Albanian, the UÇK) emerged in the difficult period of the bloody events in Bosnia and the breakdown of law and order in the former Yugoslavia. It was easy to predict that, sooner or later, Kosovo would again become the focus of attention. The KLA, founded in the early 1990s, was a disorganised collection of disaffected Kosovar Albanians, including intellectuals and those fired by nationalist ardour. Following the conclusion of the peace agreement at Dayton, some members of the KLA began actively to engage in coordinated attacks targeting Serbian individuals, including attacks on a number of Serbian police stations and on public places where Serbians were known to gather. In 1996, three Serbs were killed in a cafe in Pristina, and attacks against Serb targets and politicians steadily escalated over the next two years.

For some, enough was enough; it seemed to many that Rugova’s pacifist stance had got them nowhere. One of the leaders of the KLA was Adem Demaçi, a Kosovar Albanian writer, intellectual and activist who had been striving for Kosovar independence for many years. The issue of free speech echoed as a cause throughout the 20th century. Adem Demaçi, who won the European Parliament’s Andrei Sakharov Prize for his human rights work, was once an admirer of the hardline Stalinist Enver Hoxha but had since moderated his views. Nevertheless, as a prominent Albanian activist, he was imprisoned for 28 years in a communist jail for his promotion of Albanian rights. Many Kosovars see him as the Balkan Nelson Mandela. In 1993, he went on hunger strike, protesting against the closure of the only remaining Albanian language press in Kosovo. Pjetër Arbnori, the speaker of parliament in neighbouring Albania commented,

*When dictatorships want to oppress a people, they first try to close their mouth. Writers, journalists, the press, radio and television are the mouth of a people. Now they have closed this mouth.*

— Arbnori, June 1993, quoted in http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/

TOK connections

In pairs or small groups, discuss the quotation on the right by Pjetër Arbnori. It suggests that it is wrong to "close the mouth" of a people. Consider the following questions.

1. What do you think about freedom of speech? Should it be allowed in principal, even if you do not approve of what someone is saying?

2. Give examples of where you might allow complete freedom of speech. Would this include religious opinions, statements about class, sexuality, gender and race?

3. Does your opinion mean that you have to listen to what you may not agree with, or that you consider biased? For example, in Rwanda, does that give RTLW "hate radio" the right to preach hatred and racism? Considering what happened in Rwanda with RTLW, should that "mouth" have been closed too?

4. The radical Serbian militia leader known as "Arkan" had a sign in his office in Pristina saying, "Crats, dogs and Albanians not welcome". What is your opinion of this?
In 1996–97, the KLA was a disorganized group of nationalists who took up terrorist methods. Armed confrontation would, in the short term, bring them into conflict with the Serbian authorities and that is precisely what they wanted: to force the hands of Rugova, Serbia and even the international community to deal with the situation of Kosovo. Milošević still continued to be seen as a necessary partner by the West because of the Dayton Accords. However, five years of conflict in the Balkans and elsewhere had exhausted many; it was events in neighbouring Albania that acted as a catalyst for developments in Kosovo in 1998.

In the summer of 1997, Albania descended into chaos. Following a financial collapse, the government of Albania’s President Berisha lost control and weapons became easily available, many of which found their way across the border into the hands of the KLA. Priština saw clashes between students and the authorities, and again on Albania’s national day in November. Reasonably, the Serbian authorities regarded the KLA as a terrorist organization. The US State Department had listed the KLA on its list of terrorist groups in 1998. As in the case of Rwanda, the use by US spokespeople of the term “genocide” prompted a word game of some significance.

Early in 1998, Robert Gelbard, the US special envoy sent by President Clinton to the region, referred to members of the KLA as terrorists; a month later, he back-pedalled slightly, saying that the group had “committed terrorist acts”. In June, the US government initiated talks with members of the KLA. Meanwhile, in March, the Serbian police had tried to arrest Adem Jashari, one of the leaders of the KLA in Prekaz. Jashari was one of the founders of the movement and was called, by some, the “father of the KLA”. He was killed in the attempt, along with about 50 of his followers and members of his family, including many women and children. It made a martyr of him and elevated his status to that of a saint in Albanian Kosovo. The National Theatre and Priština International Airport have been named after him.

Ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

By 1998, the Serbian government’s response confirmed that it considered the KLA’s actions to be an armed insurrection. The government’s heavy-handed reaction only served to increase support for the KLA and, as violations of human rights and massacres became
more frequent, the situation began to spin out of control. Rugova’s leadership, still advocating a more moderate position, was out of step with a growing number of Kosovar Albanians who, although they re-elected him as president in 1998, urged him to demand full independence. Violence continued to escalate as Serbian forces attempted to regain control of Kosovo and destroy the KLA. Milošević had always referred to members of the KLA as terrorists, and there was unease among leaders in the West over what was happening in Kosovo. In Kosovo, it was not as clear-cut as simple Serbian brutality against helpless Kosovo civilians. One of the leading spokesmen for the KLA, Hashim Thaçi said:

_It was simply a necessity to free and democratize Kosovo. And nothing happened accidentally, neither the organization nor the beginning of the armed struggle._

— Hashim Thaçi, 2001

The KLA was directing its own form of diplomacy using the limited weapons it had at its disposal. After the signing of the Dayton Accords, in which Kosovo was ignored, the lesson learned by the KLA was that violence was the way to get the attention of the West. Ethnic cleansing was taking place, and not just by the Serbs against ethnic Albanians. In parts of Kosovo, a number of Serb and non-Albanians were also being driven out. Some Serb Orthodox monasteries and churches were attacked and looted, and monks deported.

_I think Kosovo was maybe the first casualty of the Lewinsky affair._

— Bob Dole, 1998

In the summer of 1998, President Clinton was fighting for his political life. While the attention of the world’s media was glued to his supposed affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, his administration was desperately trying to get a handle on developments in Serbia and Kosovo. In June, Richard Holbrooke – the US government’s chief negotiator, who had been involved in the peace agreement at Dayton and in an earlier Yugoslav crisis – was sent to Belgrade for talks with Milošević. He also met representatives of the KLA, which seemed to endorse the group’s legitimacy in the process, much to the annoyance of Serbia. With neither side willing to back down, the KLA demanding independence and the Serbian authorities retaliating against attacks on their people, something had to give way.

Once again it was media images, including those of streams of displaced civilians and a bloody doll among the 35 dead in the village of Gornje Obirinje in September, which prompted the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 1199 in the same month. However, the UN actually did little more than urge those involved to come to a solution.

The UN had passed four resolutions in 1998 concerning Kosovo. In April, as a result of the meeting of the contact group of foreign ministers from leading Western states and Russia, the UN recommended that a comprehensive arms embargo be imposed to include Yugoslavia.
Communication skills

There are a number of good documentaries on Kosovo and the NATO intervention that can be found on the Internet:

- One of these is an award-winning documentary made in 1999, prior to NATO's intervention. Called The Valley, it runs for about 70 minutes and focuses specifically on the conflict in the Drenica Valley of Kosovo. Filmed during the bloodiest summer of the war, 1998, it is a powerful documentary containing graphic images. In it, you meet the inhabitants of a Muslim village which was attacked and destroyed by Serbs. You also see a unit of the KLA known as the Black Tigers. Some of the scenes are harrowing and graphic.

- The second documentary is from the Frontline series by PBS and is called War in Europe. Go to www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/. This is an excellent website containing many very useful resources such as interviews, maps, and timelines, and also access to a two-part documentary on the war and NATO intervention.

and Kosovo. This was Resolution 1160, which encouraged dialogue, and continued to recognize Kosovo as a part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). In September, the second resolution stated clearly that the situation in Kosovo had deteriorated, and that it constituted "a threat to the peace and security of the region" (see unsec.org/en/resolutions/doc/1199).

This was followed by Resolution 1199, which called for international monitors to be placed in Kosovo to help facilitate the return of refugees, and to allow humanitarian aid to reach those who needed it. Diplomatic initiatives continued and, in October 1998, an agreement was reached between President Milošević and Richard Holbrooke, paving the way for the verification missions that followed. Two further resolutions were adopted in 1998; the second of these, in November, condemned the Yugoslav government for failing to hand into custody individuals wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY). UN Secretary General Kofi Annan warned of the deteriorating situation in the region.

Meanwhile, the US government was determined to get the European countries involved in any action to be taken and through NATO, threatened air strikes against Serbia. They prevaricated about the use of force though (as illustrated in Source C, the cartoon "To bomb or not to bomb", on page 182). In October, the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) agreement for a ceasefire was established. Among other things, it provided for unarmed observers to monitor the peace in Kosovo, for aerial surveillance to ensure compliance and for elections in Kosovo within nine months, to offer more representation for Kosovar Albanians. This KVM initiative was to be headed by the US diplomat William Walker.

The Kosovo Pact, October 1998

- A 2,000-member international inspection force will be deployed in Kosovo under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The force will be unarmed and will verify compliance with demands of a UN Security Council resolution, which include the withdrawal of Yugoslav special forces from Kosovo.

- NATO reconnaissance planes, not combat planes, will make flights over Kosovo to verify government compliance. Details of these missions remain to be worked out.

- Yugoslavia also agreed to 11 unilateral steps, including:
  - Partial self-government will be established in Kosovo, and the police force there will be made up of personnel proportionate to the ethnic makeup of the province.

  -- A general amnesty will be issued for people accused of criminal acts related to the seven-month conflict, but war crimes can still be prosecuted.

  -- The following timetable has been agreed upon:
  By Oct. 19: Details on the OSCE Inspection force to be completed.
  By Nov. 2: Agreement on procedures to reach a political solution to be completed.
  By Nov. 9: Agreement on procedures for elections in Kosovo to be completed. Elections to be held within nine months.

Source A

Source B
A cartoon by Dave Brown showing Milošević and an observer from the KVM, published in the UK newspaper The Independent on 28 October 1998.
Source C
A cartoon, “To bomb or not to bomb?”, published in the UK newspaper, the Daily Express, 13 October 1998.

First question, part b — 2 marks
Explain the significance of the comment in Source A by Milošević regarding having “an inappropriate relationship”. Which relationship is “Bill” referring to in the first frame of the cartoon?

First question, part a — 3 marks
In Source C, what do the words of the NATO soldier allude to? In what ways do you think it may be appropriate?

First question, part b — 3 marks
In Source B, why is Milošević depicted holding back the tanks? Is the cartoon in any way sympathetic to the Serbian situation? What is the message of the cartoon?

Despite the agreements made in the Kosovo Pact of October 1998, the KVM mission achieved little, and the violence continued to intensify. Before the end of the year, the decision was made to withdraw the KVM from Kosovo, as military activity was continuing on both sides. In mid-January 1999, international observers reported that Serbian security forces had killed a number of Albanian civilians in a village called Račak. This proved to be a turning point in the whole conflict.
The significance of the Račak massacre, January 1999

What happened at Račak in January 1999 has been disputed. Referred to by some as "the massacre that forced the West to act". In an interview for Frontline, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright commented, "it was a galvanizing event".

The massacre at Račak? I think it was pivotal, yes.

— Tony Blair, 1999

The bare bones of the story are that about 45 Kosovar Albanians were killed in a small village in central Kosovo. Over the previous months, the village had been in the centre of actions by the KLA and, a week earlier, four Serbian policemen had been killed nearby. The Serbs prepared an offensive against KLA members and occupied the village, herding a number of civilians to its outskirts, where they were shot by Serbian security forces. The Serbs have hotly contested this version of events in Račak. Considering that they were legitimately pursuing rebel KLA fighters in the area, some of whom put on civilian clothing after they had been in a firefight, the Serbian government had legitimate claims. The US diplomat William Walker, head of the KVM, was taken to the village. He describes what he saw in an interview.

Self-management skills

William Walker in an interview for Frontline.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/walker.html

Late in the afternoon, January 15, my British deputy told me that he had just been informed that a military clash had taken place out by a village called Račak. Neither he nor I had ever heard of Račak. The Serbs reported encountering a column of the KLA, they engaged in fighting, and had killed 15 of them.

Next morning, on January 16, I went into the office fairly early. I asked my British deputy if we'd followed up, and he said we had sent another patrol into the village. He said, "I'm telling you, Mr. Ambassador, there's something fishy here. Something doesn't smell right." And he suggested that I should maybe go out to the village and take a look. So I said, "Sure, let's do it.".

There were a lot of women around in tears and crying. We came out of the village. The village is down at the bottom of a couple of hills. There's a ravine, a sort of empty riverbed going up the hill from the village. It was covered with rocks, debris, and ice and snow. We started up this ravine. After about 500 yards, we came across the first body. A couple of journalists were there, and a cameraman was taking some pictures. It was a man's body. There was a small blanket over where his head should be. They lifted the blanket to show me that his head was gone. You could tell just by looking at the body that his clothes were the clothes of a peasant. He was obviously an old man. There were bullets all through the body, and blood all over the ground. I was a little shaken by this thing with the head gone.

We started up the hill again and, every 15 or 20 yards, there was another body, all in sorts of grotesque postures. All the ones that I saw were older men, and they were obviously peasants. There was no sign of uniforms or weapons. They were killed where they lay, the way the bullets were in their bodies, in their eyes, and in their tops of their heads, they had been killed where they lay. There was no way this could have been faked. We saw about 10 bodies while going up the hill. We finally reached a pile of bodies, maybe 17 or 18; 19 bodies just huddled together in a big pile, all with horrible wounds in the head. All of them were in those clothes that peasants in that part of the world wear when they're out in the fields doing their jobs. A good number of them had lost control of their bodily functions, and so their clothes were stained, and that sort of thing. This had not been concocted by anyone, even though this was later the claim of the government.
I talked to some of my people who'd been there, and to some of the journalists. Then I talked to some of the villagers ... The men had gotten out of the village before the troops moved in. All the stories were very consistent. The day before, either in late morning or early afternoon, the village was surrounded by the army, and they had lobbed shells in—sort of an artillery barrage. That was followed by the special police coming in, including some masked paramilitary guys with these hoods on.

They herded the women and the small children into the mosque, and rounded up the men and boys they could find. In mid-afternoon, they marched the men and boys off. The villagers did not assume they were being taken off to be killed. They assumed they were being taken off for interrogation, which quite often happened ... It got dark, and the villagers that were still there went to sleep. When they woke up the next morning and went out of the village, the bodies were discovered.

When Walker was questioned by journalists there in the ravine, he was angry and accused the Serbians of perpetrating a massacre. His frank and heated statements about the events at Račak helped to incite international opinion in favour of the Kosovar Albanians. This led the USA to adopt a more forceful policy against the Serbs, to the NATO bombing campaign and ultimately, to the defeat of Serbia and the withdrawal of Serbian forces from the province of Kosovo.

What has become controversial is what actually happened at Račak. Was it a "massacre" or was it a lawful reaction by Serb forces against attacks carried out against their men in a time of undeclared war by rebellious, armed terrorists fighting the legitimate government? Remember that, at the time, Kosovo was recognized by the international community as a part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and operated under Serbian law.

William Walker in an interview for Frontline.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/walker.html

Oh, I was angry, yes, absolutely. I think the anger came through. My statement wasn't exactly balanced, but I said, "Here's what I saw. It was obviously a crime against humanity." I called it a massacre, and I said, "My opinion is that those responsible are in the security services. We have to get to the bottom of this. The international criminal tribunal in The Hague should be invited to come in here with its investigators to do a real criminal investigation. I would hope that the government would pursue those responsible, and punish them."

When asked why he wanted to have a press conference he continued:

I thought the world should know that this sort of a thing was occurring. To this day, I'm very glad I did it. It was a turning point. The world, certainly Europe and North America, could no longer buy whatever excuse the Belgrade government came up with for some of the things they were doing there. I have yet to encounter a single person who actually was up on that hill in that ravine who came to any other conclusion. And there were an awful lot of cynical journalists there who would have poked holes in it, if that were possible.

TOK connections
Consider the difficulty in establishing the truth of what happened, even when investigating such a recent event with a relatively large number of witnesses still alive.

Class discussion
1. How can a historian assess the reliability of sources?
2. How can historical accounts be assessed?
Communication and thinking skills

Go to: balkanwitness.glyp.com/raca.htm

This website, Balkan Witness, publishes controversial articles, some apologetic to the Serb position.

Examine a selection of the articles that appear.

In addition, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=3shf4n5Uldo.

This YouTube video, Serbian War Crimes in Kosovo – The Račak Massacre (9 minutes), was ostensibly taken the day after the massacre. It contains eyewitness accounts and footage that is graphic and disturbing. William Walker’s interview with journalists is also part of this video, as is a Serbian justification for taking actions in Kosovo, their past and their future”.

Another YouTube video [3 minutes] is the BBC documentary made in 2000 called Moral Combat. The video clip includes comments by the KLA leader Hashim Thaçi. He admits that Račak was a KLA stronghold and therefore a legitimate target of the Serb military at this time.

Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DchHlgATo to watch the clip, and assess the information included there.

Viewing and assessing these sources may help you to address what happened at Račak and to answer the two TDK guiding questions for class discussion above.

Source skills


First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of the cartoon regarding NATO and Western governments, and what message might the Serbian leadership gain from this?
accounts were inconsistent and altered. In 2007, Stojanović was granted a pardon and freed. The Račak massacre was added to the charge sheet for the trial of Milošević by the ICTY, but was dropped later due to the lack of clear evidence of war crimes having been committed.

**Communication and research skills**

**Debate assignment**

Who was responsible for the Račak massacre, which helped to engender the international community into action against Serbia in 1999?

**Specific debate question**

What actually happened at Račak and who was responsible?

Examine Sources A–F on pages 187–190 and use them to structure your arguments in the debate. Before you start, here is some guidance:

1. Before we collect evidence or attempt to answer a question, we need to decide on some criteria for making a judgment. Critical thinkers base their decisions, and make knowledge claims and reason, on criteria rather than emotion or other ways of knowing.

2. Read the required sources carefully, and answer the questions that accompany them. These are designed to guide you to important arguments and considerations of the values and limitations of the documents.

3. Consider the debate assignment above as you read the sources, and record evidence in an evidence collection chart (see below) in support of a position you think is best demonstrated by the evidence. Use different coloured highlighter pens to identify relevant evidence in the sources.

4. Come prepared to debate and discuss the question in class and share your evidence-based analysis of the sources.

5. After participating in the debate, and after considering the different perspectives and counterpoints of other participants, write your final conclusion on this issue. You may be asked to do this as a summary speech for the prosecution, or the defence, depending on whether or not you propose to find someone or some group guilty of the massacre.

**TOK connections: Judgment criteria**

Before making judgments about the guilt of one party or another, we need to establish some criteria under which a decision might be valid or justifiable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for finding one party guilty: When is it valid or justifiable to bring charges against one group?</th>
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<td>Criteria</td>
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Use the criteria above to evaluate your position on this question and to collect your evidence.
CHAPTER 2.5: COURSE AND INTERVENTIONS

Source A

A photograph, taken in January 1999, of some of the dead at Račak.

Source B

An article by Bill Neely, ITN’s Europe correspondent in Priština, entitled “Serbs rewrite history of Račak massacre” from the UK newspaper, The Independent, published on 23 January 1999.

Exactly one week ago yesterday, history kicked down the door of the tiny village of Račak. Just before dawn several hundred Serbian police attacked with mortars and machine-guns. By nightfall more than 40 villagers were dead. The following day I saw their bodies scattered all over Račak - 17 of them in a heap on the stony hill above the village.

The Serbs now claim there was no massacre. Their pathologist says there is no sign that the victims were executed. A government minister suggests that the dead were rebels whose uniforms were stripped off and replaced with civilian clothes. Serbian television news gives extensive coverage to two French newspaper articles that cast doubt on the villagers’ account of the killings. No massacre. To assist in the struggle of memory against forgetting, walk with me through the village and up the hill above Račak on a frosty Saturday morning. The first six bodies are of men in their sixties: not the typical recruits of the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army. They have all been shot more than once, most in the head; one has no head. They have been in their homes; three brothers in a path leading away from the Serbian. Swedish monitor notes that the dead are all in civilian clothes and unarmed, and that there are no signs of a battle.

A few hundred yards away are three more bodies on the hillside. Each has been shot. Then in a gully, strung out like a hideous necklace, are six old men fatally and terribly injured, the line of their bodies ending in the heap of corpses. Many in this pile are teenagers and young men. Many have been shot in the head, several directly between the eyes. Moving around them, taking photographs and notes, and speaking into small cassette recorders, are half a dozen international monitors. After working for two hours one monitor, a London police officer, tells me he believes many of the victims have been shot at close range.

After viewing the scene, the chief monitor, William Walker, says: “As a layman, it looks to me like executions.” Mr. Walker is no mere layman. He was an American diplomat and ambassador in Central America during the murderous Eighties and is no stranger to state-sponsored killing. His feisty British right-hand man, John Drewienkiewicz, says of the dead: “These were old men, most of them, in their work clothes.” ... We must not forget Račak. I never will.

Source C


Those responsible for killing some 45 ethnic Albanians in Račak village on 15 January 1999 may never be brought to justice unless independent investigators are immediately allowed to do their work, Amnesty International said today. The organization also expressed fears for the safety of the villagers still in Račak and in at least two surrounding villages to which the recent violence seems to
have spread. The victims' bodies – including three women, a 12-year-old child and several elderly men – were found on 16 January 1999 by members of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Verification Mission, in and around Račak, less than 30 kilometres south of the capital, Pristina.

"This brutal crime is chillingly similar to the first reports of large-scale killings of ethnic Albanian civilians, less than one year ago," Amnesty International said. "The truth about what happened then was never established, and those responsible are therefore still free. ... If history is not to repeat itself it is essential to find out what happened in Račak on 15 January and bring those responsible to justice ..."Given the present situation in Kosovo, domestic investigations cannot be regarded as impartial. The authorities should therefore do everything in their power to protect the site of the killings, and to preserve the victims' bodies to allow for thorough independent and impartial autopsies to be performed," Amnesty International said.

Attempts by the Pristina district investigating magistrate, Danica Marinovik, to investigate the scene of the killings on 17 January failed, apparently because the area was still too dangerous. On 18 January, Serbian police forces, stationed on hillsides overlooking the village, reportedly resumed firing at Račak village. On 18 January, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, Louise Arbour, was stopped at the border between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and banned from entering the country. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has denied Tribunal investigators access for the past 10 months, claiming that the Tribunal has no jurisdiction over its territory. "The authorities should cooperate fully with the independent investigators, and provide them with all information concerning the police and security forces' operations," Amnesty International said.

Source D

"Pretext for war in Kosovo was a hoax", from the issue of Workers World newspaper, published on 8 June 2000.

"Report finds no evidence of Račak massacre" by John Catalinotto

A team of Finnish pathologists sent to Kosovo in January 1999 to investigate the so-called Račak massacre has at last publicized its findings. The result is further proof that the U.S. government manipulated both events in Kosovo and media coverage of them as part of its effort to justify U.S./NATO aggression against Yugoslavia.

The NATO powers prevented the truth from being publicized before or during the war. The reason is obvious. U.S. manipulation of the Račak incident was an essential step in initiating the war.

On Jan. 15, 1999, Serbian police – accompanied by observers from the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission and an Associated Press video team who were French citizens – had entered the village of Račak, a stronghold of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army. A firefight ensued, in which the Serb police bested their attackers. The next day, KLA members led William Walker, the head of the OSCE mission, and journalists of the international media to a gully at the edge of the village. Walker was also serving as U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time, and had a record of not exposing but covering up heinous crimes earlier when he was U.S. ambassador to El Salvador and Nicaragua. The KLA took them to the bodies of some 20 people lying there, and another 20 throughout the village. Before the international media, Walker immediately accused Serbian security forces of having committed a massacre of ethnic Albanian "unarmed civilians". He declared, "I don’t hesitate to accuse the Yugoslav security forces of this crime."

The story was spread worldwide. U.S. President Bill Clinton condemned the "massacre" in the most absolute terms. He spoke of "a deliberate and arbitrary act of murder". The German foreign ministry
proclaimed, “Those responsible have to know
that the international community is not
prepared to accept the brutal persecution and
murder of civilians in Kosovo.”

The Yugoslav government categorically denied
the allegations and called the incident a
manipulation. It accused the KLA of gathering
the corpses of its fighters, killed in the
preceding day’s battle, and arranging them so as to resemble a mass execution of civilians.
The “Račak massacre” was without doubt the
trigger event that made NATO’s war against
Yugoslavia a certainty. The Washington
Post of April 18, 1999, described Račak
as having “transformed the West’s Balkan
policy as singular events seldom do”. NATO
immediately convened an emergency
meeting. On Jan. 19, U.S. Secretary of State
Madeleine Albright called for bombing
Yugoslavia as “punishment”. The punishment
was delayed, however, as Washington went
through the charade of talks in Rambouillet,
France – at which it imposed demands that it
knew the Yugoslav government could not accept.

In the meantime, teams of forensic experts
arrived in Račak from Belarus, from
Yugoslavia and – sent by the United Nations –
from Finland. In February 1999, the Belarus
and Yugoslav experts both said there had been
no massacre. But the Finnish spokesperson
gave a vague report that allowed Walker’s
unsupported charges to stand. Now, after the
most brutal war in Europe since World War
II, the same team of Finnish pathologists isn’t
sure there was a massacre after all.

CBC Radio News learned and reported on
May 22 that the Finnish pathologists’ autopsy
report reveals no evidence that the 40 bodies
were intentionally mutilated. Only one of them
showed any sign of being killed at close range.
The doctor in charge of the autopsies is expected
to release a full report within a few weeks. But
the most reasonable conclusion is that there
was a firefight, that KLA fighters were killed,
and that the United States and NATO kept
the report suppressed to help confuse public opinion. There was no massacre – other than
NATO’s massacre of the Yugoslav people.

Source E

An article by Christophe Chatel,
“Were the Račak dead really
massacred?”, published in the
newspaper, Le Monde, on 21 Jan.

The version of the facts spread by the
Kosovars leaves several questions
unanswered. Belgrade says that the forty-
five victims were UCK “terrorists, fallen
during combat”, but rejects any international
investigation. Isn’t the Račak massacre just too
twist? New eye witness accounts gathered
on Monday, January 18, by Le Monde, throw
doubt on the reality of the horrible spectacle
of dozens of piled up bodies of Albanians
supposedly summarily executed by Serb
security forces last Friday. Were the victims
executed in cold blood, as UCK says, or killed
in combat, as the Serbs say?

According to the version gathered and
broadcast by the press and the Kosovo
verification mission (KVM) observers from the
Organization for Security and Cooperation in
Europe (OSCE), the massacre took place on
January 15 in the early after-noon. “Masked”
Serbian police entered the village of Račak
which had been shelled all morning by
Yugoslav army tanks. The broke down the
doors and entered people’s homes, ordering
the women to stay there while they pushed
the men to the edge of the village to calmly
execute them with a bullet through the head,
not without first having tortured and mutilated
several. Some witnesses even said that the
Serbs sang as they did their dirty work, before
leaving the village around 3:30 p.m.

The account by two journalists of Associated
Press TV television (AP TV) who filmed the
police operation in Račak contradicts this
tale. When at 10 a.m. they entered the village
in the wake of a police armored vehicle, the
village was nearly deserted. They advanced
through the streets under the fire of the
Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) fighters lying
in ambush in the woods above the village. The
exchange of fire continued throughout the
operation, with more or less intensity. The main
fighting took place in the woods. The Albanians
who had fled the village when the first Serb
shells were fired at dawn tried to escape. There they ran into Serbian police who had surrounded the village. The UCK was trapped between. The object of the violent police attack on Friday was a stronghold of UCK Albanian independence fighters. Virtually all the inhabitants had fled Račak during the frightful Serb offensive of the summer of 1998. With few exceptions, they had not come back. “Smoke came from only two chimneys”, noted one of the two AP TV reporters. The Serb operation was thus no surprise, nor was it a secret. On the morning of the attack, a police source tipped off AP TV: “Come to Račak something is happening.” At 10 a.m., the team was on the spot alongside the police; it filmed from a peak overlooking the village and then through the streets in the wake of an armored vehicle. The OSCE was also warned of the action. ...

The next morning, the press and the KVM came to see the damage caused by the fighting. It was at this moment that, guided by the armed UCK fighters who had recaptured the village, they discovered the ditch where a score of bodies were piled up, almost exclusively men. At midday, the chief of the KVM in person, the American diplomat William Walker, arrived on the spot and declared his indignation at the atrocities committed by “the Serb police forces and the Yugoslav army”. The condemnation was total, irrevocable. And yet questions remain. How could the Serb police have gathered a group of men and led them calmly toward the execution site while they were constantly under fire from UCK fighters? How could the ditch located on the edge of Račak have escaped notice by local inhabitants familiar with the surroundings who were present before nightfall? Or by the observers who were present for over two hours in this tiny village? Why so few cartridges around the corpses, so little blood in the hollow road where twenty three people are supposed to have been shot at close range with several bullets in the head? Rather, weren’t the bodies of the Albanians killed in combat by the Serb police gathered into the ditch to create a horror scene which was sure to have an appalling effect on public opinion? … Whatever the conclusions of the investigators, the Račak massacre shows that the hope of soon reaching a settlement of the Kosovo crisis seems quite illusory.

Source F

Extract from an interview that took place in 2001 with William Walker, Head of the KVM.

It was not my judgment alone. It was the judgment of everyone who was up there. The government story was ridiculous. The village story was dead-set consistent with everything that was on the ground. It was a scene we saw within hours of it taking place. It makes no sense to think that people up on that hill in the middle of the night on that icy slope were changing clothes, and painting people with blood, and shooting them. I can’t imagine it.

We then get to the question of the government refusing to allow the investigators to come in. If they really thought that I was blowing smoke, all they had to do was let some serious investigators come in to look at the situation, and determine that their story could’ve been accurate and truthful. They refused. The chief prosecutor, Judge Arbour, went down. I sent one of my deputies to meet her at the border, to try and bring her across. She was denied entry. It all fit in with a very consistent picture that what happened was the result of the security forces going into that village, taking the men out, executing them, and thumbing their noses at the world … If Račak had just slipped by the way, there would have been another Račak, and eventually, we would’ve had to tell the world what was happening. Račak just happened to present what I consider to this day to be overwhelming evidence of the truth that I declared at the press conference.

First question, part a – 3 marks

What evidence does Source D offer to suggest that “there was no massacre – other than NATO’s massacre of the Yugoslav people”?

Second question – 4 marks

With reference to origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Sources C and F for anyone wishing to allocate responsibility for what happened at Račak in January 1999.

Third question – 6 marks

What support do Sources D and F have for the proposal that what happened at Račak was “just too perfect” and that there was some manipulation of events by both sides in the conflict?
The response of the UN and the international community

Despite the outrage caused by news of the massacre, the events at Račak were, by the standards of recent conflicts, relatively insignificant. Compared to the massacre at My Lai in Vietnam in 1968, where more than 500 Vietnamese were killed, and what happened at Babi Yar in 1941, where nearly 34,000 died in a day, the killings at Račak were minor. Judged against what happened in Rwanda, it would hardly be noted. However, the Račak massacre began a process that led to Europe's biggest air campaign since the Second World War. It would also lead to threats of invasion that, in the end, brought about the downfall of Milošević and the end of Serbian rule in Kosovo.

The Rambouillet peace talks, February 1998

Pressure from many sources was brought to bear on the two sides to meet and talk in the days following Račak. In the same week, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expressed her frustration with the lack of control the international community had over events in the Balkans.

_We're just gerbils running on a wheel._

—Madeleine Albright, 1999

Meanwhile, the USA itself was gripped by the ongoing Lewinsky scandal in the White House, and articles of impeachment were served against President Clinton. In the Balkans, the State Department saw the need to promote regional stability and to preserve their own, and NATO's, credibility. Someone had to act.

Before the end of the month, Western leaders assembling in London demanded that representatives from Serbia and the Kosovar Albanians meet to discuss their issues. At the beginning of February, leaders from the two sides, together with representatives from the USA, France, Britain, Germany, Italy and Russia, met in the French château of Rambouillet on the edge of Paris. Outside the château, supporters of the Kosovar Albanians chanted slogans in support of the KLA and independence, which was not even on the table for discussion.

_The reason they refused to agree to the peace package was that they were not willing to agree to the autonomy for Kosovo, or for that autonomy to be guaranteed by an international military presence._

—British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook.
Milan Milutinović, whose hardline approach alienated some of the Western leaders, represented the Serbs. The real decision-maker remained in Belgrade. The delegation of the Kosovar Albanians included Ibrahim Rugova and the elected head of the delegation, the 30-year-old Hashim Thaçi. A young radical, Thaçi was one of the founding fathers of the KLA, who himself had been declared a terrorist by the US government the year before. It was not going to be easy to persuade the two sides to agree or even to compromise.

Some critics of the whole process saw the West as looking for an excuse to deal with Serbia once and for all, and that the talks were nothing but a sham. Both sides at the meeting had concerns about the contents of the final draft of the Rambouillet Accords that was drawn up over the next three weeks. Initially, both sides refused to sign the document.

For the Serbs, this was still a domestic issue concerning a province within their own internationally recognized boundaries. What they were being asked to do through the Rambouillet Accords was to allow an international body, in this case NATO, almost complete access not only to Kosovo but to the rest of Yugoslavia, in order to see that the terms of the agreement were being met. It was tantamount to a surrender of sovereignty and the Serbs refused to sign. As well as this requirement, another key paragraph in the agreement stated that, after three years, an international conference would be convened to come up with a final settlement to the future of Kosovo.

The Kosovar representatives also had a number of issues with the final document, which did not promise a referendum on eventual independence, and would require the KLA to disarm before proceeding any further. Nevertheless, the Kosovars did not reject the document outright, and pressure was brought to bear on them to consult further with other representatives. Whereas Serbia was essentially being controlled by one man’s policies, the Kosovar Albanian delegation was a much less cohesive group of people, made up of intellectuals, would-be politicians and radicals.

The representatives broke at the end of February and agreed to meet again on 15 March, following consultations with the other parties. When they returned, pressure had been put on both sides to sign the accords and, finally, the Albanians did so. The US government stated clearly that the Albanians had to sign. Behind the scenes, critics of the US government said that this pressure was brought to bear so that the Serbs could be blamed for the breakdown and moves towards military action could be undertaken. Richard Becker, head of an international action group based in New York, believed that the Rambouillet Accords were presented to Yugoslavia as an ultimatum, that there were, in fact, no negotiations at all and that it was a “take it or leave it” proposition: “The Rambouillet Accord [document] was, in truth, a declaration of war disguised as a peace agreement” (Becker). (For more on this, see www.globalsearch.ca/the-us-nato-military-intervention-in-kosovo/1666.)
US spokesman Richard Holbrooke visited Belgrade again early in March to warn Milošević that failure to sign the agreement would mean military action. Behind these events lay a definitive burden of guilt, which was carried by a number of Western leaders, regarding what had happened in Rwanda in 1994 and in Srebrenica in 1995. On 18 March 1999, the Albanian, US and British delegations signed the Rambouillet Accords; the Serbian and Russian delegations refused to do so.

On 20 March the international monitors were pulled out of Kosovo in preparation for action. William Walker reported that as soon as they began to pull out, Yugoslav forces were waiting, ready to move into Kosovo. "They wanted us out of the way as soon as possible", he commented, "so they could start doing what they were going to do, and then did it".

On 21 March, Holbrooke once again visited Belgrade to warn of impending action. He recorded what he said to Milošević:

"If I leave here without an agreement today, bombing will start almost immediately ... and it will be swift, severe and sustained." And I used those three words very carefully after consultations with the Pentagon. Milošević replied, "Yes, you’ll bomb us."

— Richard Holbrooke, 1999

The talks had failed to produce a settlement of the disputes but they did provide the pretext for the next stage in the conflict. What happened next at Rambouillet was not, in the end, a peace conference with much margin for real diplomacy aimed at solving problems. Serbia would not accept a NATO force on its territory. The NATO organization, on its 50th anniversary, wanted to show that it was still relevant as an organization and could act. By acting through NAVE, the Europeans and Americans bypassed the UN, and were thus also able to bypass the opposition from Russia and China. On 24 March 1999, Operation Allied Force was launched against Serbia.

Source A

The text of the appendix for the Rambouillet Agreement.

Appendix B: "Status of Multi-National Military Implementation Force be granted freedom of movement throughout all Yugoslavia ... Article 8 of this Appendix reads: "NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] including associated airspace and territorial waters. This shall include, but not be limited to, the right of bivouac, maneuver, billet, and utilization of any areas or facilities as required for support, training, and operations."

Source B

Response from the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, at its session on 23 March 1999.

The Serbian state delegation cannot be blamed for the failure of the talks in Rambouillet and Paris, as it had constantly been insisting on direct talks and consultations. The fault lies solely with the delegation of the separatist and terrorist movement and with all who had allowed them to behave in such a manner and sign a text which they had not wanted.
to discuss with the Serbian state delegation at all, but which they proclaimed as a complete agreement ... this document was imposed by force in Paris by the US, which thus openly sided with one party diplomatically, politically and militarily, placing NATO in an alliance with separatists and terrorists.

Source C


The Rambouillet text, which called on Serbia to admit NATO troops throughout Yugoslavia, was a provocation, an excuse to start bombing. Rambouillet is not a document that an angelic Serb could have accepted. It was a terrible diplomatic document that should never have been presented in that form.

Source D


First question, part a – 3 marks
In what ways do the contents of Source A support the contention in Source B that "this document was imposed by force in Paris by the US, which thus openly sided with one party diplomatically, politically and militarily"?

First question, part a – 3 marks
What is the message of the cartoon in Source D and how does its title relate to the message?

Third question – 6 marks
Using Sources A and B, compare and contrast how they promote understanding of the point of view of the side they represent.

Third question – 6 marks
Compare and contrast the message of Source D with what is said in Sources B and C.

▲ The man shown is Robin Cook, the British Labour government’s foreign minister.