

Out of the Past
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István Deák, Columbia University

Kosovo:
A Short History
by Noel Malcolm
(New York University Press, 492 pp., \$28.95)

Between Serb and Albanian:
A History of Kosovo
by Miranda Vickers
(Columbia University Press, 328 pp, \$18.95)

Scarcely more than a few Americans had ever heard of Kosovo until recently. Chances now are that it will become a household name, because the problems of this, Europe's unhappiest and poorest region, are so appalling as to require international intervention.

The two books reviewed here contribute mightily to making Kosovo known to the public. One, by Noel Malcolm, concentrates on earlier history while the other, by Miranda Vickers, devotes more than half of its text to post-World War II developments. Neither is an easy read, nor do they offer simple explanations to the complex problems they describe.

Both are majestic, all-embracing histories, albeit somewhat weighed down, especially in the case of Vickers' *Between Serb and Albanian*, by a mass of names, data, and other details.

Malcolm, who is a product of Cambridge University and calls himself a journalist, reads Albanian, Serbo-Croatian, Italian, French, German, Latin, Spanish, Greek, Romanian, and Turkish. His published works include an equally weighty *Bosnia: A Short*

History (1994); a musical biography of the Romanian composer George Enescu, and the life of a sixteenth-century Venetian heretic. Beyond these volumes, Malcolm has edited the correspondence of Thomas Hobbes. Vickers, who is British also, boasts numerous publications on Albania.

Kosovo is a province in the Serbian Republic; the latter is the major component of today's Yugoslavia, the minor component being Montenegro. Kosovo borders on Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia and counts nearly one and a half million inhabitants, eighty-five percent of whom are Albanian speakers, eight percent Serbs and Montenegrins, and the rest Slavic-speaking Muslims, Turks, Roma (Gypsies), Vlachs, Circassians, and others. In terms of religious identification, which in this region is at least as important as ethnicity, Albanian-speakers are mostly Muslims with a small minority of Catholics, while Serbs and Montenegrins are adherents of Eastern Orthodoxy.

It is not always easy to say precisely what the terms "Albanian," "Serb," "Montenegrin," or "Muslim" refer to. Nearly one half of Albanian-speakers do not live in Albania proper but in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Italy, and elsewhere. Albanian is proportionally the largest European Diaspora today, yet Albania, too, has its ethnic minorities. Montenegrin is a historico-political designation: most Montenegrins speak Serbo-Croatian and, like the Serbs, they are generally of the Eastern Orthodox persuasion. To be a Serb can mean either that one is from the Republic of Serbia or that one is ethnically a Serb. To be a Muslim can denote either a confessional or an ethnic affiliation, or it can denote both. There are even some people in Yugoslavia, and hence also in Kosovo, who call themselves Yugoslavs, mostly those of a mixed ethnic or confessional background.

Throughout history, Kosovo has frequently changed its name, its external and internal boundaries, and the ethnic and confessional composition of its inhabitants. The Kosovars have been conquered many times, assimilating their conquerors or adopting their conquerors' ways; under varying circumstances, they have fought bitterly among themselves or joined forces against a foreign power. In short, Kosovo is a typical Balkan province, whose inhabitants have suffered and, in turn, inflicted suffering on others but who have, throughout, retained their pride and, whether Serbs, Albanians, or of any other nationality, proven ready to defend their individual or group honor with arms. The blood feud is one of the oldest and most devastating traditions in the region. Vickers writes that a recent truce among Albanians in Kosovo, united against their Serbian oppressors, came as a blessing to the 20,000-odd Albanian men who had been virtual prisoners within their walled compounds. Murder committed by relatives whom these men often barely knew had made them the legitimate target of revenge by men who themselves often barely knew their own murdered relative. One of the most resented and least effective bureaucratic measures by Ottomans or Serbs has been to try to confiscate the Kosovars' private arms.

All this does not mean, as both authors rightly insist, that ethnic hatred is ingrained in the people. Rather, Kosovars tended to get along well with one another, and, when not, it was less because of language, religion, or nationality, than because of the complexities of clan and family ties. Being almost entirely illiterate, Kosovars remained unaware of their ethnicity until reforming intellectuals in the nineteenth century enlightened them on that subject. Even thereafter, the province's Serbian-speakers tended to treat Serbs from the

other parts as foreigners, while Kosovo Albanians felt the same way about other Albanians.

Today, because of repeated ethnic cleansings directed from above, such unpatriotic attitudes no longer exist, and ethnic lines are clearly drawn in the province.

Tragically for all, Kosovo is a sacred land, especially in the eyes of the Serbs. This myth of a holy land has been repeatedly invoked to legitimize aggression and violence. As Malcolm demonstrates, in Kosovo as well as in the rest of the Balkans, political decisions are influenced less by what really happened than by the myths that have arisen from past events.

As elsewhere in East Central Europe, places in Kosovo have multiple names and, by using the version favored by one authority, one is bound to annoy another authority. The Serbian government, for instance, insists on calling the province Kosovo and Metohija, or Kosmet in brief, which is supposed to convey the message that Metohija, which forms the western half of the province, is even more Serbian than the eastern, Kosovan part. For the Albanians the entire province is Kosovo. (Actually, in Albanian it is Kosove or Kosova, but Kosovo is the form currently used in most English-language publications.)

Because Serbia is the largest and most dynamic power in this region of mini-powers, and because, during the last two centuries, Serbs were the driving force in the anti-Ottoman and anti-Habsburg struggle, Serbian historical myths carry the most weight; they also meet with the strongest opposition. Every Serbian nationalist knows that Serbs were first in Kosovo, a claim which others dispute. Unlike Vickers, who is somewhat sympathetic to the Serbs, Malcolm suggests that, when they arrived in the region in the seventh century, the Serbs were just one of many Slavic-speaking tribal groups. The more ancient inhabitants of the region were Latin-speakers; today's Vlachs, a small Romanian-speaking group living in the mountains, may well be their descendants. As for the Albanians, they claim to descend directly from the ancient Illyrians, which might or might not be true. In any case, Albanians first emerge in the historical record in the eleventh century. Albanian is, incidentally, a difficult and isolated Indo-European language, unrelated to either Latin, Greek, or the Slavic languages. Curiously enough, the eleventh century version of the French "Legend of Roland," relating the adventures of Norman knights, contains a garbled list of Albanian place names, and one manuscript of the poem even includes a reference to "Albanie."

Not that Albanian-speakers were likely to call themselves "Albanians." Their word for themselves is "Shqiptar," a term whose origins are as obscure as the origins of most other names and peoples in the region. In general, the documents are often so confusing, and the tendency of medieval chroniclers to garble names and accept legend for fact was so widespread that historians are forced, repeatedly, to throw up their hands. Because people have been massively intermarrying for many centuries and because there is no such thing as a pure race, the question of who was there first should make no difference today. Unfortunately, an enormous amount of ink and blood is being spilled over this nonsensical question.

The Middle Ages saw a number of Christian rulers in the Balkans who, as princes did everywhere, allied themselves with or against one another in changing succession. A few even succeeded in creating large, if ephemeral empires. In the fourteenth century, for

example, the Serbian king Dusan presided over a great state with extraordinary cultural flourishing. The latter is still visible in the magnificent Orthodox churches and monasteries in Kosovo and elsewhere. By then, most inhabitants of the Balkans had long accepted the Eastern Orthodox variety of Christianity, although others, including some Albanians, had embraced Western Christianity and others belonged to one or more dissident Christian sects. In the course of events, the Serbian kings, like their counterparts in Bulgaria before them, had also managed to free their Orthodox church from the tutelage of the Greek Patriarch in Constantinople.

Then came the Ottoman Turks, in the late fourteenth century, and their arrival changed the history of the Balkans, although not as fast and as catastrophically as legend would have it. Malcolm devotes an entire chapter to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the greatest tragedy in Serbian and Balkan history, at least in the eyes of Serbian nationalists. A few years ago, Serb terrorists committed unspeakable crimes, against Muslims in Bosnia, in part as a revenge for Kosovo, an event for which Bosnian Muslims are no more responsible than Jews are for the killing of Christ.

Were it not for its terrible consequences, the legends surrounding the Battle of Kosovo could be admired as a wondrous folk tale, complete with a Christ-like Serbian Prince Lazar leading his small band of knights against the Infidel; the villain Prince Vuk Brankovic, who betrayed and, in some versions of the legend, killed his brother-in-law, Prince Lazar; and the young Serbian hero Milos Obilic, who revenged the death of Lazar by killing Murad, the Ottoman Emperor, perishing in the process. According to Serbian historical legend, vastly aggrandized by modern nationalists, the battle of Kosovo marked the end of Serbian independence. Nearly five hundred years of darkness descended on Serbia and on the Western world that Lazar and his warriors had so selflessly defended.

In the face of such a powerful legend, it might make little sense to search for the truth, but Malcolm does it anyway, proving that many Serbs and other Christians fought on the Muslim side at Kosovo. This was nothing extraordinary: Christian princes and Christian soldiers behaved no differently in Spain and elsewhere during that period. We don't know how Lazar and Murad were killed; Malcolm speculates that it was a Hungarian knight who slew the Turkish Sultan, a proposition that is unlikely to win Malcolm much favor in the Balkans. As for the traitor Vuk Brankovic, the Judas of Serbian history, we find him fighting the Turks a few years later. On the other hand, Lazar's son, Prince Stefan, another great friend of culture and the arts, sided with the Turks which, among other benefits, secured him the possessions of Vuk Brankovic.

The Ottoman victory – if victory it was, for many historians see it as a draw – did not mean the immediate end of Serbia or of Balkan independence. Christian princes continued to fight one another in alliance with or against the Turks. Only after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 did the Ottomans gradually extend their rule, to Kosovo in 1455, and to Serbia in 1459. The picture that Balkan nationalists paint of the Ottomans, is invariably bleak. In reality, as Malcolm demonstrates, and as other historians have shown, Ottoman rule, especially during its first two centuries, was superior in many ways to Christian rule: Ottoman law codes were more humane, the treatment of Jews far better, and the tax burden generally less onerous. Ottoman slavery was often less terrible than under the Christian princes, and slaves, if converted to Islam, could rise to the highest positions in the state. The famous child tribute, the devshirme, was one way for a Christian

to make a career: families competed with each other in offering their teenage boys to the authorities.

Christians were allowed to serve in the Ottoman army and were often rewarded with lifetime land tenure. Christian and Jewish converts to Islam more or less governed the Ottoman Empire, with Albanians playing perhaps the most important role.

Only when the Ottomans ran out of territories to conquer and when corruption and sloth set in, did the condition of Christians gradually deteriorate. Landowning became hereditary; peasants became serfs; and local governors became petty tyrants who fought one another as well as the Sublime Porte. A turning point came in the late 1680s, when Habsburg imperial crusaders invaded the Balkans, appearing even in Kosovo. They remained only a few months in that province and soon Ottoman power was reestablished along the Danube River. But the Western invasion led to the creation of another powerful and dangerous historical myth, that of the great exodus of Serbs from Kosovo.

As Malcolm explains, Orthodox writers interpreted this event as the second stage in the great Serbian Passion Play which began with Lazar's symbolic crucifixion at Kosovo, continued with the Serbian exodus late in the seventeenth century – comparable to the death and burial of Christ – and ended with Resurrection, the Serbian reconquest of Kosovo in 1912. Serbian writers hold that, to avoid enslavement by the vengeful Turks, Patriarch Arsenije of Pec led a huge flock of Orthodox from Kosovo to southern Hungary, thereby emptying Kosovo, the land where all Serbs had originated. Vickers accepts this view, but Malcolm won't hear of it and, truly, it is more likely that the Serbian-speaking Orthodox, as well as other people, gradually drifted north. Rather than marching out en masse, they made their way bit by bit, especially to Hungary where, after the devastating Turkish wars, rich and depopulated lands were to be had.

Those who remained in Kosovo changed religion and even language, repeatedly, over the centuries. In general, families, clans, and tribes moved, settled, converted, and reconverted in the Balkans; only in modern times have such acts become a major political issue. No doubt, the proportion of Albanian-speaking Muslims has increased in Kosovo over the centuries, so that today they form the overwhelming majority, but this was due, in part, to the willingness of local Serbs, somewhat better educated than the Albanians, to move away in search of better economic opportunities. Another reason is that Muslim Albanians have tended to have more children than the Orthodox Serbs. However, as Malcolm shows, city-dwelling Albanians have also reduced the number of their offspring. The fact is, that for quite some time now, the mainly rural and religious Muslim Albanians have been vastly outbreeding the local Serbs. For Serbian nationalists, this is not a normal development but part of a vast Albanian/Muslim/Turkish conspiracy.

Serbia freed itself from Ottoman rule early in the nineteenth century, and its example was soon followed by others. But Kosovo was still very much part of the Ottoman Empire when the Sublime Porte introduced a series of reforms aimed at modernizing, liberalizing, and centralizing the Empire. This presented even the most loyal Balkan subjects of the Sultan with an insoluble dilemma. Istanbul attempted to take power back from local lords who had usurped it; at the same time, it tried to modernize, liberalize and centralize the state. In the eyes of many provincials, this appeared as brutal oppression. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Muslims and non-Muslims together revolted against central power and, in the name of freedom, local tyrants waged wars against a state that tried to

build schools, reform the judiciary, and free the peasants from the yoke of the landowners. In the conflict between the center and the periphery, the Ottoman center proved to be clumsy and too weak.

Reforms cost money, and the Kosovars resented new taxes and conscription. In the Russo-Turkish war of 1875-1878, Albanian and other Muslims fought against the Ottomans. Turkish defeat caused Serbia to extend its borders to the vicinity of Kosovo, a process that was to culminate in the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, when Serbia annexed Kosovo in its entirety. The Balkan wars also marked the culmination of Albanian national reawakening and the creation, in 1912/1913, of a rather chaotic independent Albanian state.

In the Balkan wars, Muslim Albanians generally fought against the Ottoman Empire, then governed by the Young Turks, an aggressively nationalist revolutionary group. As Malcolm writes, the Albanian Muslims “pulled down the columns of the Ottoman Empire upon their own head.” The wars were marked by terrible atrocities on all sides, setting the tone for the horrors of the twentieth century. Reporting for an Ukrainian newspaper, Lev Bronstein, better known to history as Leon Trotsky, wrote from the Balkans:

The Serbs in Old Serbia, in their national endeavor to correct data in the ethnographical statistics that are not quite favorable to them, are engaged quite simply in systematic extermination of the Muslim population. (Malcolm, p. 253)

And Trotsky quoted a Serbian officer:

The horrors actually began as soon as we crossed into Kosovo. Entire Albanian villages had been turned into pillars of fire.... For two days before my arrival in Skopje [the capital of today's Macedonia] the inhabitants had woken up to the sight of heaps of Albanian corpses with severed heads. (Vickers, p. 77)

World War I brought new episodes in the dismal story of atrocities. The Albanians sided with Austria-Hungary and Germany, and after the armies of the Central Powers had overrun the region, in 1915, Albanians massacred Serbs or drove them out of Kosovo. When, however, the Central Powers lost war, in 1918, the triumphant Serb army, advancing from the south in company with the British and the French, took its revenge in Kosovo. The province was reintegrated into Serbia, and through Serbia, into the newly created South-Slav state.

Yugoslavia, as it soon came to be called, was a multi-national state, just like Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire on whose ruins it had been created. It differed, however, in that the Yugoslav regime, firmly in the hands of Serbian politicians, pretended that theirs was not a multi-national, but a nation-state in which “Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were but one nation with three names,” and other ethnic groups had only a negligible role. Because “plucky,” “heroic,” and “martyred” Serbia had fought bravely on the side of the Entente in the war, its leaders were allowed to get away, at the Paris peace

treaties, with any pretense and any claim. The results were tragic for all, including the Serbs. The clauses in the peace treaties which protected the ethnic minorities were largely ignored; in Kosovo, Albanian-language schools and publications were forbidden, the official claim being that there were no Albanians in that province, only Albanian-speaking Serbs. This led to the so-called Kacak rebellion, a bloody affair, but one that did not actually threaten the Yugoslav kingdom.

Much more serious for Yugoslavia was the discontent of the Croats, for which no solution could be found. In April 1941, when the German army marched into Yugoslavia, the myth of the “one nation with three names” exploded. Croats and others deserted immediately, and the German invasion resembled more a triumphant march than a bloody conquest. World War II was marked by the now-customary reversals of fortunes. Again, Croats, Albanians, and Bosnian Muslims tended to side with the Germans. Kosovo itself was divided into a German, an Italian, and a Bulgarian section; in each, the population was treated differently. Resistance to the occupiers began very soon, but also deteriorated almost immediately into a civil war. Serbian royalist Cetniks fought Albanians and Tito’s Communist Partisans; Serbian government troops under German tutelage fought Albanians, Cetniks, and Partisans. In Albania and Kosovo the anti-Communist Balli Kombetar movement alternately sided with and opposed the Germans and the Italians. At last, the Communist Partisans asserted themselves even in Kosovo, where initially they had only a handful of followers. Meanwhile, Tito’s forces had to face the dilemma of whether or not to encourage an Albanian independence movement.

As Vickers describes so well, the Communist International originally branded Yugoslavia as “a product of world imperialism”(Vickers, p, 113) that should be dismembered. However, after 1935, Stalin adopted an anti-fascist Popular Front policy emphasizing collective security and condemning the secession of disaffected regions as nationalism. From that time on, Communists were to see the unity of Serbian-dominated Royal Yugoslavia as in the interest of progressive mankind. During the war, Tito contemplated setting up a large Communist Albania, which might include Kosovo and would operate under the benevolent tutelage of Communist Yugoslavia, possibly as part of a future Balkan federation, but because Stalin wouldn't hear of any such thing and because, in any case, Tito could not completely ignore Serbian sensibilities, Kosovo remained in Serbia. All of this occurred with much additional bloodshed, except that this time, the killing was carried out by Communist Partisans who cared more for politics and class than for the nationality and religion of their victims. Kosovo now became an autonomous state within the Serbian Socialist Republic, which in turn constituted a theoretically sovereign state within the Yugoslav Socialist Federation.

The Titoists were often bloodthirsty, and their regime ultimately failed for reasons of economic mismanagement, corruption, and lack of genuine freedom, but in a region like Kosovo their rule must be judged beneficial. Both our authors and Western travelers relate how poor and backward Kosovo was before the advent of the Titoist regime: there were only a few schools and the vast majority of population was illiterate; women were either beasts of burden in the poor households, or bejewelled and incarcerated loafers in the better-off Muslim families. Now women enjoyed legal equality; the number of schools mushroomed, and soon Kosovars were even able to study at their own university. There was even a modest economic upswing in the region, although the more enterprising

Kosovars continued to go north or, increasingly, abroad, for work. Most importantly, the UDB-a, the dreaded political police, maintained the peace.

In the long run, no major regional problems were solved. The schools produced a plethora of Kosovar sociologists, psychologists, and art historians, but few engineers and scientists. The economic gap between North and South in Yugoslavia grew even wider, with each side claiming exploitation by the other. Finally, when the 1974 Constitution, one of Tito's many laudable constitutional experiments, gave near-republican status to Kosovo, the Serbs became enraged. Clearly, they had been outbred in Kosovo, a fact against which no pilgrimages to the holy site of the Battle of Kosovo, and no colonization projects have ever provided a remedy.

During World War I, nationalists in the Habsburg Monarchy waited for the death of old Emperor Francis Joseph (which finally occurred in 1916) in order to pursue their political goals with aggression; now, in Yugoslavia, nationalists waited for the death of old Tito, the last Central European emperor Tito died in 1980; by then, Serbian Communist intellectuals had already spoken up against the Albanian claims and in defense of Serbian national interests. Without the incessant agitation of these academics, the Bosnian horrors, the conflict in Kosovo, and the break-up of Yugoslavia might still have come, but in all likelihood, they would not have come so violently and so fast.

Not that Albanian intellectuals lagged far behind in stirring up trouble. Ignoring the fact that, in Tito's Yugoslavia, Kosovars enjoyed ethnic rights matched only by those granted the South Tyrolians in Italy and the ethnic minorities in Switzerland, Kosovar students revolted in 1981, and their agitation has not ceased since. While Serbian newspapers avidly spread vastly exaggerated stories of the Albanian rape of Serbian women, Albanian intellectuals spoke, in the same overblown style, of Serbian police terror.

In 1986, the celebrated Serbian novelist Dobrica Cosic and fellow-academicians issued a horrifying memorandum in Belgrade, accusing the Kosovo Albanians of genocide and demanding, among other things, the abrogation of the 1974 constitution. On April 24, 1987, at a commemorative festival held at the scene of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, the Serbian Communist party apparatchik Slobodan Milosevic correctly measured the mood of the Serbian celebrants in a wildly nationalist speech. There, and later in Belgrade, while addressing huge masses of people, Milosevic conjured the time-honored image of a beloved nation threatened with extinction and warned that Serbs would never give up Kosovo: "Every nation has a love which eternally warms its heart. For Serbia it is Kosovo."(Malcolm, p. 343)

As Miranda Vickers writes: "Everything started with Kosovo, and everything will finish with Kosovo."(Vickers, p. 289). Frightened by growing Serbian nationalism, Slovenia, Croatia, and finally even Macedonia and Bosnia declared their independence. Yugoslavia fell apart, and the war began in Bosnia over the division of that multiethnic republic. By then, Communism had collapsed even in Stalinist Albania; the Serbian national assembly had abolished the autonomy of Kosovo, and the Albanians had followed the example of Polish Solidarity in peacefully creating their own state and society within the Serbian state and society.

It is now customary to accuse the Serbs, who during World War I and World War II were celebrated as heroes, of brutality and oppression. True, Milosevic and company

are guilty of heinous crimes committed in Bosnia, yet it is amazing how patient the Serbian government has been vis-a-vis Kosovo: it has tolerated an Albanian shadow government and an Albanian boycott of all schools and state offices as well as of parliamentary elections. Albanians have refused to cooperate even in the taking of the census and, to offer but one more example, have avoided using state-owned hospitals, which amounts to virtually all hospitals. The sick are taken care of at home, often by medical students.

The leader of the Kosovo Albanians is Dr. Ibrahim Rugova whom Vickers describes as an enigmatic and somewhat eccentric figure. His aim seems to be to preserve peace while proving to the world that the Kosovar Albanians can govern themselves. So far, the strategy of civil disobedience has brought only meager fruits. Kosovars are becoming even poorer, and the 1995 Dayton Accord on Bosnia virtually ignored the Kosovo question. The peacemakers at Dayton had enough trouble bringing together Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians without worrying about such a seemingly quiet place as Kosovo. It is true that, quite recently, an "Education Accord" providing for the return of Albanians to state schools was signed between Milosevic and Rugova (though not in one another's presence), but the execution of the agreement remains in doubt.

Impatient with what they see as the failure of passive resistance, armed groups have emerged in Kosovo to harass the Serbian police and militia. They seem to be receiving arms and money from Muslim radical groups in the Mideast. This support appears to be channeled primarily through Albania, although there is no sign that any Albanian government, including the present-day one, has ever seriously planned or favored the annexation of Kosovo. Nor can the Kosovars fail to notice that even their miserable living standards compare favorably with those of the inhabitants of Albania.

The struggle between the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian police has been local; armed struggle seems to be the specialty of a few clans. There can be no doubt regarding the ruthlessness of the Serbian police, and especially of the Serbian militia that has descended on Kosovo, but history has still to show a police or military force that did not grow ruthless when attacked stealthily by fighters dressed as civilians. Only when the media will finally shed the myth of the invariably heroic freedom fighter opposed by the invariably brutal policeman will it be possible to gain more insight into the struggle in Kosovo.

One thing is certain: Bosnia cannot serve as an example for the solution of the Kosovo crisis. In Bosnia, Serbian and Croatian terrorists engaged in a brutal ethnic cleansing in order to gain land in a sovereign republic. Had the US not intervened with aerial bombings, ethnic cleansing might have ended in genocide. In Kosovo, an embattled police and an embattled Serbian minority are attempting to defend a place that is constitutionally a part of Serbia. The official Serbian argument that Serbia and, by extension, Rump Yugoslavia, are multinational states in which the rights of every minority are guaranteed is not far from the truth. The Serbs are also correct in arguing that, at least at the moment, there is no chance of a settlement with a Kosovar leadership that, in the long run, would consent to nothing less than independence. Apparently, the Kosovars are unwilling to understand that not a single major power, and certainly not the USA, favors independence for Kosovo. But suppose independence is gained? How would people there make a living? It is quite wrong to believe that the much heralded underground riches of Kosovo – lead, zinc, magnesite, bauxite and chrome – are inexhaustible.

Since the Kosovars will not abandon the pursuit of independence that Serbia is unwilling to grant, the conflict is likely to get worse and to extend to neighboring countries where Serbs, Muslims, Albanians, and Montenegrins live. Unlike Vickers, who, perhaps wisely, offers neither conclusion, nor prophecy, nor advice, Noel Malcolm concludes his masterful work with a suggestion:

When ordinary Serbs learn to think rationally and humanely about Kosovo, and more critically about some of their national myths, all the people of Kosovo and Serbia will benefit – not least the Serbs themselves. (Malcolm, 356)

Unfortunately, all this is not likely to happen soon and, meanwhile, Serbs and Albanians will continue to be irrational and often inhumane. To prevent more bloodshed, and especially the spread of war in the Balkans, the United Nations, and the United States in particular, will have to pay more and more attention to this part of the world. It will have to send diplomats and perhaps, one day, it will have to send troops, not to favor one side or another, but to enforce peace.