

The Last War of the 20th century

On the threshold of the new millennium,
Jan Marijnissen and Karel Glastra van Loon spoke with prominent experts
in the area of peace and security, both within the Netherlands and abroad.

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Foreword

The idea for this book was born during the time that NATO war planes were flying daily from military bases in Italy in order to drop bombs on Yugoslavia. The Socialist Party, which was the only political party in the Netherlands to take a stand against Operation Allied Force, organised regular public debates during this time under the slogan ‘Better than Bombs’. The huge interest in these evenings, the quality of the contributions from the various speakers, and the concern and commitment of the audiences have been an important source of inspiration for this book. We had at the time, and still have, the impression that the war in Kosovo marked a turning point in thinking in our country regarding the international (legal) order. The government of the Netherlands, a large section of the Dutch political caste, but also an important section of the media and of the population at large appear at the beginning of the new millennium no longer to have very much faith in the international legal order in general, or the United Nations in particular. In its place has come a belief in the potential of NATO as an instrument to bring order to a chaotic world, a world full of conflict, and if necessary to do this by violence. These developments deserve, in our view, critical consideration, and this book attempts to take the initiative in this.

We owe many thanks to the people who allowed us to interview them for this book. They all of them have full diaries, but nevertheless found more time for us than we had dared to hope for. We have tried to render their words as carefully as possible, and to do justice to the nuances and to the context in which they made their pronouncements. Of course none of the interviewees can be held responsible for the standpoints taken by the authors. On the other hand neither are the authors responsible for what the interviewees say, nor are they always in agreement with them. We hope, however, that we have succeeded in clearly distinguishing our own opinions from those of the people with whom we spoke.

This book would never have been written without the efforts of a large number of people. We want especially to thank Johan van den Hout for the enormous quantity of research which he carried out for us, for the organisation of interviews and airline tickets, the preparation of interview questions, the checking of facts, and the critical reading of draft chapters. His contribution was invaluable. Anna Beffers did an enormous amount of work with much patience and dedication to transcribe the interview cassettes. In Moscow we wouldn’t have been able to accomplish very much without Derk Sauer, who not only provided us with the

right contacts, but was also an excellent host who ensured that we wanted for nothing. Larisa Naumenko helped us to break down the Russian language barrier and turned out in addition to be a good guide to the world of the Russian fine arts. Yevgeny Podlesnykh brought us safely and on time to all of our Moscow destinations, which it must be said was no mean achievement. And finally we want to thank all those who showed understanding when we sometimes spent far too long at our computer screens, who encouraged us with cheering words when we had no idea how to continue, and who through their enthusiasm and commitment ensured that we maintained our belief in the usefulness and necessity of this project.

April 2000

Jan Marijnissen was at the time of writing the leader of the Socialist Party of the Netherlands (SP)

Karel Glastra van Loon was a novelist and journalist, closely associated with the SP, who has died, at the age of only 43, since this book was published in the original Dutch. His best known work in English was *The Passion Fruit*

Note from the translator:

This book is based on *De Laatste Oorlog*, written almost a decade ago, in Dutch language. Since its writing, Karel Glastra van Loon has died, and the tapes he made of the interviews cannot be located. Where these interviews were originally conducted in English, this means that they have had to be retranslated back from the Dutch. We have obviously attempted to reproduce the speakers' words as faithfully as possible, but nevertheless apologise to them for the inevitable changes of wording, which we trust have not affected the substance of what they had to say.

Steve McGiffen, 2009

Part I : Explorations

Our last war

‘This war didn’t break out, so much is certain, because of people who could have decided not to conduct it. The violent deed of x numbers of people was caused directly by humanitarian policies.’ – Gyorgy Konrád

The minister’s answer reached us via his spokesman and was exactly one line long: “The minister has decided not to cooperate with your book.” No explanation was forthcoming. This chapter contains, therefore, no interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the day, Jozias van Aartsen, in which he would have been able to give his views on the most recent war in which the Netherlands actively took part. Van Aartsen was the man who, on 24th March 1999, first made public the news that NATO air-raids on Yugoslavia had begun. This happened in the Dutch national parliament, where a debate was under way which, a day earlier, when the SP had asked for such, had been refused. This refusal, by every other parliamentary group, had provoked such a degree of disapproval and amazement in – amongst other places – the parliamentary press, that the decision was reversed, and the very next day the acute situation in Yugoslavia was put on to the agenda. By then it appeared that the order to make war had already been given. And so it occurred that the Netherlands, for the first time in post-World War Two history had, with its NATO allies, taken part in a war, without the representatives of the Dutch people having been given any opportunity explicitly to express their views. This was a beginning, setting the tone as it did for much that was to follow. War and democracy sit badly with each other – which of course says a great deal about the true nature of war.

It seems to us for a number of reasons sensible, before we give the stage to a range of experts, to dwell for a moment on the question of how politicians in The Hague, at the time of the war, saw the crisis in Yugoslavia in general and the role of the international community in particular. The most important of these reasons is, that much of what will be said in later chapters stands in stark contrast to what is thought and said in Dutch politics. Another reason is that the more time goes by the more the picture of what has ever been asserted about, for example, the motive and goal of the NATO air raids, will depart from what was actually said at the time.

In contrast with the NATO general staff meeting, debates and decision-making in parliamentary democracies are public. That the Minister of Defence during the war in some

cases discussed matters on the telephone with every parliamentary group bar that of the SP (During a general meeting of parliament, then Foreign Minister Frank De Grave said, ‘Oh, the SP is against everything, I’m not going to waste my valuable time on them.!’) we will simply think of as an occupational hazard, a consequence of the narrowing of the field of vision which afflicts many in times of war. In this chapter we will primarily draw on the written reports of the deliberations of the lower house of the Dutch national parliament, the so-called ‘Handelingen’, the ‘Proceedings’. A number of the questions which we had wanted to put to Foreign Minister Jozias Van Aartsen, about the Kosovo war and the new relations in the world which are a consequence of that war we have placed side by side with what can be found in the Proceedings regarding the Kosovo war and the new relations in the world which were a consequence of that war. In the same way we will also allow Defence Minister Frank de Grave and various spokespeople from both governing and opposition parties to have their say.

By these items there is revealed, as will become evident, a huge idealism, especially from the politicians of the governing ‘Purple’ coalition of the day (so called because it blended the red of the Labour Party with the blue of the right-wing free market liberals of the VVD) – an idealism that could only with difficulty be reconciled with the loss of belief in the viability of the society to which this same government owed its existence. Yet this was also an idealism which appeared sincere. There seemed to be a desire to cry out, time and again, that surely murderous dictators cannot go unpunished! Something must be done about it! In later chapters we will look into, amongst other things, the selectivity of this outrage and the oversimplification and myths that underlie it. It will also become clear how in military circles the fact was viewed that it was the military apparatus which was selected to be the instrument which would bring these good intentions to fruition For the moment we stand squarely with the words of Rob de Wijk of the Netherlands Institute for International Relations – the institution known as ‘Clingendael’ – who is one of the experts who will be quoted later. Referring to the government’s idealism in foreign affairs, he told us ‘What leaves me astonished is that if you asked a Dutch politician what he thinks should be done about the senseless violence in our society, he has no answer but to look guilty. But if it’s a matter of senseless violence on the world level, then he or she knows immediately what must be done. While you should surely, in my view, recognise that the problem is in that case also an extremely difficult one to solve.’

It is an unpleasant thing to consider, and something which no-one can feel easy about. But the

consequences of the conduct of a 'just war' such as was fought in Kosovo are no less unpleasant.

How, at the time, was Dutch participation in the bombing of Yugoslavia justified?

Minister van Aartsen to Parliament, 24 March: 'A decision to deploy military resources is one of the most difficult and gravest with which a politician can be confronted. The shocking human tragedies, as they drive each other forward, leave the government of the Netherlands no other possibility. With all the pain that such a decision brings with it, I would also say that a humanitarian catastrophe, which is not to be permitted and yet which is unfolding before our eyes, strengthens us in the conviction that the alliance has taken the correct decision. That judgement has not been made lightly, but has been based on belief. More than a quarter of a million Kosovars have taken flight before the unsparing violence of the Yugoslav troops. Innocent civilians are the victims. This cannot continue. It is with the greatest possible regret that the government of the Netherlands must conclude that President Milosevic is not prepared to choose the path which is wide open to him, the path of peace. This path remains open.'

What was the aim of the military operation?

Defence Minister Jozias van Aartsen: 'This military operation has as its political aim to put an end to the Serbian aggression and force the Yugoslav government to return to the negotiating table' What did the spokespeople of the governing parties think of the issue?

Jan-Dirk Blaauw of the VVD (right-wing liberals): 'We are forced to employ military means in order to bring Belgrade to its senses, to prevent a further putting to flight of Kosovars, to stop the destruction of house and home, and to call a halt to the abuse of human rights and humanitarian values in Kosovo.'

Gerrit Valk of the PvdA (Labour Party): 'It must be concluded that the international community has really gone to extremes in its attempts to find a solution to the conflict through peaceful diplomatic means. Much to our regret it must be concluded that the diplomatic way has proved a dead end. At the same time, that is the fault of the one who began this conflict, Milosevic.'

Jan Hoekema from D66, a small, centrist liberal party which also participated in the 'Purple' coalition: 'Milosevic must be restrained by violence, as he was also three years ago in the

Bosnian war. If not, then there arise penetrating questions as to how far Western intervention policies can and are willing to go. But speculation over this, and even questions to the cabinet, are at this stage relatively fruitless – and even in conflict with the adage that the opponent must be left uncertain over the next step.”

As is well-known, the Green Left group in parliament took at the onset of the conflict a step which was as historic as it was controversial. Party spokeswoman Marijke Vos put it this way at the time: ‘We support the military intervention by means of air raids, with the primary aim being the protection of the Kosovar population, aimed also at eliminating Serbian aggression and at the resumption of negotiations which must lead to a peaceful solution to the Kosovo conflict. There exists a risk that air action will not lead to the desired result, to putting an end to the aggression. There exists a risk that it will lead to thoroughgoing revenge actions. In that case the international community must take its responsibility and also in this situation do everything to force a halt to the violence. In that situation NATO must be prepared to take further steps, from which nothing must be ruled out.’

The only parliamentary group which did not support the air raids, as is also well-known, was that of the SP. Spokesman Harry van Bommel: ‘According to our firm convictions these air raids are illegal and irresponsible. To begin with there is no UN resolution which authorises the use of violence against Serbia, which puts the Security Council out of the game. Air attacks will in the short term make the situation of the refugees worse. The departure of OSCE observers as a result of the attacks has accelerated and facilitates the Serbian offensive, or so it appears. If the air raids do not lead in the short term to an agreement – and that is extremely uncertain – a humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented dimensions threatens. On what does the government base its faith that air raids will lead to signing? If this signature does not follow, what then?’

What should have happened then, in the SP’s view?

Van Bommel in the same parliamentary debate: ‘Peace in Kosovo can be achieved only through a political agreement. The parties must therefore return to the Rambouillet negotiating table, not in order to reach an agreement with NATO, but in order to reach an agreement between the ethnic Albanians and the Serbs. Other than has been the case to date, these parties must negotiate with each other directly. Only in that way can, in our view, a solution be arrived at which is also capable of lasting.’

So, at the beginning of the war, lay the cards, and they would remain largely unchanged, despite the fact that the war would last a great deal longer than anyone anticipated. A number of MPs from the Green Left and a single Labour MP (Thanasis Apostolou – not coincidentally someone who through his Greek origins took rather a different view of the actual nature of the conflict in Yugoslavia) might gradually have begun openly to speak out against the NATO actions, but of some importance to parliamentary history, never mind the course of the war, this turned out not to happen.

What strategy did NATO have in mind in order to achieve the desired goals?

Minister van Aartsen: ‘It is NATO’s view that the Yugoslav military must be hit so hard that its capacity to continue the present offensive will be greatly reduced and further humanitarian misery prevented.’

Defence Minister Frank De Grave: ‘The targets of the air raids are military targets: anti-aircraft defences, command centres, means of communication and military installations. This should underline the fact that NATO is conducting no actions against the civilian population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but that the actions are directed at the achievement of the political aims of the international community. We, the international community, assume from this that these NATO activities will lead to President Milosevic being prepared to resume diplomatic negotiations.’

Was there then amongst the governing parties no doubt at all over the correctness of the decision which they had taken?

PvdA parliamentary leader Ad Melkert on 30th March, 1999, speaking to Parliament: ‘We are experiencing amongst ourselves an attitude which is extremely self-critical, asking ourselves every day actually whether what is happening there can work, whether ends and means stand in a good relation to each other and whether we will eventually achieve what we want. We are also critical of the instruments used. After all, what is at the moment happening to the population of Serbia itself is also enormous. We are for this reason fixed on making a real distinction between the Serbian population and the Serbian regime.’

And how did this critical attitude relate to the triumphalism of the NATO spokesmen during the first week of the bombings?

Ad Melkert: ‘We heard yesterday the NATO spokesman continually express his satisfaction

over the achievement of the military goals; what these goals are also, because it is not always possible for us to follow everything in each phase. I would like to ask the government to say something about that, in particular how the phasing (i.e. of the NATO attacks – authors' note) is actually foreseen. But it is more a question of expressing satisfaction over the achievement of military goals and at the same time to keep quiet about the enormous harm to people and to the environment which was coupled with it. For supporters it is of the greatest importance that this aspect should be given consistent expression.'

And were there also doubts about the effectiveness of the chosen strategy?

Ad Melkert: 'Can we call our strategy successful now that Rambouillet as things stand is not yet signed and the humanitarian crisis meanwhile is indeed taking place, while the avoidance of such was the reason why this action was begun? The posing of this question is of course easier than giving an answer to it.'

Was it then worth considering putting a stop to the air raids, as the SP had urged?

Eimert van Middelkoop from the small Christian party the GPV happened to frame the answer to this most eloquently: 'Anyone who argues now for an end to be put to the NATO actions would be immediately responsible for the situation which would then exist. Well, you don't need much of an imagination for this. The programmatic genocide of Milosevic in Kosovo would proceed even more quickly. You have to accept that. Those who have learned to look into the mirror of God's law know human failings. However, one pious word is hardly sufficient now that we have looked the depth of human evil in the face. Sometimes human beings are like beasts.'

Debates in the Dutch parliament, as can be seen from Ad Melkert's contribution cited above, would like to be seen as spirited and of high calibre. Which is to say that the speakers appear to base their words on a reality which does not exist at all outside of the Binnenhof and of which you are inclined to ask yourself whether they actually believe in it themselves, or whether they choose to believe, temporarily, in this non-existent reality because from a political viewpoint it is expedient to do so. Did the Labour parliamentary leader really expect the Minister of Defence, at his urging, to sound the alarm at NATO in order to remind them of the importance of issuing honest information on damage to Serbian civilian targets? And, should he do so, that NATO would listen to him? As a result of the support within Dutch society? We have our doubts. In the same way, we do not believe that the spokespeople for the

different parliamentary groups were personally persuaded that in reality everything had been done to find a political solution to the conflict. The documents which formed the basis of the Rambouillet negotiations, to name just one aspect of this, were made public just after the debate was held from which the above quotes were taken. And how these negotiations panned out precisely remains to this day unclear, and probably always will.

The fine words about the ‘the path which is wide open, the path of peace’ were therefore nothing more than that: fine words. And there would also, in the weeks which followed the outbreak of war, be no shortage of fine words. Take the following quote from a debate held on 7th April, just after the Rambouillet documents had been made public via the Internet. From these documents it appeared, amongst other things, that agreements had been made in Rambouillet (at least with the Albanian Kosovars, who had signed under great American pressure) over the future status of Kosovo, which would for the time being remain an autonomous province within the Yugoslav republic. In view of the Serbian violence which had, since the beginning of the bombings, burst forth in full intensity, it seemed that there was, however, no other real option for the Albanians. In other words, the Rambouillet document, and certainly the Albanian signature at the bottom of that document, must in fact be seen as a dead letter. But not for the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Van Aartsen on 7th April, in Parliament: ‘Factually the situation is far removed from the situation during the Rambouillet negotiations. The principles and starting points of Rambouillet are and remain, however, the guidelines which we must follow hereafter. It’s a simple matter of the democratic rights of the Kosovars and respect for the people in Kosovo. These elements remain, and will remain tomorrow, unsolved. The negotiations in Paris are stuck on the fact that President Milosevic’s negotiating delegation did not want to accept ground troops from an international force on Yugoslav soil. On this point the talks went awry.’”

Jan Marijnissen, chair of the SP parliamentary group, in the same debate: ‘You say that Kosovo must remain under the jurisdiction of Yugoslavia. Since Rambouillet there are of course two things which have happened: the UCK is undiminished in its support for separation, but at the same time hundreds of thousands of people have been traumatised. The question is, to what extent does it remain realistic to wish that these people will be able to go there under conditions of autonomy? And if you believe that Kosovo must remain an integral part of Yugoslavia, how does this fit with the other final declaration of Rambouillet, in which

is stated that three years after the signing, a final agreement would be concluded “on the basis of the will of the people”? This is, in other words, a disguised sort of referendum, which would automatically still involve separation from Yugoslavia.’

Van Aartsen: ‘This element has, for the Kosovars, alongside the international ground troop force, been an important element in agreeing to Rambouillet. It would be a step in the wrong direction if we were now to decide on a political solution with Kosovo outside of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. If we should declare this at the present time it could have effects in the whole of the Balkans.’

Marijnissen: ‘But doesn’t that conflict with this final declaration, in which it is stated that the population of Kosovo after three years will determine how the definitive agreement will look? Or have I misunderstood this?’

Van Aartsen: ‘It is important to keep that in mind as an element for the future. That possibility has been created. That is the political section of the Rambouillet agreement, against which the negotiating delegation from Yugoslavia at the time had no objection. It ran aground on the military section of the agreement. The negotiators have always said that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must accept both the one, the military section, and the other, the political section. I can however not look into the minds of the Federal Republic’s negotiators. I don’t feel like doing so, either, but probably they made a point of the military section because the possibility can’t be excluded that they also had problems with the political section. But they said that they were willing to accept the political section.’

Marijnissen: ‘Including, therefore, the specification that the majority of the Kosovo population will determine after three years how the definitive accord will look?’

Van Aartsen: ‘That was the political section of the Rambouillet agreement.’

Later in the book we will return a number of times to the implications of ‘Rambouillet’ and to the question of how these negotiations turned out.

In the same debate of 7th April the question of the progress of the air campaign, which in the meantime had been intensified, and which raised ever more questions about the relationship between the stated ends and the chosen means, was gone into at some length.

Defence Minister Frank de Grave: ‘The right balance between ends and means continues to be sought. The goal has of course come more sharply into focus as a result of the actions of Mr

Milosevic. As we said last week, attacks have been stepped up. That is aimed in particular at hindering as much as possible an increase in the Serbian engine of destruction. There is now a possibility of emphatic attacks directed at the concentration of troops in Serbia. Apache helicopters should also be involved in this. This is happening expressly in order to increase the chances of eliminating military units in Kosovo.’

And how did the bombing of Yugoslav cities such as Belgrade and Novisad fit into the strategy?

De Grave: ‘That took place with the political aim of making it clear to Milosevic that the negotiating table was his only option. At the same time more operational targets were bombed in order to prevent the functioning of their capacity in Kosovo. This involved, certainly, airports, railway lines, road junctions, logistical means of transport and communication. We are also seeing that happening and find it correct and responsible. The power station which provides Belgrade with electricity was not listed as a military target. But power stations which have great significance for the functioning of the engine of war certainly do represent military targets.’

And so the hard reality of the conduct of war slowly sank into the minds of Parliament, which was doubly true for the MPs of the Green Left, who quickly turned out to be divided over the positions taken. Marijke Vos in her evaluation of the Kosovo crisis: ‘The (Green Left) group was in accord over the fact that in March military intervention was justified in order to prevent the threatening genocide. In addition we were therefore of the opinion that, after the bombings, further actions would have to be taken, in case it proved impossible to stop the violence and protect the people purely through air action. In this respect we were thinking of actions on the ground aimed at saving human lives. Then it turned out that was neither ready nor prepared to offer such protection on the ground, and that was enough for Farah Karimi to withdraw her support. For Ineke van Gent, the fact that the air raids did not protect people and the situation simply deteriorated was enough of a reason to withdraw her support.’

Still more painful was the situation for the Green Left as it became ever clearer that not only was the war going to last much longer than originally thought, but that NATO had begun to give an increasingly broad interpretation to the notion of ‘military targets’. On 12th April, for example, a railway bridge was bombed, an action which also resulted, passim, in the destruction of a passenger train, with the deaths of at least ten passengers. And on 23rd April it

turned out that a television station in Belgrade could also be a military target. Sixteen civilians died in the attack. Both incidents led to media uproar.

Members of Parliament did not allow them to pass unremarked, moreover. On 28th April Gerrit Valk, speaking for the Labour Party, opened the debate on the situation in Kosovo as follows: ‘Chair! Today sees the beginning of the sixth week of bombing, a depressing result. This should, however, give no occasion for doubting the correctness of the mission. NATO is bound to continue the actions until Belgrade is ready to yield. Stopping the actions, without NATO’s demands being complied with, would mean disaster for the region, the consequences of which are incalculable. It would be to bow definitively before dictatorship and terror. NATO’s attacks on the Serbian television have been heavily criticised. The Serbian television would also not be my first choice of target, but we must indeed consider that the Serbian television has nothing to do with journalism. It is a pure instrument of power and one of the pillars on which the present dictatorship rests. Moreover, the Serbian television has contributed to the creation of a climate in which ethnic cleansing could take place.’

Marijke Vos’s contribution was much more critical. ‘I conclude with great concern that, insidiously, ever more often civilian targets are being hit, including a TV station,’ Vos said. ‘And when I hear President Clinton say, during the NATO summit, “We will win this war,” then I ask myself if what we’re dealing with here is an attempt by NATO to boost its prestige. I have great difficulty with a position which is leading to such far-reaching escalation. We are asking ourselves whether it is really necessary to bomb all bridges in the North on the Novisad road. Meanwhile chemical factories are being destroyed. None of these targets is, in our view, a military-strategic target. For us, the limit could be reached at any moment.’

Yet Minister van Aartsen showed himself unimpressed by the criticism, defending the attack on the TV station in the following words: ‘At this stage of the conflict there can be no question of half measures. We must at certain moments make ourselves completely clear. It is obvious that the TV station forms part of the propaganda machine and also of the war apparatus of President Milosevic and that it therefore belongs to the relevant infrastructure which must be destroyed in the rest of Yugoslavia. Everything which contributes to distorting the worldview of the Yugoslav population – which is here certainly the case – falls under the title ‘infrastructure’ and lends support to the system. That is why we supported this operation as well.’

A motion from SP member of Parliament Harry van Bommel, asking the government to argue within NATO for an end to be put to the bombing, won no support outside of the SP, other than that of Green Left MPs Ineke Van Gent and Farah Karimi, and Labour's Thanasis Apostolou. A motion from Marijke Vos, requesting the government to argue within NATO that no more bombing attacks would be made on the Serbian media, won support only from her Green Left colleagues. The 'limit' to which she had referred was never reached. The majority of the Green Left's MPs continued to support the war to its end.

War is a dirty business – even a 'clean' war such as the air campaign against Yugoslavia, which was conducted via the most advanced bombs which humanity had ever produced and which cost the life of not a single allied soldier. Early in the war a Dutch F-16 pilot even painted the contours of a MIG fighter jet on to his own plane, expressing his pride in having brought down just such an enemy machine. But the longer the war went on the fewer reasons NATO had for such bravura. Great excitement was provoked, for example, when on 14th April two NATO pilots mistook a convoy of fleeing Albanians for Serbian combat troops. The bombardment, conducted with great precision, cost the lives of at least sixty-four innocent civilians. Also painful were the numerous stray rockets which landed in residential neighbourhoods, just next to a hospital, on a tobacco factory, or even over the border in Bulgaria. The resultant so-called collateral damage was deeply regretted by NATO and the Dutch government, but must it was said be put on Milosevic's account, as it was he after all who, 'with a telephone call to NATO headquarters' could end the war, as Minister Van Aartsen expressed it. In answer to written questions Van Aartsen put it in the following words: 'The government regrets the cited occurrences (attacks on a block of flats in Novi Pazar and a bridge at Varvarin which claimed civilian lives – authors' note), but notes that despite extensive safety regulations the presence of civilians in the vicinity of a target can never be wholly excluded. It cannot therefore be ruled out that incidents will continue to happen in which unintended civilian victims occur.'

Yet incidents also occurred which were more difficult to blame on Milosevic, and which – if you are not already satisfied by the declarations above – continue to pose questions. So, for example, there appeared on 15th May the following story in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, a respected American daily:

In Yugoslavia, as in every other land, children wake up on a weekend morning ready to play. They check the sky and, if it's free of clouds and F-15s, head out into the neighborhood. They

play ball, kick sticks and hunt through the grass for bits of treasure. Lately they've been stumbling upon some especially alluring objects – bright orange-yellow things the size of soda cans, and shiny spheres the size of tennis balls. The kids snatch them up. They explode. The kids lose an arm, an eye, or a life.

This scenario is made possible by NATO, which has been scattering the colorful trinkets across Yugoslavia for weeks. The soda-can things are CBU-87 and RBL755 bomblets, while the bright little balls are ATACMS bomblets. None of them is meant for children, of course. They're unexploded submunitions – the little bombs inside of cluster bombs.

The article continues with an explanation of the effectiveness of the cluster bomb. According to NATO it is an exceptionally effective weapon, because it can devastate a large area in one blow. The cluster bombs first explode above the ground, releasing two hundred shells. These shells then splinter once more into perhaps three hundred fragments of steel, shooting out at high speed on all sides. The sixty thousand shards which are in this way released are distributed over the length of four football pitches, doing their destructive work throughout this area. The average of five percent which is the proportion which does not go off is a calculated 'occupational hazard', so associated with the use of this weapon that, according to NATO, it is used only against major military targets such as airports and armoured divisions, targets around which the risk of 'collateral damage' is as far as is possible excluded. In contrast, for example, to chemical weapons, cluster bombs are not explicitly forbidden, which is to say that in no treaty do the words 'cluster bomb' occur. Peace activists and human rights organisations are, however, campaigning for bans to be included in two important relevant treaties. Firstly, an addition from 1979 to the 1949 Geneva Conventions bans the use of weapons or methods of warfare which cause 'superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering'. This protocol also forbids 'indiscriminate attacks', amongst which are included methods of warfare the effects of which cannot be limited to military targets. This general definition is further refined, banning attacks in which 'incidental loss of civilian life, and injury to civilians' are likely to occur. The use of cluster bombs in residential neighbourhoods, certainly where the bombs are dropped from great heights as was the case in Yugoslavia, leads unerringly to just such a risk.

The second treaty that could and should be applied to cluster bombs is a convention against weapons which result in unnecessary suffering, excessive injury or 'indiscriminate effects'. Although this treaty is principally aimed at landmines, weapons designed to explode when

touched or closely approached, it could quite easily be declared that it also applied to cluster bombs, which, with a 'permitted' percentage of unexploded sub-bombs of five percent, are bombs which have de facto the same destructive effects as mines.

On 12th May Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, and at the time United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, paid a visit to the small town of Nis in South-Eastern Serbia. Five days earlier the market and hospital of Nis had been attacked with cluster bombs, and fifty people had died. On 31st May Robinson produced a comprehensive report on this devastating NATO attack, for which there had been no obvious military target. Taking our lead from this report the SP asked ministers Van Aartsen and De Grave whether they stood by their earlier assertion that cluster bombs were deployed only against major military targets and from a height where they could be accurately brought to target. We also asked the two ministers if they were of the opinion 'that it is a legitimate military strategy to use cluster bombs against or in the vicinity of civilian targets.'

The answer stated that 'The government is aware of the report from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Robinson. This report does not alter the government's judgement over the deployment of cluster bombs.'

A similarly lame answer came shortly afterwards, after the end of the war, to questions from SP Member of Parliament Harry van Bommel. Taking his lead from a World Wildlife Fund report which discussed the 'large amounts of toxic chemicals and oil that leaked into de Danube-river as a result of the bombing', and noting that the Danube provided drinking water for some ten million people in five different countries, he asked whether the taking of such risks in relation to the environment and public health belonged in a legitimate military strategy. The answer from the two ministers ran, translated verbatim, as follows: 'NATO's air raids have always been aimed at targets which form part of the infrastructure which Milosevic put in place in order to conduct his campaign of oppression.' Period.

And even when, after the end of the war, it turned out that the cluster bombs had killed dozens of people including returning refugees (amongst them children) as well as soldiers of the KFOR peacekeeping force, the ministers did not feel called upon to look any more closely into the legitimacy of the use of such destructive weapons. 'NATO has,' they stated, 'in choosing its weapons always carefully weighed the military importance against the risk of collateral damage.'

It remains only for us to deal with the course of the war itself. On 11th June this was discussed in Parliament for the first time, and although no-one appeared in the mood to strike a wholly triumphal tone, the feeling that the fight was at last won was nevertheless dominant.

Labour's Gerrit Valk put his feelings into the following words: 'The moment for which we have all longed has arrived. The fight has ended and the beginning of a solution to the Kosovo conflict is within reach. It may be observed that without western intervention this would never have been achieved. Refugees will soon be able to return and will know themselves to be protected, now and in the future. And that is an extremely good thing.'

Jan-Dirk Blaauw of the VVD: 'During the air raids we engaged the government in an intensive dialogue, out of which each time the correct conclusions could be drawn. Joyfulness is, however, not appropriate. After all, it lasted a very long time and we know, furthermore, all about the many refugees and victims, when one would be one too many. Naturally, the relief was greatest for the Green Left. Marijke Vos: 'After almost eighty days of war the violence has stopped and there is the prospect of peace, and that is something for which we can only be extremely glad. But those who now talk of victory ignores the untold suffering by which it was brought about.' Finally Minister Van Aartsen expressed it thus: 'Now, seventy-eight days after the beginning of the military conflict and of the actions, it may be confirmed that the consistent, resolute and credible performance of NATO has led to the acceptance by Yugoslavia of the demand that all Serb units be withdrawn from Kosovo and an international force under NATO leadership be allowed into Kosovo. And the Socialist Party? Did the SP go back on its earlier standpoint? No. Harry van Bommel: 'We have always judged the cure worse than the . We hold to this opinion. The provisional balance of accounts is in fact a sad one. There are as many as close to a million refugees outside Kosovo and hundreds of thousands inside Kosovo. There has been large scale destruction in Kosovo and other parts of Yugoslavia. And lastly there is instability throughout the region. In this situation there are certainly no winners.'

Ethnic cleansing! Genocide! Hundreds of thousands dead!

'The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie, but the myth.' – **John F. Kennedy**

Those who seek to provide insights into complex problems cannot avoid simplifications. And those who want to make war, will not avoid the use of propaganda. The question is, when does a simplification stop being a simplification and become a lie? And when does propaganda cease to be propaganda and become pure deception? Few would deny that the Serbian television station is a source of misleading propaganda – for NATO this was sufficient reason to destroy it. But what about the manner in which the conflict in Yugoslavia was presented in the West? To what extent have the media and decision-making politicians in the NATO countries been guilty of deception and falsehood? And to what extent have the immediate simplifications of the complex reality led to a flawed understanding of what is in fact going on?

We put these questions to two experts: the Belgian historian and Balkans specialist Raymond Detrez, author of a number of highly prized books on the Yugoslav conflict, and the American linguist and political commentator Noam Chomsky. Chomsky, who became world-famous as a result of his ground-breaking theories of language acquisition in children, is one of the best informed and most radical critics of American foreign policy. In his book *Mconsent*, he took a comprehensive look at the role played by the American media in the mobilising of public opinion behind the aims of the country's political elite. But let's begin closer to home, in Antwerp to be precise, where Raymond Detrez welcomes us in an old and stately town house not far from the suburban station of Berghem. Detrez is someone who chooses his words with care and who does not allow himself to be carried away by his own emotions, precisely as you might expect from a man of science. Yet his standpoint is no less powerful for this – on the contrary. When, in our opening remarks, we present him with one of the most widespread simplifications of the Yugoslav question, the idea of the Serbs as the 'bad guys' of the conflict, he says: 'That is I think but one aspect of all these myths about the Balkans. And if we are to gain a good understanding then we must first immerse ourselves in those other myths. The myth that the Serbs acquired a dominant position in Yugoslavia, for example. The myth that Milosevic is the source of the whole catastrophe. And above all also the myth that the Balkans is an extremely violent part of the world where there have always been conflicts.'

Where making war is in the people's blood, or their genes. It is a myth the origins of which I, as an historian, have actually no good understanding.'

Let's then begin there. Doesn't the history of the Balkans demonstrate that it has for centuries been something of a powderkeg ?

Raymond Detrez: 'No. If you look at the history of the Balkans, the very opposite was the case. It's an area where few wars have been fought. From the end of the Middle Ages, the fourteenth century, to the nineteenth century no war was conducted in the Balkans. Which is to say that while wars were certainly introduced from outside, by the Turks, by Russia, by the Habsburg empire etc, no war was fought among the Balkan peoples themselves in all of those centuries. The first war between two Balkan peoples took place in 1885, the Hungarian-Czech war. And afterwards you had of course the great conflict of 1912-1913, the so-called Balkan war. But actually it stops there. The First World War certainly broke out in the Balkans, in the sense that what sparked this war was the assassination of the Archduke, but that was of course not the cause. No intelligent person believes that. Moreover you can see that the Balkans tried to stay out of the First World War, that no-one had any desire to fight that war. But as at the end of 1915 Hungary became involved, it wasn't possible any more to remain on the sidelines. And also the Second World War did not break out in the Balkans but in western Europe. The Balkans became involved in it without the Balkan countries themselves being able to do anything about it. So I don't really understand why the Balkans has such a bad reputation. But this myth has to a great extent determined how the recent conflicts have been viewed, telling people that what we are dealing with in Yugoslavia are totally irrational beings who go to war with no serious cause, and which you must therefore treat as you would children. And because it was assumed that the cause of the conflict lay in the fact that the Balkans was always at war, the real cause was not seriously investigated – certainly not by the media. And I believe that the media has a bigger impact on the decision-making of politicians than do serious scientific considerations.'

But when we just look at the most recent conflict, the struggle over Kosovo, then doesn't a war from centuries ago play a role in this, the so-called Battle of Blackbird's Field?

Detrez: 'Certainly, but that battle nevertheless plays primarily a mythological role. It was a battle which at the time didn't change the course of history by much. Rebellious armies, including troops of the Serbian king, were struggling against their Ottoman oppressors.

What's more there were also Albanians, Hungarians and Croats fighting on the Serbian side, just as Serbs fought on the other side. But okay, at Blackbird's Field the rebels were overwhelmingly defeated, and the Serbian king lost his life. And because the Serbian royal family, in common with all European royal families, maintained close relations with the church, this king was subsequently declared a saint, and through this a certain cult was created around him. But in the centuries which followed this battle it stayed at that. Only much later did the battle acquire a mythical meaning.'

When and why did that happen?

Detrez: 'That was in 1878, following the Congress of Berlin, when Bosnia-Herzegovina was placed under an Austrian-Hungarian protectorate and the Serbian route to the Dalmatian coast, and thereby to the Adriatic Sea, cut off. At that moment in history, Kosovo was an important area, while Serbia was no more than an insignificant statelet to the south of Belgrade. For the Serbian leaders it became important to find a southern route to the sea, and thus to claim Kosovo. With that political goal in view they dug up the Battle of Blackbird's Field, in order to provide historical justification for their new territorial claims. And in 1989 this myth had new life breathed into it by Milosevic with the aim of mobilising Serbian discontent in order to strengthen his own position of power.'

That brings us to another myth that you mentioned: namely that the Serbs had the upper hand in Yugoslavia .

Detrez: 'Yes. That is once again such a sloppy representation of the matter. Yugoslavia was a communist country, and the Serbs were its most numerous people, so people think that must have been something like the Soviet Union, in which all the other peoples were also dominated by the Russians. As if everywhere that peoples live together there must invariably be one dominant people. But this is often not the case. In Yugoslavia the federal system held advantages and disadvantages for everyone. The Serbs, in addition, did not form a majority. Yugoslavia was a multinational state within which the Serbs made up about forty percent of the population. You can't either speak about real minorities. The situation of the Croats within Yugoslavia was, psychologically but also constitutionally and politically, much better than the situation of the Serbs in the new Croatia. The Croats lives at the time in a multinational state, as one of the many, while the Serbs now live in a Croatian mono-national state as a minority. That is, by the way, a bad example, because there are now very few Serbs left in Croatia. That

is therefore also something to mention: the image is that the Serbs were the perpetrators and the Bosnians, the Croats and later the Kosovar Albanians always the victims. But according to figures from a Bosnian demographer, the war in Bosnia cost 355,000 lives. That is a somewhat higher figures than you usually hear, but that's because he counted a number of babies that were unborn as a result of the war, as well as the number of people who died as a result of privation and a lack of medical care. Okay, so where does that leave the relationship between the number of dead from each population group? We have 180,000 Bosnians, or Muslims if you prefer, 120,000 Serbs and 35,000 Croats. The Bosnians therefore counted the most victims, that's clear, but the number of Serb victims is not so low that you can simply put them down as the executioners and the others as victims. The figures don't allow it. Those Serbs were surely killed by someone. According to United Nations statistics there are currently around half a million refugees living in Serbia. These were thus Serbs who were driven out, victims of ethnic cleansing. Half a million! That isn't to say that there are no criminals to be found among the Serbs, but it does mean that there are certainly also victims. And that we are going to have to change our view.'

Which brings us to myth number three: Milosevic is the source of all evil in the Balkans.

Detrez: 'Yes, even in serious Dutch newspapers you read articles by serious analysts who assert that Milosevic is the cause of all of the trouble in the Balkans over the last ten years. That without him all of these wars would not have been. That's pure nonsense. In history such things never happen because one man provokes them. There are always economic and social conditions, political relations, a disturbed balance of power, which lead to situation in which what ensues is that someone such as Milosovic floats to the top. If Milosevic had not been there, then it would have been Iwanovic or Petrovic. The cause of conflicts lies always, namely, in the overall situation and overall conditions and not in individuals. You must therefore do something about these economic and social factors if you want to resolve the conflict. And not simply pull out one man and think that by doing so you have solved it. But okay, Milosovic was a communist and at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s that was of course not so good. A communist was bad, everyone agreed on that. You have to compare Milosovic, I think, with someone like Iliescu, in Romania, who is also a leader with few attractions for us. These people tried to bend to their will the whole of the process of change in which all eastern European states were caught up, so that the old nomenclature could hold on to key economic and political positions.'

And if you compare Milosevic to the Croat leader who has since died, Franjo Tudjman?

Detrez: ‘Tudjman also was successful in having the transition unfold in such a way that his whole family and his whole clique seemed to come out of it well. But he had of course very explicitly distanced himself from communism and socialism, which Milosovic had not done. What also played a role in this is the fact that in south-eastern Europe you’re dealing with a number of extremely weak economies. Economies within which the transition could have extremely damaging social consequences. In such states you see that the leaders present themselves more conservatively, even if only because that is more persuasive to the voters. You can’t just turn up with radical reforms and privatise everything straight away. In this whole economic context that would be quite understandable. You see the same, for example, in Slovakia. We are of course much more charmed by someone such as Havel than by a man like Meciar. Havel is much more respectable, and has more to do with democracy. But also this has a lot to do with differences in the economic and social situation: the Slovakian economy is, just like that of Serbia, extremely weak – much weaker than the economies of the Czech Republic and for example Slovenia. Because of this, in these countries ex-communists with little experience of democracy have remained in power. The people know well enough that this old guard isn’t suitable, but they would rather keep the certainties that they know than gamble on a radical upheaval the consequences of which are uncertain. There isn’t much desire to keep them but nor is there to get rid of them. And there’s a lot to be said for that.’

Now you have a number of reasons why we should begin to think differently about the Serbs, but what about the struggle for a Greater Serbia? Is that not a real danger?

Detrez: ‘In the Balkans “Greater Serbia” is a very common term which does not carry the same emotional baggage as it does here. There’s also a Greater Bulgaria with all of the areas which should belong there, a Greater Albania with Kosovo, part of Macedonia and a part of eastern Greece. There is a Greater Croatia to which the whole of Bosnia belongs, and a Greater Romania and a Greater Greece. This has everything to do with the nineteenth century idea of how the ideal state must be seen. The most serious interpretation of the idea of Greater Serbia is a Serbian state which consists of those areas which are inhabited principally by Serbs. But that does not differ from what the Croats want, or the Slovenians. That’s what everyone was aiming for in Yugoslavia. Now as far as Slovenia was concerned this wasn’t such a problem, because that was ethnically completely pure since way back. But in Croatia, for example, you had areas where a large majority of the population was Serbian. So there it

was said by these Serbs that if Croatia secedes then our region will secede from Croatia. And constitutionally that was perfectly sound. The Yugoslav constitution gave the rights of secession to peoples, but not to republics. The Croats could therefore certainly walk out, but that did not mean that the whole of Croatia could do so. When Yugoslavia collapsed, new borders had to be determined. Because if you took the old borders of the Yugoslav states as your starting point for the new states, then that would have been extremely favourable for some and unfavourable for others. For example, a third of the Serbs who were in Yugoslavia would remain outside Serbia. And the Serbs found that unacceptable.”

But is the idea of a mono-ethnic state desirable or not?

Detrez: ‘Personally I believe that the whole idea of national states should disappear. But that people who belong to one people should in principle live in one state is also still always a popular idea in our part of the world. It is no coincidence that in the same period that nationalism was raising its head in Yugoslavia German reunification was achieved, and that you had nationalist disturbances throughout Europe. In Scotland, for example, and in Spain, where it also always played a role.’

But German unification was of course judged in a very different fashion from the struggle for national states in the Balkans.

Detrez: ‘Yes, if the Germans want it, we find that completely normal, and if the Balkans want it we find it nationalistic. Just as we also see the genocide committed by the Germans as an incident in German history, although when it comes to the Serbs we think it’s in their genes..’

In the Yugoslav conflict two concepts cropped up more often than they had in the whole of the preceding century of bloody war: the concepts of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and of ‘genocide’. In Chapter 1 we showed how Dutch politicians regularly made use of these words when speaking of the horrific events in Kosovo. In a television appearance, former Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve went, shortly after the outbreak of the war, a step further, by comparing the fate of the Kosovars to that of the Jews in the Second World War. ‘This is an Endlösung,’ said the ex-minister, using the German word for the “final solution”. ‘There is a holocaust happening in the heart of Europe. Over ten days, Kosovo has emptied. Many tens of thousands of people have already died. Mass executions are taking place.’ And such rhetoric was not confined to the Netherlands. On 22nd March 1999, two days before the first NATO bombs rained down on Yugoslavia, British PM Tony Blair told the House of Commons that it

was imperative to ‘save thousands of men, women and children from a humanitarian catastrophe’ from death and barbarism, and from ethnic cleansing at the hands of a ‘cruel dictatorship’, adding a month later that it was ‘sometimes necessary to use violence against a bloody dictator’ guilty of ‘making a policy of racial genocide’. Three weeks after that US President Bill Clinton declared on television that ‘Although Milosevic’s ethnic cleansings are not the same as the Holocaust’, the two things were indeed related because both were horrific, well-planned, systematic examples of oppression, ‘fed by religious and ethnic hatred.’ Naturally these powerful accusations were accompanied by the necessary statistics. The American Defence Secretary William Cohen stated that probably 100,000 had died. When the government in Belgrade decided to release three American prisoners of war, he said also that the gesture of good will ‘cannot obliterate or overcome the stench of evil and death that has been inflicted in those killing fields in Kosovo’. This reference to Cambodia, where hundreds of thousands of Pol Pot’s victims had been consigned to shallow graves, had not been dreamed up by Cohen himself. On 1st April, his British homologue had declared that his country would increase its attacks on the Serbs in ‘the killing fields of Kosovo.’ while the British Defence Ministry estimated a month and a half later that the number of dead was ‘around 10,000’ and these had died in more than a hundred instances of mass murder.’

When we first made contact with Noam Chomsky, via the Internet, he told us immediately that he had great difficulty with the expression ‘ethnic cleansing’, as he did with the word ‘genocide’. ‘They have been so misused in the last decade that they have become meaningless’, he wrote to us. When he eventually agreed that we could interview him by email, our first question to him was therefore the following:

Where and when have these two concepts lost their meaning, in your view, and with what aim are they being misused?

Noam Chomsky: ‘The term ethnic cleansing was as far as I know first introduced in the first years of the Balkan wars, at the beginning of the 1990s. The term was used selectively to indicate those acts of ethnic cleansing (in the literal sense) which served as justification for western intervention. So no-one speaks of “ethnic cleansing” when the Croats, supported by the United States, drove hundreds of thousands of Serbs out of Krajina. Or when in the same period the Turks, once again with the support of the United States, destroyed thousands of Kurdish villages, through which tens of thousands of people lost their lives, and millions of others were driven from house and home. Still less is the term “ethnic cleansing”, in its

propagandistic meaning, applied to the many actions of the United States at the time of the terrorist wars in central America, which in the 1980s brought into being enormous flows of refugees. Or even earlier, at the time of the war in Vietnam, which later spread to large parts of Indochina. or the driving out and flight of 85 percent of the population of Palestine in 1948 and of still more hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in 1967 (who according to the United States have no right of return or of any form of compensation). None of these is any form of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the propagandistic sense. Ethnic cleansing is unfortunately already very old as a political instrument: the country which is at the moment the world’s most powerful, for example, came into being via ethnic cleansing, to give just one obvious example. But as a propaganda instrument the term is quite recent, and its selective use does not deserve imitating.

As for the term “genocide”, this has been in the last few decades so misused that it has become almost meaningless. There are cases where the word is applicable: Nazi Germany, for example, Rwanda, and perhaps a few others. But it is now used for enormities which for whatever reason you are against. In 1999 the propagandistic use of this word assumed wellnigh pathological forms. The NATO bombing of Serbia was generally justified by referring to the genocide which had taken place in Kosovo – at least according to NATO. By this what was meant was the two thousand who had died on both sides as a consequence of the violent Serbian reaction to what in Washington not so long before was described as the “terror” of the UCK. To talk about “genocide” in such a case is in fact a form of Holocaust revisionism. But already well before 1999 the term “genocide” had become so wellnigh meaningless through careless and selective use, that it is an insult to the victims of real genocide.’

Did it surprise you that two government leaders who could be described as representatives of the Sixties generation, the anti-Vietnam generation as it is called, have taken the lead in adopting a harsh approach to Yugoslavia?

Chomsky: ‘I don’t know much about Blair’s background, but I don’t see how Clinton can seriously be described as a member of the “anti-Vietnam generation”. He was not involved in actions against the war, and only spoke out against it on the grounds that it was a failure and too costly – not out of principle. In that he was no different to the overwhelming majority of the American political elite. In opposition to that were the some 70 percent of the general population who eventually came to see the war as “fundamentally wrong and immoral” and

not as “a mistake” – a fact that in all these years has not changed, although it’s rarely mentioned in the media and rarely brought out in discussions within the elite in general.

The fact that people who studied during the sixties conducted largely the same policies as their forerunners (by for example bombing Serbia and at the same time leaving similar crimes in Turkey and Indonesia unpunished and even supporting them) does not provoke surprise. The movements from the 1960s led amongst other things to the human rights movement (which is often cynically misused by the powerful), to the feminist and environmental movements, to a great resistance to state violence (in the propaganda often misleadingly indicated by the term “Vietnam syndrome”) and to a great number of other developments which in general have had a civilising effect on the West. But we cannot attribute these positive developments to everyone who by coincidence belongs to that generation. Not for nothing are they still ridiculed and marginalised by that part of the political elite which feels itself threatened by them.’

On the question of the use of the statistics on the numbers of victims for whom the Serbs were responsible in Kosovo having been used as a propaganda tool, Chomsky was dismissive in his reaction, writing that he had ‘no desire to get involved in the discussion over whether two thousand corpses, or however many it is which have been found since in Kosovo, do or do not justify the NATO actions. It is too easy in this discussion to create the impression that the Serb outrages weren’t as bad as thought – which is of course in no sense the case. The enormities in the Balkans, whoever carried them out, should not in any way be smoothed over. The arguments above concerning the selectivity of the indignation seem to me a more advisable contribution to the discussion.’

Raymond Detrez is, however, less reticent, saying that ‘We can assume that NATO did work extremely hard to look for victims, and the UCK even harder. Yet after six months of looking, 2108 corpses appear to have been found in Kosovo, of whom the identity and the way in which those involved lost their lives has still not at all been established. But okay, let’s for the sake of convenience assume that all of these were cases of murdered Albanians, and let’s then observe a wide margin and estimate that just a third of the real number of mass graves has been discovered – the definition of a mass grave, according to NATO, is a grave in which more than one person is buried. So then we arrive at six thousand dead. Of course that is terrible, but is it genocide? The association with the Holocaust seems to me rather exaggerated. It seems to me that the number of dead doesn’t differ a great deal from what you

might expect in a war against a guerilla movement, where things such as those we have seen now in Kosovo always happen. The imputation of planned genocide thus falls away. And with it a little of NATO's credibility.'

You could also say that it proves that the NATO action has been a success. According to NATO the Serbs had had a plan, the Hoefijzer Plan, to put all the Albanians to flight from Kosovo or to kill them. It's possible that they managed to prevent the execution of this plan.

Detrez: 'The point is that there is a lack of any historical-analytical framework for the part of people who make this sort of assertion. If you are not well-informed, the conclusions you come to will be disjointed. In the event of lack of proof of the existence of the Hoefijzer Plan, you need to look who might have had an interest in it. What interest could the Serbs have in such an operation? They could surely never really have thought that they could run all of the Kosovars once and for all out of Kosovo? If they had in practice been in a condition to do that, then wouldn't they have been given pause by consideration of the international reaction which would have followed? They were already threatened with bombing and so would they have done something which they could with certainty have foreseen that the whole world would have condemned – that seems improbable.'

It has been suggested that they wanted to put the hundreds of thousands of refugees now in Serbia into the houses and villages which have been emptied.

'Sure, but the fact that these villages had been burnt to the ground provides evidence to the contrary, it seems to me. And moreover, it wasn't only the Albanian Kosovars who were put to flight by violence, but also Serbs. Once again, I don't see what interest the Serbs could have had in the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. And NATO says that they have proof of this Operation Hoefijzer, but I've never seen it.'

All of the horrors taken together, those which occurred in Bosnia and those in Kosovo, before, during and after the war, appear to confirm the image that we are dealing here with barbarians who have no hesitation in murdering old people, women and children in cold blood, before, during or after the war, Doesn't that at least make the people in the Balkans different to us?

Detrez: 'No. The holocaust remains, as far as horror is concerned, unsurpassed. The way in which people are killed in wars is in the end a mere detail. What has happened in Yugoslavia

could have happened anywhere. We had here in Belgium this business involving a few of our UN soldiers in Somalia. They were there for only a few weeks or months, and you hear stories of children being hung over a fire. It therefore doesn't take much before such things begin to happen. It is no excuse, of course, but it's also not that unusual.'

But what then what allows such behaviour? What are the conditions which make people resort to such horrors?

Detrez: 'To begin with, not everyone who dies in a war is put to death in an horrific fashion. A lot of people fall victim also to what I would call "ordinary" war violence. In exchanges of fire. They are hit by grenades. Truly horrific acts, the torturing of people, throat cutting, that sort of thing is done by only a limited number of persons. These are diseased minds which you come across also in a peaceful society, but which in a situation of war can go about their business unhindered. Most violence results however from fear. From the fact that people feel their continued existence threatened by others. In Bosnia everyone felt threatened by others. And in Kosovo the Albanian Kosovars felt threatened by the Serbs, because they were the ones with the power, while the Serbs felt threatened by the Kosovars because they were growing in numbers far more quickly than they were themselves, and because moreover the position of the Serbs in general in what had formerly been Yugoslavia was becoming ever more troubled. And what you see as a consequence, and what in the Balkans has been on various occasions well-documented, is that in such a tense situation certain people deliberately and determinedly provoke a conflict. It's also not so difficult to guess what would happen here in Antwerp if a few Flemish people were murdered by Moroccans, simply and only because they were Flemish. I think that we would quickly have a comparable situation. People feel themselves called on to take revenge, and so things escalate. The only manner in which the situation in the Balkans possibly differs from that here in Antwerp, is the conviction on the part of many Serbs and Croats that they were oppressed for five centuries by the Muslims, during the time of the Ottoman Empire, and that the roles are now reversed. This belief means that no sound moral barriers exist when it comes Muslims. That does play a role, I think. But other than that I don't see any difference.'

If Western interference in the conflict in Yugoslavia is really based on a number of myths and false views of affairs there, as you assert, must we then decide that we are completely ill-equipped to intervene in this kind of question? That we simply don't have the analytical resources, the understanding or the knowledge to do so?

Detrez: 'I don't really know, as things stand. Does the international community, which is to say NATO, the US, now perform as it has because they had really come to the conclusion that this was the best procedure? Was the analysis therefore faulty? Or are there objectives here which have less to do with Kosovo or with Bosnia and which have now indeed been realised? And has the matter thus actually been rather well executed? We can state that the Dayton Accord was for Bosnia a complete failure. No part of it functions well. The situation of the refugees remains hopeless. But all of this means that a military presence will be absolutely necessary for a very long time. Was the performance then so bad, to pin everything on a military presence, or was that precisely what was sought? That's the question I ask myself.'

But why would anyone want that?

Detrez: 'Because it's an important area. Let's begin with the idea that things unfolded the way they did in Bosnia by accident. Then we see that subsequently things went precisely the same way in Bosnia. One again a solution which was in fact no solution. A high degree of autonomy for Kosovo, with which the Serbs would not be happy, but no independence, which is what the Albanians want. So here too a military presence is needed. Furthermore there's a military presence on the fringes of the area of conflict in Albania and Macedonia, and there's a corridor forced out of Bulgaria and Romania, and so on. Did that all simply happen by accident, from stupidity? Or is that the strategy? There's surely enough brains in NATO to think this sort of thing through. It's not my speciality, it has more to do with international politics, but I have the impression that NATO is expanding in two ways: in a more or less legal manner, with Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and in addition in a rather underhand fashion, as in the Balkans, by making itself indispensable. And perhaps that is indeed what they want: to be indispensable.'

A college of applied social studies

'Nothing is so terrifying as ignorance in action.' – Goethe

On an evening in May 1999 in a packed hall in the Dutch town of Zoetermeer a public debate on the war in Kosovo took place. One of the speakers was Kees van der Pijl, a political scientist affiliated to the University of Amsterdam, and this evening without doubt the one to whom we would be listening with the greatest attention. The analyses which he set before us, of the conflict in Yugoslavia and the motives which lay behind the actions of the parties to the struggle, were so remarkable and went so far against the grain that we, when we began to think about this book, had immediately put the name of Kees van der Pijl high on the list of those with whom we wanted to speak.

Van der Pijl was for many years a leading member of the Dutch Communist Party. He wrote books such as *Marxism and international politics* and *The making of an Atlantic ruling class*. And on the lengthy list of his published articles could be found, amongst others, 'Imperialism and the arms race between now and the year 2000' and 'The capitalist class in the European Union'. Van der Pijl has never felt called upon to pay much attention to Bolkestein's call to the Dutch communists to pay compensation for their 'errors'. He goes further than that, continuing to consider himself a communist. And that sort of contrariness is something for which we harbour a warm sympathy.

It will come as no surprise to hear that Van der Pijl feels less and less at home in the current intellectual climate in the Netherlands. The Chair of International Relations at the School of European Studies of the University of Sussex, in the south of England, came for him therefore as a gift from the (for an historical materialist, of course, non-existent) gods. Just as he himself put it at the beginning of our conversation, 'The academic climate in England is incomparable to that in the Netherlands. It's a relief!'

But we had not, of course, invited him to The Hague for a course on academic mores or the difference between the practice of the social sciences in the Anglo-Saxon and Dutch worlds. We were interested in that unfashionable social analysis with which our own political consciousness had begun. Not from nostalgia, but because we have the feeling that the accepted explanations for the violent collapse of Yugoslavia were inadequate. And that Van der Pijl, with his sharp analysis and great erudition, would be able to make important

additions to these explanations.

A popular line of reasoning is that the Balkans is a powderkeg with huge ethnic divisions which the former leader of Yugoslavia, General Tito, kept down with a heavy hand. After Tito's death these divisions had sooner or later to come to the surface.

Kees van der Pijl: 'In a certain sense you could say that Tito's system, with such a fragile balance between self-determination for the separate republics and unity within the federation, did indeed have the function of shelving certain national developments. The purpose being to spread them over a number of generations. But the idea that people in the Balkans want nothing more than to pick up a knife and do each other in, and that these tendencies could only be temporarily kept in check by a tough dictatorship is a major misconception.'

How then do you explain that nationalism became suddenly so popular in the course of the 1980s?

Van der Pijl: 'To begin with you cannot identify nationalism as a single political current; it's not an unambiguous phenomenon. Various groups in the former Yugoslavia have quite different reasons for calling on national labels and identities. Because people in the first place were citizens of the state of Yugoslavia, in most of the population petty nationalist ethnicity played only a very small role after the Second World War. At the end of the 'sixties, especially in the Western-oriented parts of Yugoslavia, such as Croatia and Slovenia, a youth movement arose which looked a lot like the May '68 movement in the West and the anti-Soviet movement in Czechoslovakia. Sometimes I think that it was simply the demographic curve which fed this movement, that the baby-boomers were demanding their space and wanted to let it be known that they counted. And as young people in the West were taking action against Yankee imperialism, and those in Czechoslovakia against Moscow, so the Croatian and Slovenian youth rebelled against the central power in Belgrade. That protest was in the first instance completely un-nationalistic, but Belgrade's reaction to the "spring" in Croatia and Slovenia meant that it was forced into a national-versus-federal pattern.'

What form did this reaction take?

Van der Pijl: 'Instead of recognizing that they were dealing with a movement for renewal, it was called "nationalism". And against this there was, naturally, a heavy taboo, because it might put the unity of Yugoslavia in jeopardy. At the point that people began to want to rediscover their own history, because they believed that their entire existence could not simply

be summarised within the story of the Yugoslav working class, they went looking for their own folk dances, their own music, literature and other cultural expressions. And that led in turn to its being written off as nationalism and on those grounds suppressed. In Croatia, where the demands of the movement for renewal were strongest, this led in the early 1970s to major purges. With the result, inter alia, that in the present conflict it was a long time before people in Croatia were prepared to take this nationalist path again.’

So it did eventually become a nationalist movement?

Van der Pijl: ‘No, I don’t believe that you can put it so definitely. Tudjman, for example, the first president of an independent Croatia, was indeed a nationalist, but he was also part of the old power structure that was always so against nationalism. What happened was that Yugoslavia as a federal ideal was lost during the 1980s. And that was to do with the enormous burden of debt, and with the advice given by the IMF and the West to run down the state, dispose of state-owned industries, lower taxes and so on. That released enormous centrifugal forces which meant that the Yugoslav republics began to operate ever more independently.

In this climate of huge uncertainty, nationalism, not as movement, but as idea, served two ends. Firstly, it helped the leaders to find a new “grand narrative”, following the discrediting of communism in the second half of the 1980s. The Yugoslav leaders were career politicians who wanted only one thing: to stay in power. And in order to achieve this goal they then in an extremely cynical manner went to the people with national symbols in order to win support. One week they were still communist, and when it turned out that communism was bankrupt, they became nationalist. And if anything else was still needed, they became that too: Greek Orthodox, or militant, whatever. That’s one side of the story. The other side is that the nationalism of the people helped them face up to a great uncertainty over the future. People were asking themselves, what if the Yugoslav state goes bankrupt, who will take care of us? Who is going to pay pensions? And who does this mine actually belong to? These are problems which have still not been solved. In Kosovo are found the biggest lead and zinc suppliers of Europe. But whose are they?’

How big are the economic divisions between the various republics and what role did these divisions play?

Van der Pijl: ‘I’m no Yugoslavia expert and I lean heavily in my analysis on other people’s work, particularly a book by Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, that I recently read. In this

you can read that the most modern sections of Yugoslav industry could be found in Slovenia and Croatia. The factories for shoes, sports equipment, textiles, radio assembly, that sort of thing. While Bosnia had an extremely mixed economy, it was moreover where the whole of the clandestine weapons industry was based. Serbia can be compared with southern Poland, with a lot of heavy industry, steel works, power stations, oil refineries.’

Did this mean that the richer republics such as Slovenia also had the feeling that they were paying too much for the backward areas via the federal state? You see an example of such in Italy, where the North refuses, increasingly frequently, to pay for the South. Or didn’t this play any role?

Van der Pijl: ‘That probably did also play a role, but the matter is a lot more complex. It was, after Tito’s death, at the beginning of the 1980s, especially the case that Slovenia in the first place, together with Serbia, wanted a revision of Yugoslavia’s structure. Except that they wanted it for different reasons. Slovenia wanted to belong to Europe, and saw itself as a sort of new Switzerland. And Serbia wanted to put an end to the policy of the rest of the republic, that is of disciplining Serbia. Tito’s policy was directed at this in order to prevent a repeat of what had happened between the two world wars, namely that Serbia, the most populous nation within Yugoslavia, could impose its power on the rest. For this reason Tito, himself a Croat, introduced a system under which numerous Serbs settled outside Serbia itself, and gave autonomy to the provinces of Serbia in which other minorities lived, such as Kosovo.’

And so Serbia wanted an end to this, and Slovenia wanted something else, but both wanted to see the back of the Yugoslav unity which Tito had constructed?

Van der Pijl: ‘Precisely. And in this Slovenia also wanted out of the whole idea of socialism and communism. That’s also of course the larger background against which all of this was played: the collapse of communism. Whereas in 1960 it still seemed that communism as a system was slowly on the way to catching up with capitalism, it became obvious around 1980 that its batteries were flat. That loss of self-confidence led to a situation in which communist and socialist elites no longer had any answer to the criticisms and provocations of opponents. The youth movement in Slovenia, for example, made use of Nazi symbols at rock concerts. Not because they were followers of Nazism, but purely as provocation. The worst sacrilege in communism is, after all, flirtation with the Nazis. These provocations led to tough intervention from the police, and that played into the hands of the Slovenian leadership, who

in public of course distanced themselves from these youths but at the same time let them carry on regardless.

In Serbia Milosevic was also adept at making use of anti-communist sentiments. Milosevic was a banker who from an ideological viewpoint actually had nothing to do with communism. For along time he was managing director of a bank in Belgrade. It is no coincidence that he originally was able to get on so well with people like He speaks fluent English as well. Milosevic knew precisely how to win those Serbs to him who had always been opposed to communism because they believed that the Serbs had too little power within Communist Yugoslavia, and that moreover their national interests were damaged by the system. In addition, by coming out with a whole new programme for his party, the SPS, he snapped up the workers from the major steel enterprises who had been badly affected by the economic crisis which Yugoslavia underwent during the 1980s. Because these big producers, who formed the backbone of the Yugoslav economy, were being put under the knife by the diktat of the IMF. And Milosevic...'

Just a minute. This is the second time that the IMF has been mentioned. What has the International Monetary Fund to do with the Yugoslav crisis, precisely?

Van der Pijl: 'I'll explain that. Perhaps "IMF diktat" are also actually the wrong words. As is always the case with advice from this kind of international organisation, there's always someone from the country itself who is not capable of acquiring the power to push through a certain, in this case neoliberal, policy, who then calls on the IMF or the EEC or whatever. You could compare it to what managers do when they bring in an external advice bureau in order to effect a certain reorganisation. They say in fact also, if you take care that you say in your report that we have to change course then we'll fill in the details in order to support this position. That's how it went in Yugoslavia. The modernising powers in Slovenia and Croatia, who were pro-market, encouraged the IMF in order to solve the debt crisis.'

How did Yugoslavia find itself in this debt crisis?

Van der Pijl: 'When Tito died the total Yugoslav debt amounted to around 20 billion dollars. But all debts taken on before 1979 were contracted in soft dollars, which is to say that inflation was at the time so high, something around 12%, that often the rate of interest fell to negative levels. For a good understanding of the debt crisis it's important to look at a few different years. First of all, 1971, when Nixon began to force the dollar downwards in order to

confront America's domestic problems. Another turning point was the oil crisis of 1973. Due to the fact that after this oil prices rose enormously, there began a massive flow of petrodollars. All of these dollars had to be loaned out in order that at least something could be made from them. That's the first phase of the debt crisis. Until 1979, so we're talking about a length of time of almost a decade, and above all in London, where the Arab world invested its wealth, massive amounts of dollars were loaned to whomever wanted them, which included countries in the eastern bloc. I know for a fact that Citibank in London ran an ad with pictures of the Kremlin leaders in fur stoles surveying a parade. This is how sound we are, was the message. Nobody thought then that this system could fall into bankruptcy.

In 1979 Paul Volker was named head of the United States Federal Reserve with a monetarist programme. Because, between 1974 and 1979 in banking circles and those elements of capitalist society capable of strategic thinking, it began to be understood that something was amiss. The American government was asked whether it knew what was happening to all of those dollars loaned to different parts of the world. No new industrial world was being built. In fact, nothing whatsoever was being done. In the Soviet Union they had put an end to the development of their own computers and such, because they could buy everything off the peg in the West. Volker's task was therefore to reduce debt to reasonable levels and in this way put an end to the situation. And this he did, principally through a drastic reduction in the quantity of dollars lent out annually. In this way the remaining dollars lost their inflationary momentum and a mass of hard dollars was created. Every country which had accepted these dollars at a rate of inflation of 12-15 percent, had suddenly to cope with a dollar which was no longer losing value. At that point the debt crisis broke.

Tito died in 1980, just after this important development, and Yugoslavia then saw itself confronted by the question of who should repay the debt of 20 billion hard dollars. That's the general context. Then you have to take into account also the international economic recession of 1981 to 1984. This crisis was overcome in many countries through exports to America, which you can find in the statistics. But countries such as Yugoslavia couldn't do that because their economy was insufficiently geared up for export. So that from that moment elements came to the fore in Yugoslavia, amongst them for example Milosevic, who said: we are going to earn back this debt by developing ourselves into an export economy, and in order to become a successful export economy we must liberalise. They then discussed this with the IMF, and the IMF made recommendations accordingly.

Don't forget that the IMF consists of around two hundred economists in Washington of whom hardly any is over forty, and a number of councils, such as the Council of Ministers, which never meet. The IMF cannot therefore do very much on its own. The people who determined what happened in Yugoslavia were people from Yugoslavia itself, people like Milosevic. The IMF could not dream up the figures itself, it could only process them. And then you could of course give the standard advice, that everyone knows well enough. Thus: cuts in social spending, a halt to the redistribution of wealth, make prices reflect reality. If shoes made in Yugoslavia, for example, cost a tenth of those made in Austria, you must make them worth a tenth also on the world market. Yugoslav dinars must therefore come to stand in the same relation to the Austrian schilling. The only way to achieve that in a society such as Yugoslavia was through lowering state spending in one go, running down every element of redistribution or social protection – by these means you can achieve a hard currency at a very low rate of exchange.

During this process of monetary reform an extremely complex game was played out between provincial elites who wanted to privatise their own part of the country – you can read about this in Woodward. The Croatian elite wanted, for example, to see everything in Croatia become the property of Croatian, for Croatia to become responsible for its own fate. And that clashed with the aspirations of the pan-Yugoslavian neoliberal elites. As far I can see there were no new elites who were deciding in favour of a new phase of socialism; certainly groups of intellectuals, but no 'power groups'. From Milosevic to whatever other politician you care to name, they were all in favour of the transition to a market economy. Only some wanted to realise this in the context of a small nation, and so in independent states, and others on the provincial level, within the federal context. Originally this was also the position of the Americans and of the western banks, because there was a great fear that when Croatia and Slovenia left the federation, the rest would say: we can't pay these debts any more, go to them for your money. So the IMF, the banks, America and the European Community were in principle all in favour of the maintenance of Yugoslavia as a federation, but with a neoliberal capitalist programme. That was the opening bid.'

There was therefore no secret agenda of the international bankers' world or of the Western countries to cause Yugoslavia to fall apart?

Van der Pijl: 'No, quite the opposite.'

It was internal mechanisms?

Van der Pijl: ‘Yes. And in part it was also an objective effect of the economic and monetary policies which were followed. You see, it wasn’t a goal of the United States, either, when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was agreed, that the Mexican province of Chiapas should go into decline. That was simply the effect of the creation of zones of extreme prosperity and investment, and of other zones of complete neglect with, simultaneously, exposure to new competitors. This was also the case in Yugoslavia. As soon as you instituted a neoliberal programme there, you found on one side people who said ‘great, I see plenty of opportunities for my firm, my town, my republic’, or whatever. But at the same time you expose the weaker sectors in a country of this kind to extremely disruptive influences. Suddenly, cheap grain came on to the market, while they were themselves grain producers. Or vegetables and fruit from the Netherlands, while they were themselves producers of peppers. This also happened in Hungary. They had the best peppers in eastern Europe – for the goulash. They had a great deal of taste, but in our eyes they were small, unsightly, half-rotted things. Then you had these boxes with cellophane and three peppers, real beauties, red, yellow and green, that we know from Albert Heijn. And all at once Hungarians didn’t want to eat their own peppers any more. The new peppers were associated with the West and with progress, the old with the bankrupt communist system and with the past. This sort of effect is something you simply have to deal with. And then you could well say that the population wants this itself, but this is a short-lived effect of the glamour that the West carries with it, and the association with the poor quality of their own products. It’s not an objective reflection of reality. So in this way such a society, suddenly exposed to the world market, is subject to enormous centrifugal forces. And these in their turn loose forces such as nationalism, religious fanaticism and racial hatred. These are therefore secondary, determined by the accidental legacy that a country carries along with it.’

Could there have been any alternative to these developments in the case of Yugoslavia?

Van der Pijl: ‘In my view certainly. One alternative would have been to introduce the welfare-state variant of capitalism. Instead of the establishment of a revamped American neoliberalism, the policies of Gorbachev, of Willy Brandt or even up to a certain point of Helmut Kohl could have been implemented. A social-democratisation of eastern Europe. This was also tried, but all those involved came to an end in a somewhat spectacular fashion. The man who wanted to extend major loans to Gorbachev, Alfred Herrhausen, spokesman for the

management of the Deutsche Bank, was blown away in 1989, allegedly by the RAF. In the acute phase of disassociation of the Soviet Union, at the moment when it must be decided which alternative must be pursued, Herrhausen was blown up with a bomb. And in 1991, Detlev Rohweder, director of Treuhand and the man therefore charged with integrating East Germany into West Germany, was also murdered, by a sniper. These are of course mere footnotes to the story, which is primarily about structural historical forces, but it isn't without significance that those who supported a policy of reconciliation with respect to Gorbachev, and primarily the more strategic figures, all in one or another sinister fashion disappeared from the picture, including Gorbachev himself. Because we haven't heard the last word on the coup of August 1991, a soup with many curious aspects.'

That all sounds extremely conspiratorial.

Van der Pijl: 'Yes, I'm also aware of that. The danger is, of course, that when you read things about this, you are dragged into such a different way of looking at how our society functions, that nobody takes you seriously any longer. And I think also that the decision of the Hungarians to choose Dutch peppers over their own has been quantitatively speaking a much bigger factor in determining how such a country will develop further, than is the question of who was working for whom when someone was shot from the street. But that does not mean that you should not try to embed such remarkable incidents structurally. Or that you should not take note of the sphere of influence in which this kind of affair unfolds. Or that you should be averse to saying that those who continued stubbornly to hold that another policy should be implemented were all put out of the way – even if I don't yet know precisely by whom or why this was done. Capital is in principle of course interested in a civilised conquest of hegemony, but that does not mean that use is never made of less civilised methods if that's the way things turn out. You can't depict this too conspiratorially, in the sense that certain powerful groups would have known perfectly well what was going to happen, but there are at the same time numerous reasons to assume that not everything happens so spontaneously as is often thought.'

Let's go back to the question of the alternative for Yugoslavia. For you that would have been for the country not to have been exposed in one go to the American variant of capitalism, but to a European, social-democratic variant.

Van der Pijl: 'Yes, a mixed economy. But by your choice of words you yourself indicate

where that would meet obstacles, namely with the Americans. At the beginning of the 1980s there were with regard to eastern Europe two strategies. The first was the Americanisation of Europe, in the east as well as the west. And the second was the Europeanisation of eastern Europe, in the context of which much attention was paid to central Europe as a sort of new centre. People such as Milan Kundera, Vaclav Havel and Gyorgy Konrád represented that central Europe, a central Europe that had always been part of European civilisation. The thinking was that these people must once again be accepted into the European family. But from the American point of view that was looked upon with a great deal of suspicion. Because for the small political elite in America who know where to find different countries of the world on a map, there existed a great awareness of the danger of a German *Alleingang*, of their going it alone. Or, to put it better, of a combination of German economic ingenuity, but also indeed that of France and Italy, with the inestimable raw materials and resources of Siberia.'

And in order to prevent the establishment of any such cooperation the American approach thus became: no European integration of eastern Europe into the rest, but an Americanisation of the whole of Europe?

Van der Pijl: 'Well, the Americans did actually want a primary economic integration – and no political integration. Neither the Americans nor the neoliberal financial world in London had ever put up obstacles to the establishment of the EMU, the European Monetary Union, in the Treaty of Maastricht in December 1991. This EMU suited them perfectly, as it at last facilitated movement between American and European branches of multinational corporations. But there was a lot of suspicion over the efforts from the European side to arrive at a so-called political cooperation and their own defence organisation. The Americans had said in response to proposals for the merger of certain European firms, for example, that it's all very well for British Aerospace to work with *DASA*, but if you go through with this, you will soon be unable to go to war alongside us, because then you'll be using a different communication system from the one we use. That's one of the levels on which American supremacy is absolute. They can leave an aeroplane hanging in the air somewhere, for example over Yugoslavia, and at a given moment the order comes from inside that plane, this and that are the coordinates, so go! And the next thing you know you've dropped a bomb. The whole thing is coordinated from inside the *Awacs* aeroplane and with the help of satellites. There's absolutely no European answer to this. And as far as the Americans are concerned,

they don't want there to be a European answer. That could in time involve America and Europe in a war between each other.'

So the American strategy with regard to eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia, was in your view always aimed at the liberalisation of the economies and at the same time at counteracting the formation of a larger European bloc?

Van der Pijl: 'Indeed. Primarily what they wanted was to prevent a new unity emerging from the remains of a divided Europe which would combine the energies of the West with the resources of the East, and which would then chart its own political and military course.

Yet in the meantime the Common European foreign and defence policy has moved to a position high on the agenda. And former NATO head Javier Solana is charged with looking into whether there could be a European army.

Van der Pijl: 'Yes, that's the crazy thing. And that has of course everything to do with the Kosovo war. The more I think about it, the more important this becomes. Because what happened there is of vital significance for the world towards which we are moving. It was, namely, primarily a war about the will of NATO – for which read America and those sections of opinion in Britain, France, Germany but also the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark which did not want a closed European bloc but a world economy into which the eastern European countries would be absorbed – to further its ends. Everything was devoted to undermining an independent Europe. But the price which in the second instance had to be paid for this was that European interests moved higher up the agenda.

The Dutch social democrats, the PvdA are currently arguing in favour of an intensification of the European arms industry.

Van der Pijl: 'Exactly. It's unbelievable!'

But you say then that the Kosovo war was primarily a war of those who wanted to prevent an independent European military force. How then do you explain that the result was the opposite of this?

Van der Pijl: 'I think that what's happening is as follows: the European leaders all knew that they were "menaced" in this war. I know for a fact that the way in which the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and his Green Minister of Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer, for example, came to hear that they were given a quarter of an hour to say 'yes' to a war against

Yugoslavia unauthorised by the UN, and also the way in which the Dutch government was dragged into it, meant that what was being said internally was ‘we don’t want that to happen again.’ People felt they’d been had. At the same time they of course defended the humanitarian character of the war while it was being fought. In a wellnigh hysterical tone they professed their love for the Albanians. And in my view that was because they were looking for a common denominator, in America as much as here, by which they could prevent their own people from asking themselves questions about the real motives behind the war. The core of the policy was in part to keep the real discussion points within the political class and attach the people to these discussion points via subordinate themes such as human rights. Which is not to say that these rights aren’t real, but these cynics have in general very little to say about these rights if things go badly.

That’s one aspect of what happened. At the same time as the intervention was officially supported in the name of humanity, and fine speeches were being given that moved one to tears, they were really pissed off because of the trick that was pulled on Europe’s political leadership by the Americans and British. Because we shouldn’t forget that Blair as a politician is much keener on capital directed at the world market than was Margaret Thatcher, so much became clear within the first years of his government. This policy of Blair and Clinton was therefore supported in words by the European politicians, but in reality they saw it for what it was, a policy aimed at stopping Europe from following its own policy. And as a reaction to this, there is now such a loud call for a European foreign and defence policy. In this sense also the Kosovo war led therefore to the opposite of what was intended.’

The question is not whether everything that Kees van der Pijl told us is true – what is true in international politics is primarily whatever one wants to maintain is true. The question is rather whether the consistent exclusion from the public debate of views such as those of this political scientist of the left does not lead to an enormous flattening out of that debate. We believe so. It is precisely in time of war, when decisions are taken which lead in one way or another to destruction and devastation, that it is of the greatest importance to listen to dissident voices, in order to see whether what you yourself hold to be true is in reality so much better thought out and argued than a view which is diametrically opposed to it. In times of war many people lose their sense of discretion – that is inherent to the nature of war’s conduct. You do not send bomber planes into the sky, you don’t fire off rockets, you do not sow death and destruction, you do not put lives in the balance if for you too many question

marks hang over your right to do these things. War is a matter of exclamation marks. That is why waging war sits so uncomfortably alongside democracy.

Foreign Policy for Beginners

‘One of the most basic principles for making and keeping peace within and between nations, is that in political, military, moral, and spiritual confrontations, there should be an honest attempt at the reconciliation of differences before resorting to combat.’ – Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States

With both arms outstretched he comes running up to us. The honourable Lord Carrington greets us as if we were old acquaintances. ‘I am so very sorry!’ He takes the hand of each of us. ‘I do hope I didn’t keep you waiting.’ We don’t bother to say that we had only just arrived and that we were, if anything, five minutes early.

‘Please, do come in!’ he says, before either of us has said a word. And hand in hand we enter the hall of his country house, ‘Bledlow Manor’, a hall from a movie, as would later be our impression, also, of the gardens. And just like everything else in this country house, it is too beautiful, too eccentric, too English to be true: the butler, the two rough-haired dachshunds, the painted hunting tableaux on the walls, the framed 1902 act hanging in the toilet in which it can be read that ‘the Lord de Carrington hath the right to agriculture and fisheries’, and the black and white portraits of the members of the royal family on a small table on the landing at the top of the shining, broad staircase which leads from the middle of the hall to the first floor.

It is a curious setting indeed in which to discuss the bloodiest war which Europe has seen since 1945.

The conversation actually took place in the spacious study of the former secretary general of NATO; the old Etonian; the former High Commissioner of the United Kingdom in Australia; the man who began his political career as a parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and went on to be First Lord of the Admiralty, Minister of Defence, Minister of Energy, and Minister of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Lord Carrington is the man who resigned as Foreign Minister in the Thatcher government because the security services for which he was in that capacity responsible had not seen the Falklands War coming. Since then in the Netherlands this has been known as the Carrington doctrine – the idea that a member of the cabinet should resign if major mistakes have been made by bodies under his or her authority, whether or not the minister had personally knowledge of these mistakes at the time. Carrington is also the man who, when he and Margaret Thatcher were once about to receive

the head of an overseas government, passed a note to the Iron Lady in which he had scribbled, 'The poor chap has come 600 miles, do let him say something.'

This man, with his impressive record of service, is undoubtedly the person to shed light on the role of 'the international community' in the Yugoslav conflict. He was after all the one who at the beginning of the '90s was asked to look for a solution to the threatening collapse of the federal state of Yugoslavia. This mission failed miserably, but it is the conviction of many, not least Lord Carrington himself, that this was not his fault, but rather to be blamed on the whims of the then German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

When we had installed ourselves around the coffee table and the butler had brought coffee and the dachshunds had found a place on their master's lap, we asked Lord Carrington to go back to the year 1991, the year which ended with a meeting which turned out to be the starting shot in a war which almost ten years later has still not blown itself out.

At the time, how did you see the situation and the different parties to the conflict?

Lord Carrington: 'What was expected from me was that I would have a constitutional conference on Yugoslavia. The European Union was afraid that Yugoslavia would blow violently apart and that this violence would spill over to other parts of Europe. I said that I would do this provided that there was no fighting. I was not prepared to have a conference when there was a war going on, because then there's no point in it. Of course I knew then that it would be frightfully difficult, but I had nevertheless the impression that a proposal would be possible that would be acceptable to all parties. What was clear to me was that it would have to be presented in such a way that each of the six Yugoslav republics would be able to choose for itself the extent to which it would remain linked to the whole. It was perfectly clear that within the republics there were different ways of thinking. Slovenia, for example, would be quite prepared to make agreements on matters such as common infrastructure, railways, that sort of thing, but beyond that they wanted, above all, independence. While in, for example, Montenegro, they still had a feeling in favour of a federation. In other words, I proposed a sort of Yugoslavia à-la-carte. We did get somewhere with this line, but unfortunately we would never know whether Milosevic, who as the leader of the Serbs was of course the most important man, would ever agree to it.'

What was your impression of Milosevic and the other Yugoslav leaders?

Carrington: 'My impression of all of them was that they were all ex-communists who had

been part of the federalist government. When Marxism died, when Tito died, they all became nationalists and stopped being communists. They were all the same kind of people. Tito had, thanks to the fact that he was a Croat who had fought in the war alongside Serbs on the side of the Partisans, bound both the Croats and the Serbs to him. Moreover, he had been a very tough leader. But these people absolutely did not have his qualities. I had for example no high opinion of Franjo Tudjman, the Croat leader. If he said one thing, he did another. Milosovic was also difficult, in the sense that he wasn't very helpful in achieving our goals, but if he said he would do something, then he'd do it. With him we always knew where we were, and with Tudjman never.'

Nevertheless you say that you had the feeling that progress was being made?

Carrington: 'Certainly. The possibility of a Yugoslavia á la carte was real, but everything fell apart when the Germans stated that the independence of Croatia and Slovenia would be recognised before the rest of the division was settled. Then it became impossible to come up with a common solution.'

Do you have any idea why the Germans insisted on this?

Carrington: 'Actually you'd have to ask the Germans that. But a number of factors which played a role are well known. There were at the time around 800,000 Croats living in Germany. That was undoubtedly significant. And the Germans did, as is well known, during the Second World War, create the independent state of Croatia. They had always retained a sympathy for the Croats. And that also certainly played a role.'

The meeting at which the Germans enforced their will, one which would eventually prove decisive to the fate of Croatia and Slovenia, and millions of Yugoslavs along with them, took place on 16th December 1991. Chaired by the Netherlands during its six-month spell in the European Community presidency, the meeting brought together Foreign Ministers from European Community member states, the intention being to take a number of initial steps on the way to a community foreign policy. Lord Carrington was not himself present at the meeting, but was later thoroughly briefed as to what had occurred. And he had tried beforehand to prevent what did in the end happen, the hasty and unilateral recognition of the two dissident republics.

Carrington: 'At the beginning of the meeting the Germans in fact stood alone. But with the exception of the Netherlands nobody really dared to stick their necks out to turn the matter

around. And I think that the reason was that just before that it had been decided in Maastricht that we'd have a common European foreign and defence policy. It would of course have been extremely painful if two weeks later at the first meeting no common standpoint had been possible on the most important question. And so they took the stupid decision to let the Germans have their way. Despite the fact that I'd already warned them, if you do that, then you'll soon all be in Bosnia. Because it was by then crystal clear that Izetbegovich, the Bosnian leader, had no interest in being left behind with Milosevic if Croatia and Slovenia were to leave the federation. And the Bosnian Serbs for their part had via a referendum already let it be known that they did not want an independent Bosnia. In other words, Izetbegovich knew that there would be war in Bosnia. And anyone could have known that. Just as it was certain that war would break out in Croatia. Which is just what happened precisely two days later.'

So what you're saying actually is that the European Community member states were prepared to risk war for the simple reason that Germany harboured sympathies for Croatia and because the other countries did not have the courage to contradict the Germans, for the sake of this brittle European unity. That's a really dreadful conclusion, isn't it?

Carrington: 'Of course you have to be very careful about claiming that this war would not have occurred without this stupid decision. In the end we have to deal with exceptionally unpredictable people. But the decision certainly hastened the war, and removed the possibility of our coming to a peaceful solution. Whether that would have happened, we'll never know.'

But in view of the risks, and of Germany's isolated position, how do you explain the fact that the other European countries swung round, and in a single night?

Carrington: 'Don't mistake Genscher's stature. He was an unusually dominant person, and furthermore he had been minister for foreign affairs for many years. Most of the other ministers at the meeting were newcomers, or relative newcomers. Moreover, they all had their own objections to the German position, rather than a single common objection. The only one who really did his best was your own foreign minister Hans van den Broek – and that didn't earn him any thanks from the Germans!

Look, I don't have much sympathy for any of the Yugoslav parties. But it's unfair to lay the blame for the catastrophe wholly on the Serbs, as so many now do. Because it was Tudjman

who declared his country's independence, with its own constitution, without first making any arrangements for the 600,000 Serbs in Croatia. And these Serbs still remembered what had happened to their fathers and forefathers last time Croatia was independent, when 400,000 Serbs were killed. So they didn't feel safe, and that is understandable. Consequently they of course reacted in a horrible manner. But that does not alter the fact that the Croats should never have done what they did. And that the European Community should never have supported them in that.'

A few days later we spoke to Hans van den Broek, Dutch Foreign Minister in the 1980s and after that EU Commissioner responsible for external affairs. We caught up with him in a much more prosaic setting: a small meeting room in the national parliament building in The Hague. (Jan Marijnissen and Hans van den Broek, conversing together? This led to a number of raised eyebrows from passers-by, and Mr Van den Broek to say 'No, the Christian Democrats and the SP are not in negotiation') Van den Broek broadly confirmed Lord Carrington's account, but added a number of brief remarks.

The first: 'I remember that I was visiting Gorbachev with the European troika in Moscow in the time when we were extremely concerned about Moscow's actions in relation to the Baltic republics. The Danes argued at the time within the EC not to work against the independence struggles of the Baltic republics, to undo Russia's annexation and recognise these republics. When we talked about this in Union circles the German side warned that we shouldn't push this too hard, not because the Germans didn't want to put the Soviet Union's back up, but actually because they expected it to set off a chain reaction in the Balkan independence struggles. But just a few months afterwards, in 1991, the German standpoint was reversed and we began to notice that Germany was setting itself up as the great supporter of recognition of Croatian and Slovenian independence. By which what I'm saying is that the Union originally and for a long time was apprehensive about a confrontation in the Balkans, especially given the historic instability of the region itself.'

What is your explanation for the German about face?

Van den Broek: 'I think that you have to look for that in developments within Germany itself, primarily you have to think about German reunification, the fall of the Wall, and the right to self-determination that the East Germans had already taken advantage of. The feelings unleashed in Germany by this were now translated to the Balkans. Amongst the Germans

there gradually developed the idea that the Croats – with whom Nazi Germany had had close links – should be accorded the right to self-determination, because they were oppressed by the Serbs, who had a majority position in a unified Yugoslavia. So as I said, the rest of the Union thought differently about this and I can imagine what Carrington told you. Because his big problem in the second half of 1991 at that conference was that the recognition of these two republics deprived him of an important instrument in his attempts at mediation. The Netherlands was in the chair during this 16th December meeting, and I want to disabuse you of the impression that Germany was worthy of serious reproach. You have to put this into perspective. In December 1991 a third of the Croatian territory was occupied by the Yugoslav army, which the Croats had already walked out of. It began then to look increasingly like an occupation. But as long as Croatia formed part of the Yugoslav Republic, tensions between Serbs and Croats were a purely domestic matter, in which outsiders couldn't interfere. The Germans reasoned that the recognition of Croatia would make it possible to intervene, because then it would become a conflict between two states. On this we, the other European countries, had little to say in opposition.'

But according to Lord Carrington the Croats weren't a jot better than the Serbs, and Tudjman was even worse than Milosevic.

Van den Broek: 'I don't agree with that either. I think that Milosevic was very much the main guilty party. Afterwards I said that we were obliged from the beginning to take sides against the Serbs, because it was precisely our failure to take a clear position which rendered us powerless.'

The direct consequence of the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia by the member states of the European Community was the outbreak of war between Serbia and Croatia. On that most experts have since agreed. But soon afterwards Bosnia-Herzegovina was also transformed into a battlefield. And who bears the greatest responsibility for that is somewhat less clear.

On 22nd December 1994 Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was a guest on the CNN programme Larry King Live. The war in Bosnia was at the time temporarily suspended by a cease-fire negotiated through the mediation of former American President Jimmy Carter. Larry King asked his guest the following question: 'Why wasn't what Carter did yesterday not done four years earlier? Nobody wants to die, so why are we killing each other?'

Milosevic's answer: 'That is due to the process of Bosnia-Herzegovina's detachment from

Yugoslavia. I had just begun to explain to you that it might be good for your programme if you consulted the archives. I still remember very well a meeting in The Hague. Carrington was in the chair. That's all minuted. We heard a report from José Cutileiro, the Portuguese ambassador who led the first conference on Bosnia. He told the plenary meeting that he had made good progress. Immediately after that we listened to an interruption from Mr Izetbegovic, who demanded the immediate recognition of an independent state. At this point I intervened myself, pointing out the big differences between the report from the head of the conference, Cutileiro, and Izetbegovic's demands. Why should we poison the positive development reported by Cutileiro through a premature recognition which was going to cause big problems? That was all tied up. Nobody wanted to listen. We have seen how after that the war broke out. The Serbs did not want to become second class citizens in a Muslim state inflicted on them. That they could not accept. That was the problem. But the other party did not want a solution to that problem to be brought about by the peaceful process begun by the European Community. They started a war. That war was forced on the Serbs.'

We asked Lord Carrington what he thought of Milosevic's statements and without hesitation he said that 'there's an element of truth in these words. Cutileiro had, long before the real horrors broke out, negotiated an agreement which appeared broadly to be what was arranged under the Dayton accords – except that Cutileiro arranged things better, and sooner, so that it would have been easier to enforce. All parties could find something in it, except the Americans, who told Izetbegovic that he shouldn't accept it, because it would be a recognition of ethnic cleansing in territorial terms by force. That's what the Americans said, I've seen the text with my own eyes. And as a consequence of that Izetbegovic then rejected the agreement.'

Why did the Americans do that?

Carrington: 'Because of the American syndrome of poor little Bosnia, the underdog which had to pander to the whims of big Serbia and Croatia – which is of course a very one-sided interpretation. Nobody had any sympathy for the Serbs, even if hundreds of thousands of Serbs were chased out of Krajina. That was done by the Croats, with the support of the Americans, and therefore was evidently not so awful. A double standard was applied throughout the entire Yugoslav conflict. And there was so much ignorance. The Americans in particular had to start with absolutely no idea what was really going on.'

Is that exceptional or is it rather the rule in foreign policy, that on such doubtful grounds such far-reaching decisions are taken?

Carrington: 'It's certainly not exceptional. Everybody made a mess of it. The Americans, the European Union and the United Nations. And nobody came out with any credit at all. If you look at the wider issues. Whether you look at Kosovo or East Timor or Somalia. The problem with all that is the instantaneous news, all the misery and starvation you see on television and then the great cry that something must be done. And so governments get forced into doing things because of public opinion. And the public opinion only wants things to be done as long as it doesn't inconvenience them. I do see how difficult it was to do nothing, but if you look at it totally in the abstract, if we had done nothing at all, what would have happened is exactly what will happen now. Serbia is going to want part of Bosnia, and Croatia is going to want a part of Bosnia. Both Milosovic and Tuzman said to me separately 'we agree'. I don't underestimate the difficulties that governments have with doing nothing.'

So you think actually that all of this Western intervention has been in vain?

Carrington: 'If you will allow me to be cynical for a moment, have you noticed the international community concerning itself very much with the Chechens. It is almost identical, they were all refugees, a rebel movement that wanted independence. As in East Timor, it was exactly the same kind of circumstances, but you have different reactions to it. You can bomb Belgrade, but you are not going to bomb Moscow without the Russians doing something with their army. In a way you have to react sensibly to it. What you must not do is preach all the time about ethnic cleansing and humanitarian intervention.'

But the fact that you can't send bombers over Chechenya says nothing about the legitimacy of bombing Kosovo.

Carrington: 'But I wouldn't say that we are going to have humanitarian wars now as Cook said the other day. That the rights of people are more important than the rights of governments. The same way you are not going to bomb Jakarta because if you bomb Jakarta the very fragile Indonesian country would disintegrate, and you would have a great power vacuum in South East Asia. You would have all the problems of a country which is taking steps towards a democracy.'

Then you don't believe in an ethical foreign policy such as Tony Blair's government has said that it wants to conduct?

Carrington: ‘To begin with I find it disturbing if someone says “this government is going to conduct an ethical foreign policy.” Because what you are actually saying is that all others haven’t, which is not true. Part of it is a genuine feeling that there was nastiness happening in Kosovo because there obviously was. As in East Timor, or Eritrea and Congo, which you hear nothing about. It is also selective. We were all ethical in the context of what was practical. I believe in doing good where that is possible. I don’t believe in acting everywhere in the world where from an ethical standpoint it would be defensible to do so. It’s simply not possible. And often counterproductive.’

Including in?

Carrington: ‘Yes. The bombing of the Serbs was counterproductive. From the beginning I predicted that the situation for the Kosovars would deteriorate, and that’s what happened. They were driven en masse from their own country. Of course there were refugees before that, but not hundreds of thousands of them. I think the whole thing was a wrong decision.’

We brought this conversation later to Hans van den Broek’s attention. At this point the views of the two former Foreign Ministers, each of whom described the other as ‘my friend’ parted company definitively.

Hans van den Broek: ‘Kosovo is for me an obvious proof of the following: that as a politician, even if you want to, you can’t turn away on the basis of an argument that the parties involved must themselves find a solution.

In July 1991, when I went with Lubbers to the G7 summit in London, we were in the presidency of the European Community, and representing therefore the European lobby with regard to Yugoslavia. In the evening there was a big banquet, and who was standing there by the entrance? Margaret Thatcher, who we both knew reasonably well. She took my hand and said: “Friend, let them fight it out.” A year and a half later fiery articles appeared in the papers, written by this same Thatcher, the tenor of which was that we couldn’t let this go on in our neighbourhood, that European interests were at stake. Thatcher had in the meantime ceased to be the head of government, but her standpoint was somewhat transformed. So I don’t want to give a categorical yes or no to humanitarian military interventions, but I resist total passivity. Because you can’t say that you can let them fight it out amongst themselves without that simply meaning that the right of the strongest prevails. And as to what happens if the right of the strongest prevails, history has shown us too many examples.’

As far as Hans van den Broek is concerned there was no doubt that the Serbs were the biggest wrongdoers in the conflict and that their leader, Milosevic, must be held responsible for his misdeeds. But what was Lord Carrington's view of the charges against the Serbian President brought before the Yugoslav Tribunal?

Carrington: 'There was a lot of bad publicity on the horrors of the Serbs. War is a pretty nasty business. When at the end of it all you start making judgements about people's behaviour you are bound to be a little selective, not even on purpose, but you are bound to do so. Even I am bound to do so. But it is ridiculous to say Milosovic is a war criminal. Where do you stop? Izbegovic is just as much a war criminal, and if Tuzman wasn't dying he would be one also. And Pinochet, Margaret Thatcher. We are getting out of control by saying so.'

In the former coach house of Bledlow Manor, which now serves as a garage, Lord Carrington has covered two walls with plaques and certificates. 'From the City of San Francisco to the Honourable Lord Carrington, Secretary General of NATO' reads one inscription on a copper plaque, typical of dozens which surround it. We don't dare to ask His Lordship if the place which he has given over to these memorabilia says something about the value he places on them. But it would of course be remiss of us were we not to talk to the man who was once the most powerful in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the new role which NATO had planned for itself. In the former Yugoslavia, NATO had acted for the first time outside the territory of its member states. The first time was at the request of and in agreement with the UN and the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The second, in Kosovo, it was wholly off its own bat.

What do you think of the new NATO strategy?

Carrington: 'When the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War was over and Central Europe became part of the West, we were faced with a difficulty. First because of the fall, the system collapsed totally. Second, how do you show the Bulgarians and so on that we want them to be part of Europe and that we love them deeply? What would have been sensible – although I admit it was very difficult – would have been to accelerate their membership of the European Union, because that would have given them the security and the financial and economical stability. Instead of which we enlarged NATO. And I don't know how far we enlarge it, but by enlarging it we make it unreliable. And if we enlarge it into the Baltic States for example, they are going to attack not one of us but all of us. Are we willing to go to a nuclear war because of

Latvia? We are not going to. So the thing becomes implausible. What we should have done was to have kept NATO the way it was and give it a much more political role in the maintenance of relations between America and Europe. Because NATO is the only stage on which the Americans have direct involvement with Europe. And at the moment we simply need the Americans. There's a lot of talk at present about a European armed force, but this wouldn't be able to start very much without the Americans. Or do you think there is even one government of a European country which would be prepared to raise its defence spending so drastically that we could effectively close the gap with America? Of course not. And there is no other form in Europe in which the US can discuss things. NATO is the only one. And it has never been used because the French are so jealous of the American dominance and they did not want it to happen. But it is a great pity.

So I'm a supporter of NATO as an instrument for preserving good transatlantic relations, and an opponent of the idea that NATO should serve to accelerate European unification. Because the way in which we are now going will lead to the Russians seeing the alliance increasingly as a threat, certainly after what happened in Kosovo. Because let's be honest, we did not treat the Russians fairly. That the Kosovo war came to an end had a great deal more to do with the Russians than with the success of the NATO bombings. If the Russians hadn't put Milosevic under so much pressure, things could have turned out very differently, and we didn't demonstrate sufficiently that we valued this.'

What could be the consequences of that failure?

Carrington: 'I think they'll be even more suspicious of NATO and the expansion of NATO will make them even more uncooperative. Five years ago I spoke in Moscow with the foreign minister. He told me that in his view 'the enlarging of NATO is a hostile act.' And I replied 'you know perfectly well that's untrue, that fifteen Western European and North American countries would never agree on aggression against the Soviet Union, that's rubbish.' And he said 'I know that is rubbish, but the difficulty is that the people in Russia make a point about the enlarging of NATO and it means us having to make the point also.'

There doesn't seem to be much left of the optimism of the early '90s, when the Cold War had just ended.

Carrington: 'Everybody thought the UN was going to solve everything because now you didn't have the two super powers you'd never get a veto in the Security Council any more, so

the UN became the means whereby you got world peace. And it hasn't happened because everybody became very selfish. Why should Brazilians interfere with what is happening in East Timor? You see the difficulties about getting a UN peace force in East Timor. Why should we worry? If there were still a question of two super powers, we would all worry very much. Nothing works quite so well to bind nations together as fear. At the time of the Cold War everyone was concerned about Africa, because the Russians were afraid that the Americans would expand their sphere of influence, and the Americans were afraid that the Russians would start a world revolution there. The unpleasant conclusion that we can draw from this is that if the Cold War had not ended there would have been no war in the Gulf and Yugoslavia would not have collapsed. Because everyone would have been much too frightened that a Third World War was about to start. And so the world didn't become safer, but less safe.'

But we can nevertheless assume that you would not want to go back to that Cold War?

Carrington: 'Of course not. That the Wall has fallen, that the eastern European dictatorships have ended, that the world no longer has to live with the threat of a nuclear war which would have destroyed everything, all of that is to the good. But we should certainly be looking for new common goals. Because all these fine words about an ethical foreign policy, about humanitarian interventions, and wars for human rights, can't disguise the fact that in reality it's self-interest that rules.'

Strategy for advanced players

‘That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach.’ – Aldous Huxley

Every disaster, every crisis and every war creates its own Dutch celebrities. To bring order from the chaos of information (or perhaps simply to find a cheap way to fill broadcasting schedules), news programmes drum up experts to provide a commentary on the satellite pictures of mudslides, lootings or bomber planes.

Rob de Wijk, formerly a leading official at the Ministry of Defence and now connected with the influential Clingendael Institute, otherwise known as the Netherlands Institute for International Relations, is one such instant expert. During the Kosovo war he was night after night a guest on the leading news and analysis television programme Nova, shedding light on the occurrences of the day and making predictions of what would happen next. But De Wijk had something that many of his colleagues were missing: an indisputable expertise coupled with complete independence in thought and statement. Where calling on other experts could sometimes be seen as rather an admission of editorial weakness, De Wijk’s television appearances almost always added something substantial to the viewer’s understanding of and ability to judge what was going on. That Rob de Wijk should play a role in this book was for us certain from the start. That he was one of the few prominent personalities who during the war came out with persistent criticism of NATO made him, of course, doubly interesting to us. But it says a great deal, if not about everything about De Wijk’s independence that he never spared the other parties to the conflict, which exposed him to the ‘warm’ interest of certain Serbian elements in Dutch society.

De Wijk: ‘During the war I had quite a few threats at my own address. Measures were taken against these.’

From whom did they come?

De Wijk: ‘From the Serb side. Anyone who expressed themselves publicly on this war has been threatened in one way or another. With strange faxes, strange telephone calls, and weird people in the street. All of the military police officers in the Netherlands were at the time driving around in armoured cars, and with good reason.

Perhaps we should begin with the most obvious question: why was the decision taken to address the Kosovo crisis by means of a large scale military intervention? How could things have reached this pitch?

De Wijk: ‘What prompted it I think is crystal clear. There there were at a given moment 100,000 Kosovo-Albanians outside the country and tens of thousands more in the mountains in Kosovo itself. If the atrocities against the Albanians had not taken place, no action would have been taken against Milosevic, no more than we would declare war on Belgium. But the question is, of course, should you respond to such a provocation with an actual intervention? Or, to put it differently, what determines, in the end, whether you intervene or not? In this case the answer is that there had been some twenty-five final and absolutely final warnings from the West to Milosevic, and that people began at a given moment to feel themselves forced to match words with deeds. That is, I think, the real reason why the intervention eventually came: the credibility of NATO was at stake.

Both sides got the other wrong. Milosevic thought “these folk will leave it at warnings and in the meantime I can carry on as usual”. And the Western leaders thought “if we threaten violence, he’ll come around”. This erroneous assessment was fed by all kinds of myths coming out of the Gulf War and the performance of UNPROFOR in Bosnia during the first half of the 1990s. The Gulf War, because it was then that the idea took hold that with the help of the air force you can call a potentate to order. And Bosnia because in 1995, when the siege of Sarajevo was brought to an end, the image was created of the Serbs as having been driven to the negotiating table by NATO air raids, which eventually led to the Dayton accords. And this image is completely incorrect, but popular indeed.’

Let’s return to these myths later, and first return to October 1998. The Yugoslav army had by then, under pressure from the West, pretty well completely withdrawn from Kosovo. What happened then was that there was an upsurge of violence from the UCK, the Kosovo Liberation Army. Our own minister Jozias Van Aartsen admitted at the time that this presented the West with an enormous dilemma. You couldn’t after all blame the Serbs for wanting to send their troops back in to stop this terrorism.

De Wijk: ‘You’re right about that – of course that was also the case. You have in fact to go still further back, to 1989, the year in which Kosovo’s autonomy was to a large extent suspended. It’s a very complex story, but the fact is that this suspension was absolutely

unacceptable to the Kosovans. In the years that followed, the moderate and non-violent Kosovan leader, Rugova, had for a long time the upper hand, which meant that a reasonable solution still seemed possible. But then there came a change in the way violence was thought about, a consequence of the violence of the Croats and the Muslims against the Serbs, supported, if not openly, by the West. A number of people in Kosovo then began to think, well, if you use violence, you can apparently provoke a foreign intervention. This weakened Rugova's position, and strengthened that of the hardliners. They saw that violence had had its rewards in Bosnia, and that led directly to a situation in which the UCK was going to show its presence ever more emphatically. Then of course Milosevic couldn't do anything but try to bring the UCK into line. Which again led to a direct confrontation between the UCK and the Serbian troops.

The question is therefore one which refuses to go away, so I'll put it again: were the streams of refugees inside and outside Kosovo now the result of a clash between the UCK and the Serbian troops, or were they the consequence of ethnic cleansing? Draw for a moment a parallel with Chechenya or East Timor. In Chechenya the population left: is that ethnic cleansing? NO, of course not, it's the result of a clash between the rebels and the Russian army. East Timor, ditto. And the problem with a guerrilla war is that the rebels, guerrillas, freedom fighters, call them what you will, merge into the general population. That is the essence of a guerrilla struggle. So if you want to finish off a guerrilla movement, you have to finish off their base, and that is the people amongst whom they bivouac. I have often had the feeling that in Kosovo nothing but an ordinary counter-guerrilla insurgency was in play, and that the people were its victims.'

But what are your thoughts on Operation Horseshoe – the alleged Serbian plan systematically to drive the Albanians out of Kosovo?

De Wijk: 'I've yet to see really hard evidence for the existence of this operation. I've made enquiries with various people, but it's always said that there are secrets involved. This is how it always goes in relation to this conflict. The facts don't lend support to what's said. Was there talk of a threatened genocide? The evidence was never produced. And what is left of the many successes which NATO announced during its air campaign. Not so much now. The contradiction between image and reality runs like a leitmotiv right through this conflict.'

Was there, in addition to NATO's credibility and the fate of the refugees, not also still

another motive behind this action, for example dislodging Milosevic from his throne?

De Wijk: ‘No, I don’t think so. You can draw a parallel here with the Gulf War. There too it was never the aim to remove Saddam Hussein, even if the suggestion in all the rhetoric over Saddam as the new Hitler persists amongst a section of the public. But you can’t get rid of a dictator through military violence. It was in the Kosovo war therefore also not the intention to get rid of Milosevic, but to force him to his knees.’

But there was at the same time a desire to see the back of Milosevic.

De Wijk: ‘Yes, of course, but what was unusual in this whole conflict was that it wasn’t at all clear how that bombing fitted into an overall solution to the problem. It’s now thought that the problem will be solved if Milosevic is out of the way, which I seriously doubt, but the bombings were not aimed at bringing that about. I’d go even further: it was always thought that threats would be enough and that there would be no need to proceed to exercise real violence. Which brings me back to the myths and the role they played. The people with whom I spoke were all absolutely convinced that Milosevic was forced to the negotiating table in Dayton by the bombing.’

And that, you argue, is incorrect?

De Wijk: ‘Yes. The real reason why the Serbs went into negotiations was that the relation of forces in Bosnia had totally changed. And that was a separate matter from the bombings. The Croats were on the offensive, the Muslims had regrouped and had become stronger, and the Serbs actually no longer had a choice. They could no longer gain a military victory. It was stalemate. But this reading of the facts did not suit NATO. If you are as strong as NATO you can only ever win. The Americans would also rather have as little to do with diplomacy as possible, for the very simple reason that diplomacy is for the weak. These are people who think in terms of power and of force. Capitulation won’t do, and neither will a stalemate or a diplomatic solution. That is another way of thinking.’

So what they accuse Milosevic of, that he is typical of someone who thinks only in terms of power, actually goes for them as well?

De Wijk: ‘Yes, of course.’

And how did the Rambouillet negotiations fit into this?

De Wijk: ‘I have a strong conviction that Rambouillet came too early. The parties to the conflict each retained a military option. Milosevic had the feeling, still, that he could defeat the UCK, and the UCK thought that they could yet drive the Serbs out. No stalemate had as yet been reached. This is classic, you see. Peace can be achieved in one of two possible ways: either one party is victorious, which is for the most part what leads to a stable peace, or a stalemate is reached after which a solution is found by diplomatic means. That’s what happened with Dayton. But Rambouillet simply came too soon.’

Would the alternative then have been to wait longer?

De Wijk: ‘If the member states of NATO had wanted to prevent a situation arising in which they felt forced to intervene, then they would have had to recognise that they had a problem which they could not manage. And they would then have had to bring that problem before the Security Council, which was in the end an advantage to them. That was the escape clause.

But would that have meant too much loss of face?

De Wijk: ‘Not at all for the outside world, because I think that it in fact involved absolutely no loss of face, except for NATO itself. That’s how they would have perceived it. Look, we didn’t sit at the table in Rambouillet, but what struck me as well was that in reality they were taking the side of the UCK. The Albanians were pitiable and they were struggling for a just cause and it turned out exceptionally well for them that the UCK signed and the Serbs didn’t. I recall that there was a great fear that both parties would fail to sign and that would really have been a problem, because then there could have been no intervention. Milosevic would then have had carte blanche to continue, and there would have been no possibility to act against this. Then NATO’s credibility would have been on the line.’

Wouldn’t you therefore say that the aim of Rambouillet was to lend legitimacy to the intervention?

De Wijk: ‘Yes, but it only became so during the negotiations. I’m absolutely convinced that, to begin with, NATO did not want to intervene. Of that I am one hundred percent certain. I have talked this over with so many people. The political consequences are gigantic, you don’t know what sort of trouble you might run into, you don’t know how it will turn out. That’s the paradox. Whenever I go to Russia, or anywhere else for that matter, and I try to explain that NATO really didn’t want this war, no-one believes me. And that’s not so crazy, because NATO of course gave the opposite impression.’

It's said that there was a line of reasoning at NATO that it was desirable to do something concrete to mark its fiftieth anniversary.

De Wijk: 'And I don't believe that at all. People really didn't want this war. It was generally always thought that Milosevic would change his tack. Europe was especially keen to make its mark in Rambouillet. Don't forget that Blair and Chirac made a real attempt there to make it clear that Europe could be relied on to manage its own affairs. The Americans were originally not even invited. But the tactical error was that these negotiations came too soon. The parties to the conflict were not really prepared to resolve it, because there remained military options for each. So at a given moment it became clear that the Europeans could not save the day, and at that same moment the Americans took over. Next the decision came, because of their own credibility, to intervene militarily. That's how things unfolded, in my opinion.'

Could we nevertheless consider just three hypotheses as to why NATO in fact might have wanted this war? 1: Enlargement of the Western sphere of influence. 2: To provide an actually existing basis for the new strategic concept, a sort of justification for this concept in advance. And 3: To please interest groups in the US.

De Wijk: 'But it was precisely the Americans who did not want it!'

But Albright did, certainly.

De Wijk: 'Yes, but Clinton absolutely didn't. He also didn't want a ground war, to mention just one aspect. The Americans always have big problems with intervention in countries where their own interests are not involved. The US Congress was also dead against it. The President didn't at any time have the nerve to activate the War Powers Act, by which he could have taken on certain powers to conduct the operation. But he didn't do it. And as far as this conscious interpretation of the strategic concept goes, I don't believe in that either. Because NATO doesn't function in that way. NATO has no opinions, because NATO is nothing. It is a club of nineteen sovereign countries each with its own idea.'

And the hypothesis of the sphere of influence? NATO has surely now got its foot in the door in that part of Europe.

De Wijk: 'Yes, but you have to look at the state of that foot – a wounded foot! No, we in democracies can almost never decide to go to war, but we can certainly become involved in them. Didn't you also here (in the Dutch national parliament) find that a call for intervention

wouldn't win any applause?'

Well, at the time of Srebrenica, Van Traa did win a majority, although in other countries nobody wanted to go there. We had just then formed the light mobile brigade and Van Traa said 'if we have it, we should use it.'

De Wijk: 'Yes, that's true. It was on those stupid grounds... But that still isn't to say that you could also carry nineteen countries along. Because Srebrenica was our decision and thus became our problem. In Kosovo the whole of NATO had to go along with it.'

But wasn't it also a factor that in general more of an atmosphere of self-reproach was created around the whole Yugoslav crisis – the feeling that we should be doing more to put an end to the violence?

De Wijk: 'Yes, certainly, and that self-reproach is correct to the extent that we got it wrong wrong. But there's no good saying that we should have acted earlier, because the fact is we didn't act earlier. That's the real problem. Exactly when should this earlier have been when you should have done something? Perhaps what Max van der Stoel does: a sort of preventive diplomacy in the framework of the OSCE , to ensure that a dispute doesn't degenerate into an armed conflict. That is of course excellent. But if there's already an armed conflict in a region, it's already in fact too late. The West understands the art of intervening at precisely the wrong moment in an armed conflict. Because either you do it preventatively, or you do it at the moment that the fighting has passed its peak and you're faced with a stalemate. But when you're in the middle of an escalation, you shouldn't intervene.'

But then you have to reckon with public opinion. Because it's precisely when it escalates that the call goes up to do something.

De Wijk: 'Yes, that's true. It's a dismal conclusion but the escalation of violence makes the public believe that something must be done, and this creates political support for intervention, but at the moment when it is completely unsuitable actually to intervene. And the worst of it is that this scenario recurs time and time again.'

So you agree with Minister Van Aartsen who says that the rapidity of the news and the impact of television pictures make it certain that the public will call for intervention. This influences politicians who then have no time for reflection or to give consideration to long- or medium-term goals.

De Wijk: ‘Yes, but hold on – with the first part, that television pictures lead to a call for intervention, I certainly do agree. But that the politicians as a result are forced to intervene, here we part company. The problem is that many politicians have themselves no idea of how they should deal with this kind of crisis. If you do have a concept of this, and a good analysis, then you’re already well on your way. But if you don’t have an analysis story, then you will be pushed around by that day’s illusions.’

And why do so few politicians have that analysis?

De Wijk: ‘Because there are very few people, in politics as much as anywhere, who are prepared to give serious consideration to the question of how you deal with military force and with armed conflict.’

I find that quite a conclusion. You are saying in fact that politicians, parliamentarians, the leaders of NATO, none of them has given sufficient consideration as to what these military processes actually amount to.

De Wijk: ‘Absolutely, even the military. The military has certainly given this more consideration, but their perception is still very strongly guided by the East-West conflict. The last forty years has seen us grow lazy. We all thought in terms of a balance of deterrence. We knew precisely what we had to do if the great, evil enemy wanted to extend its workers’ paradise to the North Sea. It was a scientific, almost mathematical approach to the conduct of war. But the problems by which we are now confronted are of a whole other order. Here we’re talking about the best way to manage conflict.’

But haven’t we in the meantime gained any experience? We’ve had Lebanon, Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia. Have no lessons been learned from these?

De Wijk: ‘No, unfortunately not. The only conclusion which has been drawn is that it’s impossible to make a sharp distinction between peace keeping and peace enforcing. That you have to conduct a peace-keeping missions using heavy methods, so that you can possibly move on to enforce a peace. But how precisely you must do that, nobody knows, nor do they at all know when. The problem is also that there are some seventy-five limited armed conflicts going on in the world, any of which could escalate into a war. How in God’s name can you decide where to step in?’

So we intervene in the Balkans and not in Chechenya.

De Wijk: ‘Yes, because the Balkans were seen as being too close to home and are surrounded by NATO countries. When matters there really exploded, this could have had serious consequences for NATO member states such as Greece and Turkey. Moreover, large numbers of Kosovars fled to Italy, and the Albanians provoked rather a lot of problems in Italy. So the stability of this part of Europe was involved. NATO had also repeatedly stated that they would intervene in Kosovo because the conflict there could spread to neighbouring countries.’

Isn’t that a legitimate concern?

De Wijk: ‘Yes, it’s completely legitimate to want to prevent a conflict from spreading further. But the big problem is that there is a difference between legitimacy and legality. The military intervention, aside from the fact that it was badly timed and therefore did not lead to the desired results, was also once again illegal.’

In a later chapter we take a much more extensive look at the question of how the Kosovo war stands in relation to international law. We will do that in the company of an expert in international law, Professor Paul de Waart. The specific expertise of Rob de Wijk lies much more within the area of military power, and above all where military and political power intersect. In his present function as an independent adviser he travels throughout the world giving lectures for top military personnel and politicians on the question of how military power should relate to politics, and vice versa. De Wijk is personally acquainted with a large number of decision-makers within NATO, and moreover regularly exchanges thoughts with politicians who carry direct responsibility for the deployment of military means. He is one of the few people in the Netherlands who knows the alliance’s functioning from the inside, and who is able and willing to speak freely about it.

Can you give us a glimpse of NATO’s daily practice in time of war? What role did the Netherlands for example play in the whole decision-making process within NATO?

De Wijk: ‘The Netherlands has little influence in NATO – let’s begin by making that clear. It is absolutely the case that the four big countries – the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany controlled things during the Kosovo war. And when it came to the crunch only the Americans were in charge. Every day a video conference was held between the supreme commander General Wesley Clark and his sub-commanders within the various headquarters in Europe and America. That began at 8 a.m. Until half-past eight it was “US only” and after that the Europeans could shuffle in, by which time the decisions were of

course already taken. In addition there was also in Vicenza, from where the operation was led, a section of the meeting each day reserved for Americans only. During this the Americans' targets were determined, and these would be bombed by American planes.'

And what was the difference between the American and the European strategy?

De Wijk: 'That the Americans had a strategy, and the Europeans didn't. It's as simple as that.'

And this American strategy could be described as 'bombing from a great height'?

De Wijk: 'Amongst other things. The American strategy was put neatly on to paper for the benefit of the Gulf War. What we saw in Kosovo, Operational Plan 4601, was a copy of Desert Storm. The strategy was based on seeing a country as a system, as a cohesive organic whole. What you therefore try to do is to undermine this system. This you do by tackling a large number of elements within that system simultaneously. To avoid difficulties from anti-aircraft guns you deploy high-flying bombers and cruise missiles. In this manner you can at the same time destroy the leadership, not Milosevic himself, but his ministries and headquarters, and also industry, particularly the industry upon which the war effort depends, as well as the infrastructure and communication interchanges, so that troops become isolated. So you strive for the total destruction of the power base, of the whole system of command. That's what they tried in Iraq, where it didn't incidentally succeed, and they tried it in Kosovo, where it succeeded even less. But that is the aim.'

And why did that not succeed?

De Wijk: 'Because the strategy was based on a number of assumptions which were incorrect. For example, that by means of such attacks the morale of the population would be broken, after which the people would turn against their leaders. The opposite is the case. Moreover, the starting point was a Western manner of conducting war, with big military units commended from a central point. In such a case long logistical supply lines are needed and a flawlessly functioning communication network. With the help of NATO's strategy these were easily disrupted. Only in Kosovo was the war most certainly not conducted in this manner. There the Serbs made use of small paramilitary units, the Arkans of this world.'

And these can operate without telephone, computers, or if needs be any logistical support.

De Wijk: 'Precisely. So the wrong sort of war was fought.'

So what you're saying is that the Americans had a clear but flawed strategy, and the Europeans had no strategy whatsoever. .

De Wijk: 'Yes. That was also shown by the Americans' annoyance over, for example, the French dawdling whenever a decision had to be taken over bombing targets, as came out later.'

Now we still need to talk about something else: how do you explain the fact that all of the countries, including one such as Greece where ninety percent of the population was opposed to NATO intervention, nevertheless stayed on board right to the end?

De Wijk: 'Because extremely smart diplomatic work was done by the Americans. There was continual telephone contact, every day. And the Greeks did not participate in the operation. Thessalonika's harbour was also not used even though at a given moment 2000 marines had to be shipped in. They couldn't go through there. And that the Greek government took up a position that it would go further in its participation, yes, it's possible something was done behind the scenes to bring this about. A subtle arrangement for extending credit, for example. I don't know precisely what, but that's usually how these things go.'

What do you know about the Dutch government's involvement in the whole process?

De Wijk: 'In my opinion there was no question of any such involvement.'

Weren't they telephoned? Kok has let slip something about this.

De Wijk: 'Yes, Kok was indeed telephoned, but the question is what happened then? The Dutch government had no demonstrable influence on the way in which events unfolded. Which is in fact quite remarkable, because we flew five percent of the total number of sorties and eight percent of the combat sorties. After the French we shared third place with the British. In military terms we made a disproportionate contribution.'

Why is that?

De Wijk: 'Because we can do a great deal with limited resources. We deployed far fewer planes than did other countries, but we did a great deal more with them. That came, amongst other things, as a result of the "swingroll" concept of the F-16s, the concept that they can perform numerous tasks simultaneously. In other countries they can either do bombing flights or defend the airspace. Another point is that Dutch flyers have better than average training and

are trusted by the Americans. That's why they are allowed, to a modest degree, to join in with the big boys.'

That's the military-technical side, but what about the politics? Why does the Netherlands have the ambition to play with the big boys there, too?

De Wijk: 'I don't think that it's a conscious choice. It happens because the quality of our air force isn't bad.'

But Joris Voorhoeve wrote in his book *Labiele vrede* ("Unstable Peace") that the Netherlands, simply because it is a small country and therefore not influential, can through this sort of participation in international actions also achieve a disproportionate level of influence.

De Wijk: 'Perhaps that could indeed happen, but in practice it doesn't. We have no disproportionate political influence. I think that this Dutch preparedness to join in with this sort of action has more to do with our own credibility. We are a country that has for a long time put the emphasis on compliance with human rights, that is typical of the Netherlands, and certainly not typical of middle-sized and large countries, which have the possibility to pursue power politics, which we do not. We can make a difference in the moral-ethical area. So whenever human rights are abused, we're very quickly on the scene in order to be morally responsible or to raise our voices about the deployment of military means. Then we give ourselves the duty to make a reasonable contribution to this. But we are not in a position to bend that into reasonable political influence. There's a constant in this, which you also see in relation to policy-making regarding international appointments. We Dutch are on average not all that good at getting top international functions – with the exception perhaps of those relating to agriculture. We believe that the quality of candidates for international functions must sell itself. And we think that whenever we contribute something good to international operations, we will automatically gain more influence. But of course that isn't so.'

So the Americans say, 'you can fly more missions because you have good planes and good pilots, but that doesn't mean we're going to phone up your defence minister any more often in order to allow him to take part in defining policy.'

De Wijk: 'Indeed. It led moreover to a situation in which we did have two officers in the command centre in Italy who worked on the planning of targets. But that isn't politics. I think that our military influence is certainly greater than our political influence.'

That's also an important subject: the power of the military in the entire conflict was many times greater than that of the politicians.

De Wijk: 'Isn't that stupid? That happened because diplomacy played no role, it was simply a military operation. Only at the end of May did diplomacy get the upper hand. Politics sidelined itself by closing all doors to Milosevic. He was a war criminal, so you couldn't talk with him. The diplomatic channels were shut tight. The big problem that arose then was that Wesley Clark went his own way. There were extraordinary internal problems at NATO over the way in which Clark carried on with his targets. You'll have to ask Niek Biegan from the North Atlantic Council about this. He's really angry over it.'

(The North Atlantic Council is NATO's political arm. We did later try to speak to Niek Biegan, the Netherlands' representative in the Council, but he did not get permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to speak to us)

Let's move on to the fact that all diplomatic channels were slammed shut. Is that why they brought the Russians on board?

De Wijk: 'Yes. Although they said they weren't willing to negotiate with Milosevic, that happened through seeking contact with the Russians. Then a number of formulations for a peace agreement were sought which would also be acceptable to Milosevic. So, for example, the role of the United Nations was emphasised, and Yugoslavia's territorial integrity, and the fact that Kosovo would continue to form part of the Republic of Yugoslavia.'

Is it then strictly correct to say that all diplomatic channels were slammed shut?

De Wijk: 'For the West, certainly. There were absolutely no openings. That's why I wasn't happy with the fact that charges were brought against Milosevic by Louise Arbour of the Yugoslavia Tribunal. Because you couldn't speak to such a man any more. And yet you needed him. If you're not prepared to remove him, then you've surely got to talk with him. That's also now one of the big problems, that he's still there, but the West can't talk with him.'

That's why Yugoslavia was kept out of the Stability Pact, the EU's plan to bring peace and security back to the Balkans. First Milosevic must disappear from the stage. Do you see this as a source of renewed conflict in the longer term?

De Wijk: 'Absolutely.'

And what should we think about the fact that the Yugoslav role in Kosovo seems to have played itself out?

De Wijk: ‘Yes, that’s also something. It’s completely in conflict with the agreements made with Milosevic, in which there is, after all, talk of a multi-ethnic Kosovo under Serb administration. It strikes me that we’re time after time ready to formulate visions of the future which are known in advance to be impractical. At the beginning of the war it was stated that a political objective was that an end must be put to the humanitarian tragedy. The basis of this was the assumption that the war would be over within two days. Which was not the case. Then it was said that a maximum of a week was needed to establish supremacy in the air. This supremacy was never for a moment achieved during the whole war.’

How’s that – wasn’t there only one Stealth bomber shot down? Isn’t that proof of ascendancy in the air?

De Wijk: ‘No, because they could not fly low. They never went below 10,000 feet, despite the fact that they would have to go lower than that to be effective. But they never succeeded in taking the Serb anti-aircraft guns out. And that once again was the fault of the fact that the Serbs simply kept quiet. They shot only very occasionally at an overflying aircraft, which meant that where precisely the anti-aircraft guns were located wasn’t known. That was exceptionally intelligent, because as a consequence NATO had everywhere to be on the alert, and no-one could go below 10,000 feet. And NATO hadn’t expected this because they proceeded on the basis of their own strategy and not that of the enemy. There was no question of using your imagination.’

Still, that must have been humiliating, wasn’t it?

De Wijk: ‘I only know that I was at NATO the day the war started and I heard Clinton say “now we’re going to throw a couple of bombs and I’m sure then that Milosevic will back down.” My first reaction was a spontaneous impulse, that believe it or not, the military tragedy would only get bigger. During the entire war I tried to put myself in Milosevic’s place, and perhaps I’m a bad person, because I think I succeeded pretty well. If you reason from the man himself, then you could see what his options were. And one of these options was to mess about with the floods of refugees. By making the humanitarian tragedy still greater, he undermined NATO’s objectives.’

But then we are still left with a problem. Because then you can either conclude that at

NATO they are so blinded by their own position and their own power that they are completely incapable any longer of putting themselves in the enemy's shoes, or there is some kind of hidden agenda. Because the first supposition sounds unbelievable.

De Wijk: 'Let me put a question to you. Why did the Transport Minister, Tineke Netelenbos come out with a measure such as pay-to-drive as a solution to the problem of traffic congestion?'

Ugh... because she supposed that making it dearer for you to drive your car in the rush hour would mean that more people would choose to go by public transport.

De Wijk: 'Precisely. And because I am myself a driver, I know from my own environment that this is nonsense. Because it is in the rush hour that the traffic is almost exclusively business-related. And business passes these costs on to you and me, to the customer. Anyone can see that. And yet you have such a measure.'

But looking at Kosovo, people were asking why do you say the bombings didn't work. In the end Milosevic withdrew from Kosovo, the refugees went home. In short, NATO won.

De Wijk: 'And my point is that there was in fact absolutely no victory, but instead a deal was made.'

But certainly a deal which was to NATO's advantage.

De Wijk: 'No, you have to look at how this deal was put together. The deal was that a number of Serbian troops would be allowed to go back to Kosovo following a ceasefire; that they would be allowed to protect their own holy places and monasteries; that Serbian troops would position themselves along the borders with Macedonia and Albania; that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia would be completely preserved. Moreover there was no more talk of a possible referendum on Kosovo's independence. So for Milosevic it was a completely acceptable compromise. If you take into account also the fact that a stability pact would be introduced for the whole region, and Milosevic understood that this would also cover Yugoslavia, including economic support for reconstruction. Then none of this happened. NATO didn't stick to its deal. And so Milosevic had been conned.'

But he was also in a position to be conned.

De Wijk: 'That's so. But because of that you still can't say that NATO won militarily. The fact

is and the fact remains that a deal was concluded. And the question is whether you needed this entire war to get that deal.’

That question, and many others, we would have liked to have put to General Wesley Clark, the supreme commander of Operation Allied Force. The General also agreed to an interview, but unfortunately his staff informed us two days before it was due to take place that it could not go ahead.

In connection to his early retirement (about which there has been a great deal of speculation, but officially it had nothing to do with the course of the Kosovo war) Clark was going on a farewell tour. He was truly sorry, so we were told, but it was impossible for him to find the time. And so the voice of the supreme commander is missing from the next chapter. But that does not make the critical comments of the military personnel who did speak to us any less relevant.

Men of steel

'One cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war.' – **Albert Einstein**

Might he make an opening statement, in order to set out his position clearly? Of course he may: who are we to refuse such a request from Sir Michael Rose, retired British Army general, former commander-in-chief of UNPROFOR in Bosnia, and outspoken critic of NATO's war in Kosovo. We are sitting in a restaurant a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace and we have just ordered lunch. The general began to speak, and in the five minutes which followed he let go with a monologue which we could in fact have reproduced word for word. He did not hesitate for a moment, did not commit a single slip of the tongue, and he never had to search for a word. Sir Michael Rose has thought long and hard about Yugoslav wars and he does not want any misunderstanding regarding the conclusions which he has drawn from this.

On the UN mission in Bosnia: 'Within the mandate given to us by the United Nations, we were exceptionally successful. We kept 2.7 million people alive, we daily brought 2000 tons of food and fuel allocated to us for this, and that during three-and-a-half years of an often three-sided civil war. According to American figures 130,000 people lost their lives in Bosnia in 1992. In 1993, the year that the UN peacekeeping troops were admitted, the toll fell to 30,000 and in 1994 to 3,000. Because hostilities could be reduced, progress was again being made in the political and diplomatic arenas, as a result of which in 1994 weapons were for the first time silenced and peace lay within reach. It is no secret that the Americans then prolonged the conflict by advising the Bosnian government not to sign the peace agreement.'

On the Dayton accord: 'This agreement was not brought about by the NATO bombings of Serb positions in August and September 1995. No way. These attacks were from a military point of view totally irrelevant, they had only symbolic significance. The Serbs knew what was going to happen and had abandoned most of their positions. The munitions depots were empty. There was at the very most a bit of damage to their communications system, and that was quickly repaired. What paved the way for Dayton was a dramatic change in the military-strategic balance. The Croatian army had, in particular, thanks to American support, taken a considerable amount of territory from both the Serbs and the Muslims. After that Milosevic and Tudjman had reached an accord, because both decided that given the circumstances it was no longer possible that a big, strong Muslim state would emerge – and that was what both had

wanted to prevent by means of the war. That, and the UN's efforts to do as much as possible, in the midst of the warring parties, to protect the civilian population, led eventually to the peace of Dayton. But NATO had decided before this to state that the UN mission was a failure and that NATO's military power was what in the end led to an agreement. But that is emphatically not true.'

And lastly, on the Kosovo war: 'NATO has fought the wrong war in Kosovo. Deliberately, because of its own credibility, and because of the relations between the European countries and the United States, and for all sorts of other reasons, the lessons of Bosnia have been ignored. They believed their own propaganda about Dayton and based their strategy for Kosovo on it. As a result this strategy was doomed to fail. The wrong means were deployed for the wrong targets. They confused an ordinary war with a humanitarian mission. In an ordinary war you achieve victory by overpowering the enemy with an enormous surplus of force. In that case the safety of the population takes second place – and that's exactly what happened in Kosovo. But in the case of a humanitarian mission the safety of the population should come first. The conduct of humanitarian war should include three elements: political action, aid action, and security action. These three elements must be continually coordinated with each other, and none of the elements should be lacking at any moment.

The deployment of ground troops is absolutely necessary in this. You cannot solve complex military problems solely from the air. Yes, naturally you can win a war from the air by dropping an atom bomb, which solves all problems in one fell swoop, but that is of course unacceptable. So you need ground troops. Why were these not deployed in Kosovo? Is it because of the fear of body bags, the fear of public opinion? I don't believe so. American opinion polls show that people there believe that America, because it is the most important great power, has a duty to help oppressed people. Moreover there were also a great many deaths amongst their own soldiers during the UN mission in Bosnia, without that having led to a loss of support from the people. The French lost some seventy to eighty soldiers, the British more than fifty. Nobody considered this reason enough to quit the mission.

I think that a much more credible reason is that many armies from NATO countries are accustomed to what I call "levels of training that do not represent the realities of war". Their programme of exercises are, so to speak, not aimed at a real war, but at a civil society version of war. They have introduced all kinds of administrative procedures, particularly in the area of decision-making, which are unworkable under war conditions. So you can go outside the

command structure to appeal against the decisions of your superiors. You can make use of working hours and regulations on leave forced through by trade unions. And in all sections, women are allowed, including in those where they, according to my firm conviction, in conditions of war do not belong. Because think for a moment at how a ground war in Kosovo would have looked: it would have been an infantry war, a low-level war, in the mountains with a rucksack and a rifle, fighting from improvised bunkers, in villages, in forests. The sort of war that the 14th Legion conducted in Burma against the Japanese. Women cannot physically cope with such a war. And I'm afraid that very many armies within NATO are no longer trained in this hard reality of the conduct of war – certainly not the armies of small countries. The modern NATO armies are very good in high-tech war, but for an infantry war they're imperfectly prepared. Yes, your marines could still perhaps do it, and the Belgian paratroopers, but those are small units, you won't get so far with them.

So if you really want to conduct a humanitarian war, a war in which the civilian population is spared rather than being made the victim, then you need an overwhelming surplus of military force both in the air and on the ground. If you don't have that, as in Kosovo, then you give the enemy a free hand. Milosevic was able to achieve his aim without NATO being able to do anything about it. He wanted to chase the Kosovars out of Kosovo, and he succeeded. It is the diplomatic pressure from Russia which is to be thanked for the fact that the Serbs were finally restrained. And it was touch and go whether the Russians would also take half of Kosovo, or allow it to be taken by the Serbs, at the moment that they were already advancing towards the airfield at Pristina. That that didn't happen then we can thank just one thing: namely a telephone call from Clinton to Yeltsin, in which he said "if you do that, and we can't stop you, you won't get another cent from the IMF." That eventually determined the outcome of the war, and not NATO's air power. NATO did not win militarily, nor politically, it was defeated. NATO lost because of a lack of strategic insight and a lack of leadership. So, that's how I see things, and now it's for you to pull my statements to bits.' Sir Michael laughed, and the starters arrived.

Let's begin at the end. You said that Milosevic had achieved his ends and chased the Kosovars out of Kosovo. But the refugees were quickly able to return. So you could say that he won the battle but lost the war.

Sir Michael Rose: 'You could say that, yes, but it is the reasoning of someone who hasn't succeeded in achieving their first aim. It's the argument of a loser. You can say that the people

were eventually able to return, but thousands of people fewer than when the war began. And the country to which they returned was completely devastated. A great many people were deeply traumatised. And as I said, that they could return was not so much to NATO's credit as to the Russians', and the importance that Russia attached to IMF moneys. NATO cannot possibly maintain that they won the war. It is intolerable, and they should not be allowed to get away with it!

Okay, let's go back to the beginning. You called the UN mission in Bosnia a success. How would you describe the goal of this mission itself?

'The most important goal of our mission was to offer humanitarian aid and relieve human suffering. The second aim was, and this goes also for any peace-keeping force, to try to create circumstances in which peace is given a chance – which is something other than imposing peace by violence. The third goal, to finish, was to prevent the further spread of violence. It was for all involved, as much for us in the military as for the political leaders who directed us, totally clear that we would be completely occupied with peacekeeping and not with waging war. This would be heavy peacekeeping, if necessary supported from the air and with heavy artillery, but it would never become the conduct of war, it was not our task to destroy their military infrastructure, or eliminate soldiers, or whatever.'

But this clarity wasn't maintained. There was in the end a great deal of confusion over what the UN soldiers there should and could do, wasn't there?

'Of course – enormous confusion. We received a lot of contradictory orders and signals, from the different countries as well as from different corners of one and the same country. Then I spoke to the British UN ambassador in New York and he said, "you are a peace keeping force and that means that your possibilities are limited. But the next day my own Chief of Staff was told that we should punish the aggressor, that we had to take sides in the conflict. So I said, what now? What do you want? Because it doesn't matter to me. I'd like to be fighting here. But then I need another set of orders and other equipment. And then they decided after all that we should stick with peacekeeping. If you look at the orders we had, then the mission was a success. I've given you the figures. The criticism of our performance came mostly from people who thought that we should have done more.'

Let's talk about this criticism. You were accused of taking the side of the Serbs. Just as NATO wanted to give your troops air support, who were charged with protecting the

enclave of Bihac, you ordered your units in the field not to pass on the locations of the Serb positions.

‘That’s a downright lie, pure propaganda from the Bosnian government. I know exactly what the repercussions were of the orders which I gave at the time. They concerned an attack from the south by the Serbs on Bihac. We were in the north and the centre, and I gave my units orders immediately to go south in order to map the Serb positions so that I could pass these on to the air force. I’d asked for this air support myself! But two years later a report appeared in the paper that I had been so pro-Serb that I ordered my men not to give the Serb positions to the air force.’

It would have concerned leaked CIA reports, in which a word-for-word transcript of your orders appeared. The radio channels which you used were bugged by the CIA.

‘Of course they were bugged! Not by the CIA, however, but by the Bosnian secret service. And the Bosnians were bugged by the Serbs. Everyone knew that. You kept it in mind. When these stories came out I went to NATO and said, you’ve got the papers, you can prove that these are lies. Give me the literal transcripts, so that I can defend myself. And what did they say? That regrettably they had no documents regarding this period, that unfortunately they had been destroyed. To which I replied, how then did I get this out of your archives yesterday? Because I’m no fool, I had someone working for me in their headquarters. I already had those reports.’

So it was not only the Bosnian secret service, or the Bosnian government, who in your view came out with that report, but also NATO?

‘Yes, they lied. And why? To maintain the myth that the UN was weak and corrupted, and that it was NATO who in the end decided the war in Bosnia. They deliberately and knowingly supported the Bosnian propaganda. They had the proof in hand to exonerate me, but they refused to make it public.’

Then you occupy a truly remarkable position. Because you were, as a British General, of course also usually part of NATO. And at the same time you were misused by NATO to blacken the UN’s name.

‘NATO began to be seen by us at a particular moment as a part of the problem and not part of the solution. This came about through their believing in the Bosnian government’s

propaganda, as well as that of the Croats. Why did the Americans take the Muslim side? Because the elections arrived, because the Muslims succeeded in persuading the media that they were the oppressed party, because the American public began to believe that the Muslims were the victims and the Serbs the wrongdoers. The US government then wanted to show that something was happening, that results had been achieved, and for that reason they took sides. Except that the problem of course was that the Muslim army didn't amount to anything. Without support from the NATO ground troops the Muslims could never have turned the war in their favour. And given that absolutely no NATO country was really prepared to fight in Bosnia, which includes the Americans, one had to be prepared to accept a compromise. Which is of course what in the end happened. Dayton was a compromise and a compromise that for the Bosnian Muslims ended up even worse than what they would have been able to achieve a year earlier. And how many deaths occurred in that time?"

Another important point of criticism of the UN is that they set up the so-called safe havens, and then turned out to be neither prepared nor able to defend these areas effectively. With all the terrible consequences that had. Wasn't the idea of safe areas flawed?

Rose: 'Absolutely not. It is an excellent concept. In the Middle Ages there were always in times of war places where civilians could shelter from the violence. But the concept stands or falls on the warring parties being prepared to respect these places of safety. You can't expect peacekeepers to defend such an area because that means warfare and they're not equipped for it. I said that from the beginning, moreover. These areas were safe insofar as both parties agreed on that and held to that agreement. But both parties breached the agreement.'

Both parties, so not just the Serbs?

Rose: 'Of course. Take Srebrenica. In April 1993 the Serbs decided to attack Srebrenica, because the Muslims were continually carrying out attacks from there on surrounding Serb villages. It was then agreed that the Serbs would give up these attacks if the Muslims in Srebrenica were disarmed, so that the Serb villages would be safeguarded against Muslim violence. But the Muslims were never disarmed and the attacks simply continued. That's how things went in Bihac, and it wasn't any different in Srebrenica. Now most of the people who were staying in Srebrenica certainly didn't come from there. They were Muslims who came from other parts, in flight from the violence. These people would rather have gone to Tuzla, in

the Muslim area. Mladic then offered to allow these people to get away, so that they could go to Tuzla. And who held out against that? Who denied these people safe passage? Precisely the Bosnian government, the military leadership of the Muslims. And why? To strengthen their own position of power. Because let's not forget, the people who are running the show today in Bosnia are the same people who time after time prolonged the suffering of their own people by consciously rejecting the possibility of peace, because they put their own political, military and financial interests first. In the end NATO institutionalised and legitimised their totally depraved and corrupt manner of operating politically. All the money and all the efforts that are now being spent on the reconstruction of Bosnia are benefiting the same people who were responsible for the unnecessary suffering of the population. The man with whom I had continually to deal whenever we had to negotiate over a transport of aid goods, this same gentleman is now president of the Bosnian airline. This man owns every jumbo jet in the country.

Let me make one thing clear: I have more criticism of Milosevic, of Mladic and of Karadzic than of the leader of the Muslims and the head of the Bosnian government, Mr Izetbegovic. But in 1994 there was a cease-fire around Sarajevo, the town was prospering again, transport was again possible from and to the town, there was gas and light, there were plans being made for repairs. And who then put an end to that truce? Mr Izetbegovic. And why? Because he didn't want peace – yet. He thought that from the next phase of war he had something to gain. You should have seen the faces of the people in Sarajevo! They didn't want any more war, they wanted peace. But the Bosnian government had other plans. So what I say is that the Muslims had originally right on their side, but they threw that right away themselves. When the UN went to their aid, and the peacekeeping troops arrived to help prevent Bosnia from disappearing from the map for good, they started to believe that they could win the war. They were going to use the international support to tilt the balance in their own favour. The UN's impartial peacekeeping troops then became all at once an obstacle. From friends we suddenly became an enemy. That was also said quite literally to me by prominent Muslim leaders: They considered us, just like the Serbs, an enemy. And they hoped that they could achieve more with NATO's support. Which didn't happen. The Dayton peace came a year later than it was needed, and the conditions were less favourable to the Muslims. But they no longer had a choice. They gambled and lost. And the biggest loser was the population. So I'm also critical of the Muslims and not only the Serbs.'

Let's be honest: Sir Michael Rose has an interest. It is inevitable that his opinions are coloured by the fact that UNPROFOR, his UNPROFOR, has been weighed down with so many cartloads of criticism. It is inevitable that it stings him that it is not the UN peacekeeping force but NATO that walked off with the honours of the Dayton peace agreement. Yet it is nevertheless indeed remarkable that his analysis fits seamlessly with that of Rob de Wijk in the previous chapter, who also called the idea that the Dayton agreement could be attributed to NATO's air raids a myth, and who also was of the opinion that this myth had set NATO on a false trail in the Kosovo war.

Before we return to Sir Michael Rose's criticism of Operation Allied Force, we would like to give the floor to another expert. His name is Clifford Beal, and he is the editor-in-chief of the world's most influential military trade journal, a magazine which is essential reading for every senior military officer and every politician charged with military responsibilities: Jane's Defence Weekly. The offices of Jane's (named after the magazine's founder, Fred T. Jane) are to be found in the endless sea of red brick houses, tarmac roads and railway lines which together form the outskirts of Greater London. Clifford Beal welcome us to a rather nondescript meeting room identical to the ones with which every other office appeared to be equipped. We drank tea, as you would expect in England, and Beal began in a similarly typically English fashion, with an apology. 'Actually,' he said, 'I don't have a very good understanding of the things you are writing about. I'm an outsider, an observer.'

'That,' we replied, 'is precisely the reason we want to speak to you.'

And so Clifford Beal proceeded to an eloquent, well-rehearsed opening statement – just as Sir Michael Rose had done. There was, however, one difference: around five minutes into his discourse Beal's English accent began slowly to make way for an unmistakable American twang. When we asked him about this later, he explained that though American he had over a long time become thoroughly Anglicised.

He drinks his tea with milk.

Perhaps we can begin with the lessons that we can draw from the Kosovo war.

Clifford Beal: 'You can look at this on two levels: the military-technological and the political. To begin with the latter, I think that Kosovo can be seen as a warning that something is changing in the way in which the idea of "sovereignty" is regarded. Whether you like it or not, because the United Nations in fact sanctioned NATO actions after the event, a precedent

was set for the future. And I hear from various sides that people aren't happy with this, because they weren't happy with the whole way in which the Kosovo crisis unfolded. There is in itself nothing wrong with giving foreign policy an ethical component, but at the same time it's important that you keep a cool head. It is understandable that, under pressure also from the media, the emotions play a role in decision-making, but the danger exists that at a certain moment a decision-making process is set in motion within which rationality has little place.'

Do you think that the television pictures of violence and of refugees played an important role in the decision-making of the Western leaders?

Beal: 'Well, it certainly contributed.'

But didn't these Western leaders in their turn also use these pictures to generate support for their air raids? And didn't Blair, amongst others, continually appear on TV talking about genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass murders, and so on?

Beal: 'Of course that's also true. When the prime minister of Britain goes touring a refugee camp in his shirtsleeves, he is doing that in the full knowledge that pictures of his visit will be shown throughout the entire world. And that these will provoke a certain emotion. So the media are also used, that's correct. In the course of this war all sorts of factors played a role. Also, we at Jane's do not know precisely at the moment, for example, precisely what happened in Rambouillet. We'll probably know the truth some day, but that is not yet the case. It seems that the Western countries were also divided there. That some wanted to give diplomacy another chance, but that the Americans especially wanted to teach the Serbs a lesson. The Americans also now make no secret of the fact that they want to see the back of Milosevic. They want a stable Serbia, a reconstructed Serbia, but on their conditions, revamped along Western lines and under Western influence.'

Did the Americans underestimate the Serbs and Milosevic?

Beal: 'I think that there is every reason to assume that Madeleine Albright especially though that the Serbs at that time, under pressure from those few NATO air raids around Sarajevo, signed the Dayton treaty. And that on those grounds they concluded that Milosevic would now also quickly back down. They thought, we chuck a few bombs, he shoots off a few rockets so that his people can see that he's prepared to defend his country, and then he backs down. A great number of analysts, in Europe as well as in the United States, warned that he would not back down. But they were not listened to – for whatever reason.'

What lessons can be drawn from the war that followed this mistaken estimation?

Beal: 'I can most easily talk about the military lessons, because that's my field of expertise. There are two important lessons to be learned. The first is that there exists a great need for more and better precision weapons. For various reasons: the first reason is that if you really want to win in a military operation such as this using only the air force, you must be capable, including in heavy cloud and fog, of taking out your targets with great precision, so that you don't have repeatedly to bomb before you know with certainty that you have taken out your target. The people in finance ministries should be pleased if better precision bombs arrive, because that would save bombs and therefore money. The ordinary citizen should also be pleased, because it would reduce the chance of civilian casualties. Moreover the technology is developing so quickly that these improved weapons should soon not cost so much as the old precision weapons. And what we have seen in Kosovo is that these old precision weapons are not satisfactory and that we have too few of the new type of weapon. At the end of the war the Americans had run right through almost all of their stocks.

The second lesson to be learned is that there is still a great deal of room for improvement in the area of interoperability – that is at the moment the buzz-word in military circles. What it means is the capacity of the different countries to make use of each other's systems. In Kosovo it turned out in particular that great differences existed between the various technical systems used. In, for example, the area of radio communications. Some European NATO countries didn't have available radio apparatus which was compatible with that of the Americans. Because of this you had of necessity to make use of frequencies which could be listened in to by the Serbs. Another problem was the espionage. Both the Americans and the Germans made use of unmanned aircraft to take aerial photos of enemy installations. That is of course of vital importance, because before you send a manned plane to drop bombs, you would first like to know where exactly the targets are, and what there might be in the way of anti-aircraft weapons. These American spy planes take digital photos, which they send on straight to the ground. But the Germans still work with old fashioned photographic rolls. So then a plane of that kind has first to return, which doesn't always happen, and then the films must be developed, and only then do you know what the enemy is up to – or was up to, of course. Because modern warfare is a round the clock business. It no longer stops when the sun goes down. So the speed of information processing is of vital importance. And in all of these areas NATO fell short. They weren't sufficiently prepared. What you had in fact to deal with a

fight between a giant and a midget, and nevertheless they were beset with problems. NATO could indeed claim major successes in the air campaign, but if you look at the enormous number of flights, the thirteen- to fifteen thousand attacks which were carried out, you are entitled to ask how successful they really were. Naturally, they were reasonably successful in destroying Serbia's infrastructure. But the mobile targets, the tanks, the army units, how many of those were actually taken out? In American air force circles there was decided disappointment over the results.'

To what extent did the Gulf War play a role in this? Were expectations of what air power could achieve inflated?

Beal: 'That certainly played a role. There had not been sufficient realisation that the conditions in Europe, with its mountains, bad weather, and in this case its small, mobile army units, are completely different from those in the Arabian desert, where large army units were concentrated in an open landscape under a clear sky. And don't forget, when the Iraqis set fire to those olive groves, this immediately caused problems with these precision weapons. Because as the smoke developed the laser guidance system wouldn't work any more. The lessons should have been drawn from this but they were insufficiently learned. I think that the manufacturers of all of this hi-tech stuff also played a role in this. They made the things seem rather more splendid than in reality they were. Because in the Gulf War as well the bombings were far from being as precise as they would have had us believe.'

Now if we could talk about the industry, to what extent did the military-industrial complex as it is so aptly called play a role in the Kosovo war?

Beal: 'Naturally it's the case that wars are used to test new weapons systems. That happened in the Gulf, and it also happened in Kosovo. And if it turns out that a new weapons system works well, then more are ordered. But a war isn't started so that a weapons system can be tested, so that was not the case here. There are always other, political reasons.'

You said just now that we should conclude that still more intelligent weapons systems are needed. Yet at the same time you say that the Europeans lag far behind the Americans. How must that then be for the rest of the world? Aren't you afraid that the enormous lead the West enjoys in the technological-military area will lead to new tensions? Or to a new arms race?

Beal: 'There's certainly something in that, but on the other hand technological development

doesn't simply stand still. So you don't have that much choice. Furthermore it is becoming ever easier to avail oneself of modern technological methods. You don't any longer have to put a spy satellite into space yourself in order to be able to conduct espionage from space. There are private corporations which have access to that sort of satellite and which you can simply commission to take extremely detailed photos, or infra-red pictures for example, of whatever bit of the earth's surface you like. That is now already the reality. Israel, for example, tried to get the American authorities to put pressure on that sort of firm so that no photos of Israeli territory would be sold to Arab clients. But the American government in the end told them that they had no say in the matter. That is therefore a development which runs parallel to the technological development of Western defence capabilities. And then the Russians may not have the money right now to do very much about the development of defence apparatus, but the Chinese are working hard on it. They're working on laser techniques by which they can shoot satellites out of the sky, or at least damage them so much that they become unusable. And satellites are of vital importance for hi-tech warfare. So I do indeed see the problem, but I think that we have little choice. You can at the very most say that more effort should be made to resolve conflicts or even to prevent them. Because you can't expect the soldiers to do everything.'

And that brings us smoothly back to Sir Michael Rose, one of the soldiers from whom politicians expected more than he could deliver. While his meal went slowly cold, he slammed the politicians who send men such as himself to war, and then start new wars on the basis of a faulty analysis of past failures.

Sir Michael Rose: 'My military instinct tells me that NATO did not do everything it could in Rambouillet to prevent a new war. I can't prove it, but everything seems to point to the fact that they had already decided before the last round of negotiations to go to war. Why else would they have come with ever more new demands? Why else would they have demanded from Yugoslavia that they should declare themselves within twenty four hours in agreement with a military paragraph that gave NATO the right to make unlimited use of Yugoslav territory? No country whatsoever would have accepted that. I think therefore that NATO per se wanted proofs that it could fulfil its new self-appointed role, that they wanted to show that they could succeed where the UN in Bosnia had failed, as they said. They wanted to show the world that they could do it cleanly, clinically and effectively in Kosovo. And I also understand the psychology behind this very well. I understand the aversion to the Serbs, after everything

that had happened in Croatia and in Bosnia. I understand what was driving NATO. But it was not for nothing that rules were laid down in the past to which countries must abide when it comes to waging war. This was done because they wanted to get rid of the unworkable idea that there were just and unjust wars. And that idea is now once again being embraced. We are going back to the time when countries believed on the basis of moral considerations that they had right on their side when they attacked another country. And that is exceptionally dangerous. How much easier would it have been for the NATO countries to condemn the war in Chechenya if they had not themselves been drawn into the struggle in Kosovo? How much more credible would the criticism of the Russians have been? But now they have themselves ignored the international laws, and of course the Russians' crimes in Chechenya are worse than those of NATO in Yugoslavia, but an ordinary burglar has nevertheless little right to criticise a big bank robber. It doesn't matter whether you have broken the law a little bit or a great deal. Whoever breaks the law loses moral credibility.

Humanitarian war is an objectionable concept. A humanitarian action, which is possible, consists of the three parts which I listed earlier. But to whitewash a war by calling on humanitarianism, that is deadly dangerous. European history gives enough bloody examples of that.'

On this point as well the former general had the support of the editor-in-chief of Jane's Defence Weekly, who had this to say about the humanitarian mission of the West: 'NATO, western Europe and America want to impose their vision on the rest of the world. They see it as a question of good versus evil. They want to spread democracy and the free market. But the question of course is whether you can indeed do this in this way. Or whether you won't very quickly run into the practical limitation that you can't be everywhere at once, that you simply do not have sufficient means and manpower to bend the entire world to your will.'

And this, on the humanitarianism of the war in Kosovo: 'You of course have to ask yourself whether it is permissible in a humanitarian war to bomb targets such as television stations and electricity generators. Shouldn't NATO have warned that this broadcaster was considered a military target, so that the civilians who worked there would have had the choice to remain at home? In a traditional war you don't have to pose such questions. This sort of target is legitimised because you can consider it part of the military-industrial complex. But if you devastate Donau, if you bomb chemical factories so that enormous quantities of poison go straight into the water, threatening the drinking water of hundreds of thousands of civilians,

can you then still speak of a humanitarian war, or is that simply chemical warfare? These are important questions. An enormous catastrophe for civilians has been brought about in the name of humanitarianism. If I was now a young law student I would immediately specialise in military law. Because in my view there will be a great deal of money to be earned in the years to come presenting claims against the West on behalf of the people of Yugoslavia.’

Sir Michael Rose: ‘The Geneva Convention states categorically that everything possible must be done to spare the civilian population. So if you’re going to drop bombs from rapid-flying aircraft from 15,000 feet and you regularly miss your target causing unnecessary civilian casualties, then you will have to adjust your strategy. Refrain from doing that, and continue despite everything for eleven weeks, then you are committing a war crime. A civilian who accidentally lets off a pistol and kills someone else can call on the fact that it was an accident, but if he does this ten times one after another, he will be thrown in jail. Then he’s a criminal. And I can assure you that within NATO it was thought of in just this way. Among the people that I know there I have still come across no-one who thought the Kosovo war a success. They are ashamed by what happened there. They considered it a hopeless mission carried out in an excruciatingly poor fashion. For external consumption they maintain the appearance that it was a success, but internally they are very, very unhappy.’

Beal: ‘You should ask General Wesley Clark if he is still of the opinion that the NATO air raids were such a great success. Or if he was able to conduct the war in the fashion that he himself would have done, or whether he had to settle for compromises, that he was obliged furthermore to follow the way of least risk, in order to ensure that the alliance stayed together. I think that that was the case. I think that he was mistaken about how difficult it is to conduct a war together with nineteen countries, each of which has its own interests and culture. And you should ask him how it was that journalists who were on the spot saw far fewer destroyed Serbian tanks than NATO claimed were hit.’

Rose: ‘How did Clark explain the pictures of all these Serbian tanks and soldiers withdrawing from Kosovo following the signing of the peace? They did not have the appearance of a crushed and defeated army. On the contrary. Once again: NATO did not win this war. And what should we think of the destabilising effect that radiated from this war? NATO has introduced a culture of violence. They have shown the world that they reserve to themselves the right to use violence to bring order to things if something doesn’t please them. But what if Milosevic, just like the Russians, had had a nuclear weapon – would they still have attacked

him? I don't think so. I think that they would then, just as in Chechnya, have thought twice. So what is the message to Milosevic and to other dictators like him? Make sure you get a nuclear weapon!'

As we said, we would have loved to have put all of this to General Wesley Clark, but we didn't get the chance. In a number of interviews with a range of media outlets the former commander-in-chief did react to critics of the NATO attacks in general and his own role in particular.

It seems to us extremely doubtful that Clifford Beal and Sir Michael Rose would share the view of Leonard Ornstein, journalist on the leading Dutch current affairs weekly *Vrij Nederland* that Wesley Clark 'displayed a brilliant strategy in Kosovo'.

The law of the strongest

‘The cause of liberty becomes a mockery if the price to be paid is the wholesale destruction of those who are to enjoy liberty.’ – Mahatma Gandhi

In this chapter we want to consider the legitimacy of NATO’s actions in Kosovo. For this reason we went for advice to the Dutch jurist and specialist in international law Professor Paul de Waart. But because there is probably no better place to start a chapter which must deal with the question of how international law relates to criminal regimes, to bombing operations, or to war crimes, than in Berlin, we want to begin in that city.

To be more precise, in the recently renovated Reichstag, once the place where the Dutchman Marinus van der Lubbe was arrested by the Nazis in connection with the burning of the same parliament building which recently returned to its function as the seat of the Bundestag, Germany’s federal parliament. We were there to speak with a German parliamentarian who could provide an international background to the often somewhat abstract observations of Professor De Waart. Because the offices provided for members of the Bundestag were not yet ready for use, the Green MP Hans-Christian Ströbele met us in the General Reception Room, where a number of other Members were conversing with their guests. This would not prevent Herr Ströbele from saying exactly what he thought of the matters at hand. Just as directly, we explained to him immediately the reasons why we had come to Berlin.

‘I am,’ he said ‘one of the few Green MPs who both inside and outside the Bundestag has stated his opposition to NATO’s bombing in Kosovo. I consider Germany’s decision to participate in this bombing to be a thoroughly wrong. I thought that when we began, and I still think it.’

‘The reason why we want to speak to you,’ we said, ‘is that we would really like to know why.’”

What exactly are your objections to the Kosovo war?

Ströbele: ‘First of all, NATO’s aim, that they wanted to put an end to the humanitarian disaster taking place in Kosovo. Well, the catastrophe only really got going after the bombing had begun. Before that there was fighting, attacks by the UCK, retaliatory actions by the Serbs and also, as a consequence of these, refugees, but the dimensions of the tragedy did not

compare to what we have seen since just after the bombing raids began. The fact that prior to the bombing raids all foreign observers, and all journalists and aid workers in Kosovo were withdrawn, or indeed driven out, also played a role, as this meant that the last possibility of monitoring the situation was going to be lost. The human rights situation was also not improved by the war, on the contrary. Moreover the ethnic cleansings were not stopped, but merely reversed: it was no longer the Kosovo Albanians who were being driven out and murdered, but the Kosovo Serbs. For us Germans there was an additional shameful element here, namely the fate of the Roma from Kosovo. There were around 100,000 gypsies living there, who have since been practically all driven out or killed, and hardly anyone bothered himself about this. Those amongst them who fled to Germany were treated exceptionally badly and eventually even sent back.'

Why is that particularly shameful for Germans?

Ströbele: 'Because during the time of the Nazi regime hundreds of thousands of gypsies were murdered in concentration camps. We are therefore obliged by history to concern ourselves about the fate of the Roma.'

How did the decision-making regarding German involvement proceed exactly?

Ströbele: 'The Bundestag decided at the time, with the support also of the Greens, that in the case that no diplomatic solution for Kosovo was arrived at, then NATO would attempt to enforce a solution by means of bombing. That is the first time in post-war German history that the Bundeswehr, the federal defence force, has contributed to such an action. You have to understand that those who, at the time, in the autumn of 1998, took that decision believed that it would never actually come to it. There was an assumption that Milosevic would give in at the last minute. Even after the failure of Rambouillet, on the night that the planes were already in the air, there was the idea that a telegram or something would come which would mean that none of it would be gone through with. That was the thinking in our group. And then it was morning and people found, yes, that they were all of sudden in the middle of a war. And they were so bewildered by this that they didn't even want to discuss it in the Bundestag. I was then one of the people who nevertheless ensured that a debate would take place. But also after that it was totally obvious that they didn't want to talk about it at all. And I think that all of this came from a guilty conscience, from the feeling that they wanted to shut out the whole affair.'

How is the war seen now, in retrospect?

Ströbele: 'In the Green group and on the part of our own Minister for Foreign Affairs, there is in any case no self-criticism. The feeling is that we handled things correctly. But outside our parliamentary group, in the party and amongst our voters, things are very different. Already, during the war, when for example it became known what conditions were placed on the Serbs at Rambouillet, there was a wave of criticism. And the fact that both the SPD and the Greens did so badly at the last elections has in my opinion everything to do with the Kosovo war. I hear that on the street, where what's being said is that the Greens have become the war party. That will continue to be a problem for our party for a long time.'

To which Rambouillet conditions are you referring?

Ströbele: 'I mean for example the fact that the Serbs were required to allow NATO troops on to the territory of Yugoslavia proper, a demand with which no sovereign state ever would have complied. And that the Serbs were never offered the chance to allow international troops – by which I mean not NATO troops, but troops under UN command – into Kosovo, an option that would probably have been acceptable to them, to the Serbs. If that had indeed happened, then this entire war would probably never have been necessary.'

And with this we arrived at a crucial aspect of the whole Kosovo crisis: when is a country or group of countries entitled to impose its will on another country by violence? What conditions must be fulfilled in order that a war be legitimate? We were talking, in short, about the international legal order. And so the time had come, at least on paper, to turn back to the Netherlands in order to exchange thoughts with Professor Paul de Waart, expert on international law and one of the people who during the war lodged a complaint on behalf of Yugoslavia with the International Court of Justice in The Hague against NATO and its member states. Surprisingly enough the oft-cited lack of a mandate from the Security Council turned out not to be the first argument that he brought forward against the NATO bombing. When later we brought that aspect into the discussion his views on it were just as remarkable. But first the obvious opening question.'

What is your first and most important objection to the war?

De Waart: 'For me the big problem was that NATO was extremely unclear about what precisely its motives were in acting against Serbia. The Americans did not trust Milosevic, and for this, on the basis of earlier experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they had of course

quite a few reasons, but it determined to a large extent the strategy adopted in Rambouillet. The Americans wanted an international troop contingent in Kosovo in order to protect the Kosovars. Protection by the OSCE observers, which had already been arranged, no-one was ever actually willing to give a serious chance. On the contrary, they were already moving towards believing that in Rambouillet the Serbs must be threatened with military violence. Not for a moment was there any talk of humanitarian reasons for the use of violence. On the contrary, the threat of the air force was used because it was thought that it would be a big stick with which Milosevic would be forced to sign Rambouillet. It was thought that the threat arising from the bombing – and no ground troops, that was also made clear from the very start – would be sufficient to bring Milosevic to his knees. And so no-one actually worried themselves about the legitimacy of the use of military violence. Although they were actually overstepping the mark when it came to international law. Because under international law you can certainly force an agreement using violence or the threat of violence, but that goes only for peace treaties. All other treaties are by definition invalid whenever they have been concluded under the threat or the use of violence. So Milosevic could, so to speak, calmly sign everything, and then go to the International Court of Justice and ask them if they would declare it invalid, because it was signed under the threat of violence.’

Okay, but that didn’t happen. Milosevic didn’t sign.

De Waart: ‘No. And then NATO had the feeling that it was no longer possible to pull back. That the threat must be realised. And on basis of that and other considerations it was decided to try using violence. Then you had this slow, I would almost say manipulation of public opinion through talk of hundreds of thousands of deaths, thorough talk of almost a million refugees, of the pressure on Macedonia and Albania and other areas. And only then did they begin to say, we’re bombing to protect human rights. In Rambouillet nobody ever said to Milosevic, if you carry on driving people out and murdering them then we will be forced to use violence. The phrase “humanitarian intervention” played no role in Rambouillet, so the legitimacy of the violence was adapted to the way in which the situation progressed. I’d go further, and this is also confirmed, what was said to the Kosovars was that if you don’t sign, we can’t bomb. Of course that was completely crazy. So I wasn’t convinced that the Kosovars were really in accord with what was agreed, that they really wanted a pluralistic society, that they wanted autonomy within the context of the Serbian state, And since then it has become totally clear that they did not want any such things.’

In Germany the Green MP Hans-Christian Ströbele had direct access to his own Minister for Foreign Affairs, Joscha Fischer, who in turn as a member of the Contact Group was closely involved in the negotiations in Rambouillet. In fact, without the pressure from Fischer Rambouillet would probably never have taken place. The former environmental activist who rose to become the first Green minister, placed great value on the search for a diplomatic solution to the conflict – a solution which never came.

Ströbele: ‘The negotiations in Rambouillet were completely successful on a number of important points. Agreement was reached on almost all points of the political section of the accord, including with the Yugoslav government. Only in relation to the military section were things different. It’s clear that the Serbs in Rambouillet did not see the stationing of NATO troops in Kosovo as negotiable. But on 23rd February 1999, so that’s a month before the war, the leader of the Serbian delegation wrote a letter to the members of the Contact Group stating that Yugoslavia was prepared to negotiate on the extent and characteristics of an international presence in Kosovo. In the last group meeting before the beginning of the war, I asked why it had never been proposed that an international force of troops without NATO be stationed in Kosovo. The answer was that the UCK would in that case refuse to sign the accord. The Western negotiators were therefore aligning themselves emphatically with the wishes of the UCK.

Also, a few days after the start of the bombing the Serbian president Milutinovic (not to be confused with Milosevic, who was president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which Serbia formed part) declared that stationing international troops in Kosovo would be possible. But NATO stated then, and this included the Federal German government, that the Serbs must first sign the Rambouillet accord, including the conditions concerning a NATO presence in the whole of Yugoslavia, with no negotiation possible on any detail at all. Only after two months of bombing and of the driving out of Kosovars did other proposals appear on the table. In a document dated 2nd June 1999, the G7 countries proposed the stationing of civil and military units under the leadership of the United Nations. Such a proposal should of course have been made at Rambouillet.’

We also put the problem of the military annexes from the Rambouillet agreement to Paul de Waart.

What do you think of the argument that Milosevic could not sign the Rambouillet

agreement because NATO claimed the right to act as a policing power throughout the whole of Yugoslavia?

De Waart: ‘Agh, how can that sort of agreement come to pass? You look for an example. And a comparable condition can be found in the agreement over Bosnia-Herzegovina. In that an international troop contingent was even invited to help the warring parties to stay away from each other. So there they were also prepared to say: “you can take action throughout our territory.” But I am in complete agreement with you when you say that this condition in Rambouillet was a real piece of cheek, because it was in conflict with Yugoslavia’s sovereignty. So that is a formal objection to this condition. But there were also practical objections. There was also then already an idea that Milosevic might possibly be on a list of potential suspects at the Yugoslavia tribunal, which could have meant that Milosevic, by agreeing to an article of this type regarding unlimited freedom of movement for NATO troops in Yugoslavia, would make himself vulnerable to arrest by foreign troops in his own country. This was also in this respect an absurd condition.’

From what later came out regarding the negotiations in Rambouillet, one could gather that the way in which the annexes turned out to be in the agreement was not completely clear for those involved. Or as Hans-Christian Ströbele in Berlin recollected, ‘The Russians’ role in Rambouillet was of course extremely important. They formed a bridge between the West and the Serbs. But when the military section of the agreement was on the table, the Russians were shoved to one side. The Russian representative Mayorski announced late on at Rambouillet that Annexes 2 and 7, in which the military questions were regulated, had not been discussed with him and that he could not agree with their proposals. That concerned also the conscious authorisation for NATO troops to be allowed to operate on Yugoslav territory.’

It’s time to leave the international legal and diplomatic squabbles of Rambouillet behind and look at the bombing itself, because this doesn’t only raise legal questions, but also of course those of a moral nature. We first put a number of questions to Paul de Waart.

NATO considered itself, because of its higher goals, justified in bombing places in which it was known that there would be civilians, places to which people would come. How is this moral aspect seen in international law? Does there exist something like a collective guilt of all Serbs for the aggression against the Kosovars?

De Waart: ‘An aggressor’s guilt is indeed recognised in international law. The Germans and

Japanese had a collective guilt after the Second World war. An individual German could not say, 'I was a resister, so I don't have to contribute to war reparations. The same went for Japan. But at the same time you cannot hold the individual citizens of an aggressor state, and certainly if it is a dictatorship, responsible as individuals for that aggression. In other words, there is indeed a guilt of the population as a whole, which must be carried. That's what you can call the risk-liability. In this case, the fact that you live in Yugoslavia and are a Serb makes you vulnerable to the possibility of military damage. But just because the fact that this damage can also be inflicted on individual citizens who, as individuals, are entirely blameless, there are within international law all sorts of stipulations designed to offer civilians the best possible protection. So you can't use all kinds of weapons in all kinds of circumstances. You can't bomb things of cultural value. You cannot shoot prisoners of war in occupied areas, to mention a few examples. So there have been established all sorts of rules which protect these people as far as is possible, people who are not directly combatant, in time of war. It's like this – even in a war you can't deliberately kill people, you can only – however crazy this might sound – take them out of the fight.'

Say that one of the relatives of a repairman in this TV studio bombed by NATO should say that here a person was deliberately killed who had no part of the practices of Milosevic and his men in Kosovo. This is murder. Can such a person make a complaint to NATO, or to the US, or the Netherlands?

De Waart: 'No, that is not foreseen in international law. But he can bring the matter before his own courts. And then he can make the complaint against anyone he wants to. The Yugoslav judge will then have to look at whether he is competent to handle the case. And assuming that he does declare himself so competent – he is therefore not dependent on the US or on the international court, this judge can for example condemn Clinton or Blair to so many years in prison. Or he can order the US or the UK to pay damages to this gentleman. This gentleman will then receive a verdict on the basis of which he can have American or British property sequestered. To date that is the only way.'

To what extent does the fact that NATO acted without a Security Council mandate offer legal points of entry?

De Waart: 'Legally you can do little with this. Humanitarian intervention in the sense of military action for the protection of human rights is something which can be decided on by

the Security Council, as in Iraq with the no fly-zones – whatever you might think of that – or by individual states. If an individual sees someone in the water who is in danger of drowning then he can, no, must even, help. And if a state determines that another state is terrorising its own population and breaching human rights, then that state can say, this is so terrible, we're going to intervene. And if a number of states say that they are going to do that together, and for that purpose want to use an international organisation such as NATO, you would strictly speaking also be able to defend that.'

But is that in your opinion desirable? Because NATO has in the meantime in its new charter asserted that what happened in Kosovo should be able to happen elsewhere.

De Waart: 'I think that you then first have to answer the following question: is NATO a self-defence organisation – which you can put forward grounds for – or is it a regional security organisation – which you can also put forward grounds for? NATO has to date deliberately left this open. The point in particular is that a self-defence organisation can only act whenever there is a question of self-defence, while a regional security organisation can also act in its own region whenever peace and security must be preserved. If you read the United Nations charter, you will see that a regional security organisation can act whenever there is a civil war in a member state. Then you don't have to wait for a decision from the Security Council. If the state cannot cope, the regional organisation takes it on itself, and if this cannot cope or if there is the threat of a conflict within the regional organisation, only then do you have need of the Security Council. So it isn't always the case that you must first have the permission of the Security Council before you can intervene somewhere. But NATO wants to have it both ways. It is no longer strictly an organisation for the self-defence of the affiliated countries, but is also of course not a regional security organisation, given that Canada and the US are represented within it as well as the European countries. Or you would have to say that it is a region of rich countries as opposed to poor countries, but that is an economic criterion and not a geographic one.'

Do you think then, taking everything into account, that NATO exceeded its authority under international law in intervening militarily in Kosovo without a mandate from the Security Council?

De Waart: 'Once again, considering the use of violence in order to force an agreement, I would say yes. But if you say that it was in the end a humanitarian intervention, then you can

build a case that no decision of the Security Council was needed.’

And that is what is now being said.

De Waart: ‘Exactly, that’s why they do that now, that’s why they use the concept of humanitarian intervention. But for such an intervention there are also rules under international law. There must to begin with be evidence of mass breaches of human rights, which must be objectively confirmed. Then all possibilities for a peaceful solution must have been blocked. Any violence used must in addition be proportional and, moreover, effective. Now look at Kosovo and put the question, were all possibilities of a diplomatic solution exhausted? My answer would be ‘no’. Was the violence then proportional to the goal which they were seeking to achieve? No, that was also not the case. And was it effective, was the humanitarian catastrophe prevented? No, this was equally not so. None of the conditions was fulfilled. On this basis I believe that the Yugoslavs have a case at the International Court of Justice. Unfortunately it will be a little while before it become clear whether the Court thinks the same way about it.’

We also asked Hans-Christian Ströbele about the legitimacy of NATO violence. His reasoning was not juridical but moral, but his conclusions were not so far removed from those of De Waart.

Ströbele: ‘If you justify the bombings with the argument that they had as their goal the stopping of ethnic violence in Kosovo and the prevention of a humanitarian tragedy, as NATO does, then you can only conclude that this mission failed, and therefore that the moral justification is lacking. Over the continuation of ethnic violence, but now in reverse form, we have already spoken. But the NATO bombs and rockets on bridges, roads, railways and residential districts also naturally sowed a great deal of hatred and anger amongst the Serbs. The Serbian paramilitaries and soldiers held their Kosovar victims responsible for these bombs and their terrible consequences. They claimed that UCK members and sympathisers, including women and children, helped the NATO pilots to find their targets using radio connections and mobile phones. Whether there was any truth in these accusations or not, this propaganda contributed to the atrocities and to the driving out of people. Because the Serb military could do nothing about the unreachable NATO planes, they took it out on the population. And that that would happen was predicted by many beforehand.’

Does all of this mean that the NATO bombing must be considered an act of aggression?

Ströbele: ‘That seems to me an unavoidable conclusion.’

De Waart was more nuanced, as befits an international jurist: ‘If you reason formally, then you have to say that aggression can under existing international law only be committed by states against states, not by international organisations against states, not by peoples against states or by states against the people. So an international organisation cannot be formally guilty of aggression. But NATO is an organisation of states, and these states can indeed be guilty of aggression. In other words, you cannot summon NATO before the International Court of Justice for committing aggression, but its member states you can. That is what Yugoslavia has done. And the next question is then whether this aggression was directed against Yugoslavia. To which NATO says, no, it was exclusively directed against Milosevic with the aim of helping the Kosovars. And along with this you immediately bring the next problem into view, namely the protection of the right of self-determination of peoples. That right is recognised. And on the basis of that right a people that is oppressed can in the end split away and form a new state, for example an independent Kosovo, or join another state, for example Albania. There are, however, many ifs and buts to this. The right to self-determination is recognised by human rights treaties, so it is a right of individuals, but it is linked to peoples, not to minorities. Minorities have also the right to self-determination, but to a cultural self-determination. A minority cannot form its own state. If the Turks in the Netherlands are oppressed, they have the right to protection, but they do not have the right to say, ‘right, we’re seceding from the Netherlands.’

And the Kurds in Turkey, for example?

De Waart: ‘Then the question is, when is it a matter of a minority and when a matter of a people? There are different opinions about this, none of which is as yet absolutely established. That’s because the existing states believe that international law protects their pluralistic nature. So no-one wants to go to a situation in which every state consists of one people, however you would want to define that people. Okay – if you ask, what is the most characteristic difference between a minority and a people, you could say that peoples are minorities or majorities which have built up historic rights within an organised state. Now the problem of course is that every minority is inclined to say “we have an historic claim on this ground. That could happen after a hundred or two hundred years with the Turks in Germany. They could say, we have been here in Beieren for so long, as an oppressed people, that we have a right to our own country. So actually you have to have an international land register in

which the territorial rights of peoples are laid down, as a basis for possible claims for self-determination, in the case where there is a question of oppression. Because self-determination isn't an end in itself, but a means – that's in all the documents – state formation is also no end in itself, but a means to achieve self-determination.'

And in Kosovo now you have the strange situation where the West on the one hand gives its help to the Kosovars but on the other does not honour their wish to become independent. Kosovo must also for NATO remain always an integral part of Yugoslavia.

De Waart: 'Yes indeed, but that isn't in conflict with the Kosovars' right of self-determination. The conflict is only over their right of secession, and that's something else altogether. You can say that the Albanian Kosovars have a historic right to Kosovo. But the same also goes for the Serbian Kosovars. In Europe the collapse of Yugoslavia, but also of Russia, was originally seen as an internal affair. It was said that if these people agree amongst themselves to go their own ways, then so be it. But from the standpoint of the international legal order this was an extremely unfortunate development. Because you of course had to ask yourself whether the states created were viable. Is an independent Chechenya viable? And what about an independent Slovenia? That is in itself perhaps viable, but at the same time you have to conclude that this would be at the cost of Serbia. Within Europe the Union for example would never accept that the Po region secede from Italy, you can bet your life on that, because it would be at the cost of the rest of Italy. So the question of whether the struggle for independent states in former Yugoslavia or Russia should be supported is not so easy to answer.'

Which in itself brings us back to the question which arose earlier in the book on a number of different occasions. What were the Germans thinking of when they forced the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia on European countries?

The German MP Hans Christian Ströbele: 'In my mind the government of the day wanted to enhance its influence in the region, and this could be done by strengthening the bonds with those countries or peoples with which Germany had felt linked since way back. They thought it would be easier to cooperate with them than with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I thought and continue to think that this was of course an extremely bad thing. Especially when it came to Croatia. As you know, Hitler's Germany had at the time good links with Croatia, and not just Tudjman but also other leading figures from that country always feel still very

much at home with the mindset of those days.’

Has anyone ever asked Genscher what his motives were?

Ströbele: ‘No, I don’t believe so. There are still many question marks over this. Genscher was an exceptionally successful minister of foreign affairs, and moreover of great electoral importance to his own party, the liberal FPD . The fact that he in spite of this and without any clear explanation withdrew from politics could of course have had to do with the fact that he knew that he had made big mistakes in Yugoslavia and that he didn’t fancy waiting for the consequences of that for his own political career. He has always managed to avoid concrete questions over this.’

There was still one matter about which we wanted to speak with Paul de Waart, and that was the role of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, which for the last few years has been trying to put the biggest wrongdoers from former Yugoslavia behind bars.

How do you see the role of the tribunal?

De Waart: ‘That I find a very difficult matter. I was in 1993, when it was established, strongly opposed, and I remain so. Because I think that the Security Council is not the body to establish this sort of tribunal. It is I think good to remind ourselves how this decision was arrived at. We had then just behind us the Rwanda atrocity, and actually you had then to consider that the West and especially the United States did not want to do anything. While public opinion was demanding that something be done. At the same time the first investigations were taking place into all those mass graves in Bosnia-Herzegovina. That also led a lot of people to think that something must surely be done, that those responsible must be punished. Then it was being said that a tribunal for both Rwanda and Yugoslavia must be created, and the Americans agreed to some extent, because then something happened in each case. It had more to do with the psychological effect than with the question of whether the tribunal would really accomplish very much. Then however the question arises, how do we do that? Because if you are to set up a tribunal on the basis of a common will between states – such as has occurred in the case of the permanent court which is now being established – then we can say categorically that Yugoslavia and Rwanda would not go along with this. So what was being sought was a means to arrive at this identity of will, and then what was said was, let’s take Chapter 7 of the UN charter, which offers the Security Council the possibility of instituting an aid instrument. That’s binding on every state, including Rwanda and

Yugoslavia.’

So what is your objection to this?

De Waart: ‘My objection is that an instrument established for the preservation of peace and security can set up an obstacle for just this preservation of peace and security. You create a court that must judge the inhabitants of a state, or of a number of states, without the state or states having created the basis for such. And you must therefore also immediately see the problem. In Dayton both Tudjman and Milosevic were present, while everyone was convinced that both gentlemen could qualify for a trial by the court – if not for genocide then for serious breaches of human rights. But no-one wanted to arraign them, because they were so necessary to the preservation of peace and security which is what was being sorted out in Dayton. And since then you have had to contend with the opposite problem. Because now Milosevic has been arraigned, you can ask yourself whether the establishment of peace is possible in Kosovo without Milosevic. The chances of this are to date not clear. Then there’s another point. You could in the meantime certainly conclude that judges in both tribunals have done exceptionally valuable work, that they have gone at this work extremely seriously. But the public plaintiffs are playing politics, and that has not been called to account.’

Are you referring to the making public, by Louise Arbour, of the order to hunt down and arrest Milosevic, at the time of the Kosovo war?

De Waart: ‘For example. That was a really bad business. She may have been perfectly right about the evidence, although you can put a question mark over the claim that in Kosovo evidence against Milosevic was piling up, but that’s not nearly so interesting. After Bosnia there were enough grounds for pursuing Milosevic. But as public prosecutor you cannot of course say that there’s pressure being exerted upon you not to do it, by all sorts of countries, but I’m independent and I’m going to do it anyway.’

Don’t you also have to address this separation of political and judicial power?

De Waart: ‘No, what appeals to me is the principle of opportunity, by which I mean the time in the Netherlands, for example, that it was decided that there would be no prosecution of Prince Bernhard regarding the Lockheed affair because this would be in conflict with the general interest. Now quite apart from of what you might think about that, the fact that the possibility exists to make such a decision – one which by the way can be appealed – is extremely important. It is not for nothing that the public prosecutor comes under the

responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. This already means that whether to pursue a matter or not is a political decision. And it has to be, moreover, because only a politician is in a position to weigh up the possible consequences.’

Arbour at a certain point went so far as to say that if the arrest warrant against Milosevic were to prolong the war, that would not be her concern.

De Waart: ‘That is, however, complete madness.’

But who was it then who should have called her to order?

De Waart: ‘That’s the big problem. The Security Council has created a sort of monster. If you want to rein this monster in, you can rightly say that there are legal procedures to be followed, but when that doesn’t happen... So let’s say that Ms Arbour’s actions undermine the international legal order rather than strengthening it. If you asked me whether I would have wanted to be that court’s public prosecutor I’d say, not for any money. If you asked me if I’d want to be a judge there I’d say, also not for any money. Because what gives this court its legitimacy.’

Should Arbour have decided to put the arrest warrant for Milosevic on the secret list instead of on the public list?

De Waart: ‘That would have been even worse. Even ignoring the fact that these secret lists must be seen as a travesty of the international legal order. Whether or not you’re on Interpol’s list isn’t generally known, but normal criminals know whether or not they are being sought. Now say that a Serbian general goes to Vienna and is arrested there, because it turns out that he is on the tribunal’s secret list. Then that would mean that you can never again take Milosevic to the negotiating table. So you’re no further on than you are now. And the big problem now is that you can’t arrest Milosevic and if indeed you could pull that off you would be faced with the question of whether he would not be exchangeable. Or whether the Serbs wouldn’t then say, that’s it, we’re taking back everything we’ve agreed to date. As long as Milosevic isn’t tried and convicted in his own country, at least by the people, the problem won’t be solved. That crime should be punished is a practical approach to rapists, traffickers in women and drug dealers. But why have we, all of us, always thought that people suspected of political crimes should not be sent back to their own countries? That someone who is suspected of a political crime can’t be extradited? It’s because political crimes are different. Milosevic says that he shoots down terrorists who want to secede, while these people

themselves say that they are involved in a liberation struggle.’

But in Nuremberg and Tokyo didn't people stand trial for their political misdeeds?

De Waart: ‘But you can't compare the Yugoslav tribunal to those. In those cases it was a matter of a trial of the defeated by the victors.’

And do you think that was a good thing? Or not?

De Waart: ‘I think it was good, but I would have liked the victors to have been judged alongside them. When you see in Hiroshima the official documentation of the Americans, in which it says that Hiroshima was bombed because it was an open town while Nagasaki was chosen because it was in the mountains, with the aim of comparing the effects of the two atom bombs, then I'd say that that was the clearest war crime. But the Americans were never brought to trial That's why I'm the biggest supporter of a international court of justice, but a court which on the one hand can operate without regard to person, while on the other hand it is answerable to a political body which is above it. You could for example say that the Security Council is responsible for peace and security in the world, so I'm giving to this council the political responsibility to direct the public prosecutors. If someone doesn't agree with the non-prosecution of a complaint, then they must appeal to the international court which can then tell the Security Council to change its decision. But the prosecution of persons, certainly of political persons, must in the end be a political responsibility. Just as the decision as to whether or not to employ violence must be a political decision.’

From old Russians, the things which do not fade

'I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.' – Sir Winston Churchill

Where better to begin a visit to Russia, the new Russia, than in a shiny new office belonging to an investment bank? And who better to speak to than a former KGB agent, who has perforce in these new times set himself a new life-goal, i.e., to become a millionaire as quickly as possible?

Renaissance Capital is the name of the firm, and the secret-agent-turned-bank-director's name is Yuri Kobaladze. He is tall, around fifty, and with short grey crew cut hair and steely blue eyes. He is polite and friendly and his English is, certainly by Russian standards, exceptionally good. But that is no surprise: we knew that he had lived in London for seven years. 'As correspondent for the Russian press bureau Tass,' he told us. 'But that was of course just a cover. In reality I worked for the secret service.'

England would come up a number of times, and each time his look took on something of a dreamy quality. 'My beloved country,' he would call it. And 'England, sweet England, how I miss you!' His big hero is Margaret Thatcher, and his dream is to go back to England once more – not as a secret agent this time, but as a multimillionaire.

Yuri Kobaladze is the sort of man who it would be hard to believe existed if you had not sat opposite him, if you had not heard with your own ears what he had to say about back then, and about now, and about the crazy years between, years in which the world around him changed beyond recognition, to an extent that there remained nothing for him but to change beyond recognition himself. 'Do I have an understanding of banking?' he says 'Of course not!' With a sweeping wave of his arm he indicates the other side of the glass wall which divided his room from the rest of the office complex. There a few dozen of his colleagues are busily working at computer screens covered with colourful graphics and tables. 'These guys spend the whole day looking at the Dow Jones Index, and at I don't know what indexes, and I have absolutely no idea what information they get from them. But they're earning a great deal of money. And that's what it's all about, don't you think?'

And Yuri Kobaladze, with the network of contacts that he has maintained from his time in the KGB, which ensures that Renaissance Capital has as little trouble as possible from the various corrupt state services operating in Russia, the new Russia, which usually make it so difficult to do business there – perhaps he knew nothing about banking, but he knew everything about the shady practices of Russian politicians. We will refrain here from quoting him extensively, because he was more someone who put our visit to Moscow into a certain context, who made us aware of the crazy tempo at which the changes in the former Soviet Union had unfolded. This context is of importance to an understanding of how the NATO attacks on Yugoslavia came over in Russia and the emotions which they released. But we leave it to other, more prominent speakers to put these emotions into words. One thing that Yuri Kobaladze told us we do, however, want to recall here, because his words turned out to have a clairvoyant quality.

At the end of our interview we asked him what he thought about Russia's military strength. What we said was this: In the West the Russian armed forces are no longer highly rated. Except for the nuclear resources, of course, but no-one took Yeltsin seriously when in Budapest he declared in menacing tones that Russia still had the atom bomb. What do you think of this?

Yuri Kobaladze: 'It is of course true that the Russian army is in a deplorable state. The men are so heavily underpaid and demotivated. The matériel is suffering from a chronic lack of maintenance and because of that is hardly usable. So Russia could scarcely conduct a successful traditional war. Just look at the enormous problems which we have at the present time in Chechenya. I am completely convinced there is only one lesson to be drawn from this assessment, a lesson which is being learned in senior military circles. Russia must sharpen up its nuclear strategy. We will have to be prepared to use the nuclear bomb at an earlier stage.'

What sort of concrete situations are you thinking of?

Kobaladze: 'Of the threat from Turkey, for example. Right now there's a strengthening taking place of the bonds between that country and a number of former Soviet republics which feel a fellowship with Turkey, such as Azerbeidjan and Turkmenistan. It is certainly not unthinkable that in the near future this will lead to great tensions. And Russia will not be in any condition to win a conventional war against the Turks. In that case we will have to take refuge in the use of nuclear weapons. I don't think there's any other choice.'

The interview with Kobaladze took place a week before Christmas 1999. A fortnight later Boris Yeltsin resigned his presidency and nominated Vladimir Putin as his successor. One of the new leader's first political acts was the accentuation of Russia's nuclear policy.

If Yuri Kobaladze's contacts with the military top brass can be regarded as a measure of all his high level connections, then he will most certainly achieve his ambition in a very short space of time and become a multimillionaire. And in the meantime the world will have become a little less safe. Exactly as he predicted.

There is supposedly no-one in Russia who understands relations between his own country and the West better than Georgi Arbatov, founder and managing director of Moscow's Institute of the USA and Canada Studies and the former security adviser for every Russian leader from Nikita Krushchev to Boris Yeltsin. Georgi Arbatov has the meticulous bearing of a diplomat, the dependability and independence of a scientist, and the natural authority of someone who knows that, when it comes to his area of expertise, he need defer to no-one – and certainly not to anyone currently forming part of the Russian foreign service.

'Boris Yeltsin,' he said, without beating about the bush, 'in the course of his presidency, got rid of everyone who had any real understanding of matters, and surrounded himself with people who were on a professional level utterly worthless. They had neither sufficient knowledge or expertise, nor enough experience at their disposal to lead the country. Putin is simply the most recent example of this. And the people with whom Putin in his turn surrounded himself are of still less quality.'

Arbatov, in short, is worried. And one of the things which most worries him is the enormous lack of understanding in the West of just what is going on in his country at the present time. When we spoke to him it was a few days after the Russian parliamentary elections. In the West the result of these elections was greeted positively, much to the astonishment and alarm of the former strategist. 'In the West people are saying that the reforms are now in good hands. That proves to me once again that they don't have any real idea of what is going on here. These were the sort of elections you find also in Africa, elections which have nothing to do with any real democracy. Two months ago Yeltsin picked a complete unknown to provide leadership to a political party which previously had no existence whatsoever and one which what it stands for no-one knows. Then the whole box of tricks was emptied out, from propaganda and bribery to political murder, in order to ensure that this party had the elections

all its own way. And this is what the West is calling a step forward. Apparently the West has no other goal than to undermine Russia once and for all. We'll need years if not centuries to get the Russian economy back on its feet. And in the meantime the door is wide open for a new dictatorship. A dictatorship, remember, which has nuclear weapons. It's extraordinarily worrying.'

Allow us to go back to the year 1989, the year of perestroika, the year that the Wall fell. What chance was there then that the Soviet Union would yet survive and come good?

Georgi Arbatov: 'I think that in the years from 1989 to 1992 there were still plenty of possibilities. Not that the Soviet Union in its then existing form still had a future, that I don't believe. The upkeep of that enormous empire cost many times more than it produced in income. And that always means the irrevocable end for any empire. So it was obvious that the Union must be reexamined. But then a number of matters needed to be carried out with great care. What, for example, to do with the nuclear arsenals? How do you share out the army's resources? How do you deal with the minorities within the various republics? Agreements had to be made on these matters. There are parts of the Ukraine where more Russians live than Ukrainians. These people look to Moscow, they send their children to school in Petersburg, not Kiev. What do you do with these people? How do you go about this? These are all matters that you simply had to regulate, before you shut down the old Union. But in the last two years of his term of office Gorbachev made a number of big mistakes, pushing everything along with a rapidity that was not to be desired. His most important mistake was that he alienated a large number of his supporters, people who just like him wanted sensible, gradual reforms. That was why the attempted coup then took place. And it was this coup that meant that in the end Yeltsin came to power. Because he was of course the man who at the moment of the coup jumped into the breach for democracy. Who climbed on to a tank and addressed the people. Without Yeltsin the communists would perhaps indeed have won. When Gorbachev came back from the Ukraine, where he sat out the coup, his leadership position had in fact already been lost to Yeltsin. And Yeltsin then added yet another list of mistakes to the errors made by Gorbachev.'

What do you mean?

Arbatov: 'I still well remember the first conversation that I had with Yeltsin after the coup was defeated. I said, it's time we got past that tank – that chapter is at an end. Now you've got to

go to the office and form a serious, professional government to ensure that the economy gets out of this blind alley. His answer was that he didn't need a professional government. Then he dropped me, just as he'd dropped Gorbachev. He betrayed everyone who in the previous few years had put so much effort into the reform of the Soviet Union. And then he formed a government of non-professionals. In the shortest possible time he had surrounded himself with people with no thorough training and no experience. And worse than that, with thieves, con-men and charlatans. Yeltsin knew absolutely nothing about macro-economics, which is in itself no problem, because I think that most politicians have no understanding of economics. But they call a number of specialists together with different views, then listen to what they have to say, then decide on that basis what they can best do. But Yeltsin listened to someone with no experience whatsoever of practical economics, a lightweight journalist who had never written a book on economics. To this man he entrusted far-reaching economic reforms, with all their consequences.'

Did the West also play a role in this?

Arbatov: 'At the very beginning Moscow was naturally overrun by American consultants who took care that the whole country was festooned with American advertising billboards. Demand for Russian products collapsed completely, and Western imports took their place. Walk into any supermarket and you'll see that almost all products are imported. In eight years the productivity of the Russian economy fell by more than fifty percent – that's more than any economic recession has ever been able to bring off. Russian agriculture was as good as finished. More than half of the cattle stock was slaughtered. If you can no longer get rid of your milk, you slaughter the cows, and then the people who had had the task of looking after these cows are unemployed. It is a terrible tragedy, the consequences of which we can see every day on the street. The difference between poor and rich is in the meantime bigger than that in the United States. Every evening I see out of my window how the tramps are chased out of the waste containers where they've spent the night. And meanwhile elsewhere in the city you're seeing the first Rolls Royces. Meanwhile there is no city in the world with more casinos than Moscow.'

But who do you hold responsible for this? In the West people are always saying that it's the fault of the Russians themselves that it's going so badly for them. Look how corrupt they are, look at all these mafia practices.

Arbatov: 'Of course, we didn't import these corrupt leaders, we produced them ourselves. But these are the same leaders who are always supported by the West – even when it has long been obvious in the West just how corrupt they were. I spoke recently to a very reliable source in America, who told me that the FBI and the CIA had already had access to lists of the foreign bank accounts of all sorts of top Russians, at a time when here nobody had yet seen how bad everything was. And instead of helping us to fight against this putrefaction, they just made it more difficult. Take a man such as Anatoly Chubais, the father of privatisation. This man has for many years been able to yell, if you shove me to one side, then Western credits will dry up. Because he was the one in whom the West had faith. He was a man of the reforms. But what did he do in practice? Those things which had for generations been worked so hard for by Russian workers, that had been built up by the efforts of millions of people, he gave away for almost nothing. There was a big tobacco factory in Moscow, not far from the airport. It was sold off for a low price, then the new owners sold all the machines, the buildings they rented out, and in the biggest building of all they started a new casino. And that sort of practice is still going on. That's the kind of reform which the West says are all steps in the right direction.'

Is Georgi Arbatov a reliable source? Is he not simply an embittered exponent of the old regime? In Russia itself enough people have put this question – if this Arbatov could find it so good under Krushev, and Brezhnev, and Gorbachev, why should we still trust him in these new times? Arbatov is aware of this criticism and his answer comes loud and unvarying: 'These leaders needed me more than I needed them. I have never applied for any position, but evidently they needed someone with my qualities.'

The fact is also that Arbatov is seen in expert Western circles as undoubtedly the best in the area of international relations. He is known to be erudite, independent and unimpeachable. The institute which he heads offered during the years of the Cold War a place to people who were mistrusted by the regime and forbidden to travel abroad. To Vladimir Lukin, for example, a man who has since also earned his spurs in Russian foreign policy. In the early 'nineties he was for some years Russia's ambassador to Washington. And on his return he was elected to parliament and appointed chair of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee. In this capacity he was present at the OSCE summit in Istanbul in the autumn of 1999. Lukin is a member of the Jabloko ('Call') party, the party which is seen by many foreign observers as representing the most democratic, most critical, least populist and least extreme of all of

Russia's political currents.

Jabloko suffered in the last elections a painful slump and could win only twenty-one seats, down from forty-five in 1995. In his office in the Russian parliament building we asked Vladimir Lukin about his view of the the West's policy in relation to Russia in general and the Yugoslav conflict in particular.

How did you respond when the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia began?

Valdimir Lukin: 'With a feeling of surprise, confusion and humiliation. Because this was without any doubt an act of pure aggression. Anyone who wages war against another country, without the approval of the United Nations, or any other international body, is guilty of aggression. And the consequences for the international legal order we can today here in Russia experience directly. What is now taking place in Chechenya can't be seen as something unconnected to what happened in Kosovo. If one in the world is allowed to do it, then the other will do it too. What was permitted in Kosovo is now permitted everywhere. That means that it can also happen in Russia, or in the Ukraine, or wherever. The only reason Russia won't be attacked by NATO is the nuclear weapons that Russia has at its disposal. That means that the Kosovo war, from a strategic point of view, was also a tremendous disappointment. It was disillusioning with regard to how we thought that relations between the great powers and the conduct of war had developed.'

But the West says 'we couldn't simply look on in Kosovo at what we had already seen happen in Bosnia. There was a desire to prevent another humanitarian disaster.'

Lukin was decisive: 'If that's the case, you have to say that this ambition was not fulfilled. One form of ethnic cleansing simply gave way to another form of ethnic cleansing. That's not a matter of belief or opinion, it's a matter of facts.'

You could also say that in Rambouillet there was an attempt to come to an agreement with Milosevic, and that he was threatened with violence as a means of persuasion, the big stick. In the end they were forced to make good on that threat, because Milosevic turned out not to be inclined to come to a solution.

Lukin: 'That's what Hitler did too, saying that "if you don't cooperate we'll use violence." And if the West says that it acted only from the noblest of intentions, then I would reply that "Hitler also considered that he had noble intentions". Hitler really believed that what he did

was in the interest of the German people. That's why you can't construct international law on the basis of what someone at a certain moment thinks is right, but on that which you can agree together.'

You used the words 'disappointment' and 'disillusion'.

Lukin: 'For the democratic-minded in Russia what happened in Kosovo was an enormous disappointment. But no-one, I believe, can still care very much about that. The intervention in Kosovo is part of a policy to bring about a further break-up of the Soviet Union. The most important aim of this policy is not to increase Russia's democratic aspects, but to prevent the strengthening of the bonds between Russia and its neighbouring states, such as Ukraine. We very much want to have good relations with Ukraine, not because we want to annex the country, but because we are concerned about the local Russian-speaking population. Is the West doing its best to help us in this? On the contrary, they're encouraging polarisation. Both the United States and the European Union are trying to increase the distance between Russia and Ukraine. They are supporting the people in Ukraine who want a close association with Poland and not Russia.'

But the west claims nevertheless to support the democratic forces in Russia?

Lukin: 'I can see no evidence of it, It's nothing but fine words.'

Tony Blair declared immediately after the Russian parliamentary elections that he was very happy with the result.

Lukin: 'That proves only that Tony Blair understands absolutely nothing about the Russian reality. These elections were a power struggle between two competing bureaucratic power blocks. It's the kind of democracy you find in Indonesia, or in Egypt. Real political parties can hardly participate in the political process. Everything is dominated by the power blocs – one led by Yeltsin and the Kremlin, the other by the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Lushkov.'

And so we returned once again to the point where we had been with Georgi Arbatov: to the question of whether the West was really interested in a democratisation of the former Soviet Union and of all those other parts of the world where chaos reigns, or merely the apparent order of a dictatorship. Will anything ever come of this New World Order?

Georgi Arbatov: 'I don't like the words "New World Order". It reminds me too much of Hitler's words. But okay, perhaps the words aren't important, I understand what is meant by

them. I thought myself that the end of the Cold War offered the chance for new relations in the world. But I think now that we will need a great deal more time before things really change for the better. As things stand the world's leaders are far too concerned about their own petty interests. About how they can survive an affair with a trainee, for example. Or in the case of Yeltsin, how he can prevent his successor from investigating all the crimes and corruption of which he and his family have been guilty. There is a terrible lack of really good statesmen at the moment. Not so very long ago you had people like Palme in Sweden, Papandreou in Greece, Kreisky in Austria, Ghandi in India – all of them thinkers, all people with major qualities, who each contributed to ensuring during the Cold War that things never really got out of hand. And just look now, there is almost nobody any more whose above average.'

What in your opinion should have happened to NATO at the end of the Cold War?

Arbatov: 'The only justification for the existence of NATO was the presence of a strong enemy. That enemy no longer exists. The Soviet Union has fallen apart, and Russia does not have the power to be seen as a realistic threat. So NATO's viability is at an end. Following the end of the Cold War both sides had to ask ourselves, what now? This question should have been answered by looking for mechanisms and organisations which would both guarantee security and bring about a real integration of Russia into Europe. NATO has never been an organisation which concerned itself with integration, only with security. NATO has no morality, apart from a military morality. The OSCE, on the other hand, has indeed a morality, but lacks instruments. The result is now that the United States, as the sole remaining superpower, threatens to become after a fashion the training school for all international bodies. They are pushing the EU, the OSCE, NATO, the United Nations, all of them, out of the way. Increasingly it seems that nothing can happen unless it has the support of the United States. That was also our biggest concern in the Kosovo war. It is a war which opens the door to still more demonstrations of power by the United States. Because who will be next to take their turn? Bulgaria? Ukraine? Who can say? Add to this the economic crisis in Russia, which to a large extent was caused by ill-thought out reforms of American manufacture, and you will understand why anti-American feelings have so much revived here. No self-respecting politician can any longer allow himself to say anything positive about the United States. And that is extremely threatening for the future of relations between Russia and the West.'

And Vladimir Lukin adds: 'The New World Order was of course above all a romantic concept and not a realistic idea. But at the same time there was at the beginning of the nineties

certainly the possibility of doing things differently, better, than they had been done. It was possible to imagine a new security construction for Europe, one of which Russia would form part. But the Americans never wanted that. They don't want NATO to be Europeanised. They want to keep matters under control on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. If there are outsiders who come forward and want to join NATO then that could happen, but a real, thorough change to NATO, that the Americans are against. The Americans also don't understand what's happening in Russia, because they aren't really interested in Russia. All that interests them is whether Russia will become a second America or not. So when Russia plumped for a president, they were pleased. When McDonald's arrived and ads for Pepsi, they were delighted. And when we decided to have an elected parliament just as they have their Congress, they were completely content. But when they at a certain moment discovered that Russia would nevertheless not become a second America, that we see some things differently to them, then they immediately gave Russia up for dead, saying that Americans can't do anything about it if everyone is against them.'

As a result of the Kosovo war more people in Europe are going to be saying that we must become less dependent on the Americans, that we should have our own European defence force, for example. What do you think about this?

Lukin: 'I don't see it in itself as negative. The Yugoslav question certainly made it clear how important it is that Europe learns to solve this sort of problem for itself. For three years the Americans didn't want to deal with the problem themselves, and when they eventually did get mixed up in it they did so in a totally unacceptable manner. But for a really effective European security organisation it is absolutely necessary that Russia and the Ukraine take part in it. The Yugoslav question cannot be solved without Russia's contribution, as also turned out once again to be the case in Kosovo. For us it's not a matter of easing western Europe away from the Americans, which is neither possible nor necessary. If the Netherlands for example finds it agreeable by means of one construction or another to remain under the protection of the American umbrella and they're prepared to pay for that, why not? But what it is about is that trust in Russia in the European countries must be restored, a trust which suffered enormous damage in Kosovo, because the European countries went increasingly along with the pig-headed actions of General Clark and NATO. Why weren't the agreements laid down in the peace treaty effected by Russia adhered to? There was a great deal of anger over the rapid advance of Russian troops towards the airport at Pristina, but for us it was completely obvious

that if we didn't do that there would be no chance whatsoever that the Serbian population of Kosovo would have the protection which had been agreed on. And why were the Russians in Kosovo treated as if they were an occupying power rather than forming part of the international peace-keeping troops. Why was so little action taken against the Albanians' violence? Why was the daily murder of Serbs allowed? That sort of thing meant that we ourselves lost a lot of trust in the European countries. And that trust must first be restored. In order to achieve that we would need to create a sort of regional security council. A podium on which we can together arrive at solutions for this sort of problem. That would go a long way towards a European solution to European problems. That's a completely different way from NATO's and also from that currently argued for by most European leaders.'

The question remains which at the time that this book was being written formed the biggest stumbling block between Russia and the West: the war in Chechenya. Yuri Kobaladze, the man of the new nuclear strategy, the man who so admires Margaret Thatcher, the man who concluded that the world was made up only of winners and losers, and that at whatever cost he would henceforth belong to the winners, this same Yuri Kobaladze surprised us by adopting an unambiguous position against the war in Chechenya. 'This was is criminal and stupid,' he said, 'and we will, just as we did the last war in Chechenya, lose it in the end.'

Georgi Arbatov was also extremely critical of the latest war in the Caucasus. 'It seems really as if this war was started specially to help Vladimir Putin win power,' he said. 'Officially there were two reasons to start the war. First of all the bomb explosions in Moscow and a few other cities. Those were undoubtedly the work of terrorists, but whether they were Chechen terrorists is far from certain. No-one has ever been indicted and no real investigation into the possible perpetrators has ever been established. The second reason was the attack by the Chechens in Dagestan. We had given the Chechens after the last war the chance to run their country according to their own lights, and the result was that the Chechen way of doing things was exported to other provinces such as Dagestan. These two matters made it possible to portray this new war as a war against bandits and terrorists. But you don't conduct a war against terrorists with weapons of mass destruction, with tanks and air-raids. What they want to do is destroy Chechenya, ensure that there's no-one left who would vote for an independent Chechenya simply because there will be no more Chechens left in Chechenya.'

But Vladimir Lukin, whose party was the only one in Russia before the elections to make careful attempts to arrive at a non-military solution to the problems in Chechenya, defended

the war waged by his country in the recalcitrant province.

You said at the beginning of our interview that the war in Chechenya cannot be separated from the Kosovo war. What did you mean by this?

Lukin: ‘That in Kosovo the rules of the game were changed. And that we see ourselves as forced to play according to these new rules.’

But did you find this war in itself justifiable?

Lukin: ‘You know how it began. After the last war we were in complete agreement with a condition of peaceful coexistence. We gave the Chechens the chance to do things their own way. And what happened? They invaded Dagestan. How should you react in such a situation? Russia is an exceptionally peace-loving country. We haven’t got ourselves mixed up in the internal affairs of Uzbekistan, of Ukraine, and not even of Chechenya. But there was nothing else we could do.’

Do you think that the Russian army and the Russian leaders will succeed in achieving their aims and win the war?

Lukin: ‘I don’t see how they could fail. The only problem is time. But eventually any outcome, whatever it may be, will be a success. The only thing we can’t do is unilaterally withdraw the Russian troops. Because the the situation would in the shortest of times go back to how it was before the war. And then we would find ourselves within two years once again forced to impose order on things. The Western advice to Russia is therefore completely unrealistic and impractical.’

And in this, to close, Lukin enjoys once more the support of his old mentor Georgi Arbatov, who says that the West should ‘stop trying to trample Russia underfoot, stop issuing prescriptions which push our country ever deeper into the morass. Not so long ago Moscow was the safest city in the world, now I wouldn’t advise anyone to go alone into the streets at night. Our government has so little money that they said it didn’t make much difference if the Bolshoi Ballet was ruined, they wanted to close the Hermitage, our entire rich culture was threatened, and all because we had to adapt to Western prescriptions. And if you count in the arrogance of NATO, then it’s not surprising that fascism is raising its head here. That extreme nationalists are enormously popular. In the end every country is responsible for its own problems. I don’t want then to pin Russian problems on the West. But if they really want to

help the democratic forces in Russia, then the west must draw the lessons from what is happening in this country now.'

Noam Chomsky in Van Aartsen's Paradise

'We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.' –
Albert Einstein

For any of the ordinary mortals who have ever been allowed to speak before the General Assembly of the United Nations, it must have been one of the highpoints of their lives. Whether that was also the case for a politician like Jozias van Aartsen, our own Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, is a question that we would have loved to have put to him, but that we must of necessity leave unanswered. What we can, however, confirm is that Van Aartsen, when he took the floor on the 24th September 1999 in the great assembly hall in New York, took advantage of the opportunity to inform the honourable representatives that the Netherlands was always in the forefront of the struggle for a better world.

While the title of his address, 'Shifting emphasis' may not sound very ambitious, the content belied this. What Van Aartsen, in his capacity as temporary chair of the Security Council, put on to the agenda, was the view that the UN and the Security Council would become somewhat more effective if all of the member states were to agree that a country's sovereignty would henceforth be subordinate to considerations of human rights. And it didn't stop there.

Van Aartsen said this in his speech: 'Let me go one step further. The blurring of the boundaries of sovereignty does not stop at human rights. In the future, the notion of sovereignty is going to be tested beyond that. Think of decrepit nuclear installations. Or massive damage to the environment. Lack of water. Mass marketing of narcotic drugs. Can responsible statesmen afford to wait until the damage is actually done? Or do they in fact have a duty to prevent it? These are questions which, at some point, the Security Council will have to be involved in.'

Van Aartsen closed with the following words: 'The Security Council should be stronger, not weaker. It should be a credible leader in the maintenance of peace. In order to be credible, it must be consistent, swift and proactive. It must show courage, drive and vision. It must keep changing with the times. It must put people over politics. That is a tall order. Its decision on East-Timor gave us hope for the Council's potential.'

Van Aartsen delivered a message, and he did it whenever the opportunity presented itself. For

example on 18th May 1999, in the middle of the Kosovo war, in the Palace of Peace in The Hague. There he spoke at a meeting of peace activists, on the occasion of the centenary of the First International Peace Conference which had been held in The Hague. He said then, amongst other things, that ‘In the last few months the war over Kosovo has absorbed all of our attention. People are being pursued, people are fleeing, people are dying. In my opinion, Kosovo must become an important reference point in our thinking about the future of the international legal order. In view of the human tragedy, in view of the devastation and destruction, the war in the Balkans should be seen as demanding an improvement in both international laws and in the manner in which we resolve conflicts, and then primarily on the cutting edge of law and diplomacy. This is, in my opinion, the most important lesson which must be learned, The blueprint for legislation and diplomacy developed in 1899 and then later in 1907, can no longer keep pace with developments in the world we know today. We will have to adapt.’

A few months later, on 9th September, He spoke in Duisburg at the Fourth Dutch-German Conference, which on this occasion had adopted the slogan ‘On the way to the Knowledge Society’.

This speech caused quite a stir in the Netherlands because of the fact that the minister had spoken any words of criticism whatsoever over the role of the electronic media during international crises (see also Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). Yet what he had to say about diplomacy and the international community was surely just as remarkable. ‘While citizens as a result of technological developments expect more and more from the government, the EU and the UN,’ Van Aartsen said, ‘we have to act within the framework of a UN Charter which is half a century old... Today we consider it a generally accepted rule of international law that no sovereign state has the right to terrorise its own citizens. The NATO actions against Yugoslavia confirm this position. The international community must give serious attention to the shift in the balance between respect for national sovereignty on the one hand and human rights and fundamental freedoms on the other. This will not be a pro-western or anti-Third World debate. The shift in this balance brings with it uncertainties. But the international community cannot permit itself to ignore this development. Yesterday it was Kosovo, today it’s East Timor, and who knows what tomorrow has in store?’

In a radio programme three days later Van Aartsen further developed his German speech and said, amongst other things, that ‘An important part of the debate that I wanted to open up

there is that we, just at a time when we are confronted by terrible situations, such as for example in East Timor, are still having to deal with being fenced in by the old Charter of the United Nations, the speed that news travels and the slowness of diplomacy. The Charter, in the framework of the discussion over sovereignty, now has its limitations. I must point that out. And I want to set this discussion going. Because I am the kind of politician who isn't content to stop there, but also wants to do something.'

In short, Van Aartsen's message to the world was laid out here: international law, international legislation must as far as possible be adapted to give the UN Security Council more powers to intervene militarily in sovereign countries who are recalcitrant in the area of human rights, but also in such matters as drug trafficking or environmental pollution. A first step in this direction, as Van Aartsen has since made clear on a number of other occasions, would be to abolish the right of veto within the Security Council. This right gives the Council's five permanent members – the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China – the chance to stop any decision by means of its veto. It was for example well-known that one of the reasons why the Security Council could not decide to act militarily against Yugoslavia over the Kosovo question was that Russia and China would very probably have blocked such a decision with their veto.

For any person not yet overcome by cynicism, Van Aartsen's words have a certain attractiveness. What would, after all, be finer than a world in which 'responsible members of governments' could act via an international forum against the abuse of human rights, against environmental pollution or trade in illegal drugs? Or, even better, that such an international forum would know how to prevent such misdeeds? Would that not create the conditions which would quickly mean the arrival of paradise on earth? Would this not also mean that humanity's struggle for a better world had at long last been crowned with success?

We put these questions – by email, given his overfull diary, which made it impossible to arrange a meeting with him – to a critic and notably independent thinker, the linguist and political commentator quoted in Chapter 3, Noam Chomsky.

Our question is the following: what are your views on the 'blurring boundaries of sovereignty'?

In other words: what could be wrong with 'responsible statesmen' stepping in when human rights are violated, or when the health of millions are at risk by 'decrepit nuclear

installations'?

Chomsky: 'First, some preliminary observations. To begin with, I am aware of no evidence that "Today, human rights come to outrank sovereignty." On the contrary, the rich and powerful pay scant attention to human rights and often act to violate them in the most extreme way. It is not necessary to look very far for examples: simply consider the southeast corner of NATO itself in the mid-1990s, and the way the other member states reacted.

By defending human rights during some of most outrageous ethnic cleansing and atrocities of this grim decade? Or by leaping enthusiastically into the fray to supply high-tech weapons, military training, and crucial diplomatic support so that the terror could reach a successful conclusion, with several million refugees, 3500 villages destroyed (seven times Kosovo under NATO bombing), and tens of thousands killed?

That is only one example, striking not only because of the scale, but because it is so close to home, therefore impossible to miss, except by deliberate choice.

The rich and powerful guard their own "sovereignty" zealously and show utter contempt for human rights, facts all too easily to demonstrate. In this regard, the patterns of the past persist – including the pronouncements about a "new era" of devotion to human rights, freedom, and all good things, familiar throughout modern history (with analogues long before).

Second, sovereignty is indeed under attack, and has been for some 25 years, but not in the name of human rights. Rather, in the interest of multinational corporations and particularly, financial capital. As well understood, the dismantling of the Bretton Woods system from the early 1970s, with financial liberalization, has the effect, and the intent, of restricting the possibilities of democratic choice (sovereignty), and transferring decision-making power to the hands of a "virtual Parliament" of investors and lenders, by now overwhelmingly involved in very short-term speculation, which is harmful to the international economy as well as destructive of the exercise of democratic sovereign rights. These matters were well understood, and clearly articulated, by the framers of the Bretton Woods system, and are understood today.

Third, individual cases have to be considered on their own merits, always. That must be kept in mind when we move to the more abstract level of principles.

The question that you are raising, citing Mr. Van Aartsen, is a question of principle. The

principle is that “responsible statesmen” should have the power to act to deter human rights violations, risks to health, dangers from nuclear installations, etc. According to what you report, Mr. Van Aartsen has in mind UN actions under Security Council auspices. If so, that would be well within the current framework of international law and world order. Of course, such actions are subject to veto by the great powers, which naturally imposes severe limits on implementation of the principle (whatever we think of it).

How do these limits function in practice? Here there is a factual record to which we can turn. Putting aside much self-serving mythology, we discover that since the UN “fell out of control” with decolonization, the US has been far in the lead in vetoing Security Council Resolutions on a wide range of issues, with Britain second and France a distant third. Recent years provide no evidence of change in that regard.

Sometimes the great powers resort to formal veto to block international action to deter major atrocities. Sometimes other means suffice. Thus the US did veto a resolution calling on all states to observe international law (naming no one, though the intent was clear) after Washington had rejected the World Court demand that it terminate its “unlawful use of force” (terrorism, aggression) against Nicaragua and pay substantial reparations. But Washington was able to rely on other means to compel Nicaragua to submit, and later to withdraw its request for reparations. Or, to take another case, the US did not have to resort to a veto to block any inquiry into its destruction of half the pharmaceutical supplies of a poor African country in 1998, leading to many thousands of deaths. No one knows how many thousands, and in the West at least, no one seems to care very much, given the agent of this particular criminal atrocity.

This case, incidentally, though small on the scale of atrocities (by the West in particular), provides a fair illustration of the attitude towards “sovereignty” in the rich countries that describe themselves as “the international community.” Imagine that Islamic terrorists had done this in the Netherlands or the U.S. The attack on “sovereignty” might then have been taken a shade more seriously. As noted, huge atrocities even within NATO itself, with decisive and increasing support from the Clinton administration as atrocities peaked, merited no attention from the “international community” and its “responsible statesmen.” They were apparently not even mentioned at the 50th anniversary of NATO in April, held under the sombre shadow of “ethnic cleansing” – by the wrong hands. In brief, in the real world “responsible statesmen” do as they choose, pursuing power interests, as in the past. And they

can do so with impunity, for the most part, unless deterred from within.

Let us, however, imagine that some extraordinary conversion takes place and, breaking the rather consistent historical pattern, “responsible statesmen” begin to act in accord with the impressive rhetoric that they produce, and that is produced on their behalf by the educated classes. On that assumption, we can set aside all of history as irrelevant and dismiss the institutional framework of policy making, which remains unchanged, but is inoperative (by assumption) in the post-conversion era. A number of simple questions then come to mind. Who are the “responsible statesmen,” and how do they attain that rank? The answer appears to be: by self-acclaim, as in the past. We can also hardly avoid Juvenal’s question from 2000 years ago: Who will guard the guardians? And another more mundane question arises: does anyone take the proposals about the new era seriously? That is readily tested.

Take the cases you mention: “massive damage to the environment,” “mass marketing of narcotic drugs,” threats to “the health of millions.” These are very serious problems today. Should “responsible statesmen” therefore act to overcome them, disregarding sovereignty (hence presumably by force)? That should not be difficult. The US air force is capable of bombing Washington, which would only be appropriate under the principles proposed, since the US is a major actor in each case mentioned.

The US is the world’s major polluter. It is not only the leading consumer of narcotics but also a major producer (particularly, of “high tech” narcotics) and a major marketer: perhaps about half of the profits from narcotrafficking flow through US banks, and early efforts to stem these crimes were blocked by George Bush, in his capacity as “Drug Czar” of the Reagan Administration.

The threat to “the health of millions” is even more clear. In Africa, for example, it is expected that there will soon be tens of millions of orphans because of death from AIDS. Tuberculosis is now one of the world’s leading killers. Malaria takes an enormous toll. The Security Council is scheduled to have its first meeting on these matters in a few days, January 10. We will therefore be able to evaluate the commitment to the principles that are allegedly to guide the “new era.” These atrocities can be significantly reduced by simple means, for example, by introducing free market conditions. Until now, that has been blocked by the extreme protectionism that the great powers, primarily the US, have introduced into the ludicrously-named “free trade agreements”: the extremely onerous patent regime, which of course the rich

societies never considered accepting until they reached their current pinnacles of power and wealth.

In the case of pharmaceuticals (as throughout most of the economy), Western protectionism is based on the principle that the public should pay a large share of the costs of research and development (R&D), and when some useful product results, it should be handed as a public gift to pharmaceutical giants, who are then protected from market competition by the sanctity of “intellectual property rights”; in the current scheme, including product patents that not only protect the publicly-subsidized corporate giants from market discipline but also deter innovation and technological progress, so that the protected firms can gain enormous profits. And of course, elementary market conditions entail the 90-10 rule, as it is called in the public health profession: 90% of R&D is devoted to threats to the health of 10% of the population – in the real world, the 10% represented by the self-defined “responsible statesmen”.

Let us turn to the next example, nuclear threats, surely severe, perhaps the main threat to survival of the species. There are, on the record, evaluations of these threats, for example, by the former Commander-in-Chief of the US Strategic Command, General Lee Butler, who spent his professional career on these matters. He regards it as “dangerous in the extreme that in the cauldron of animosities that we call the Middle East, one nation has armed itself, ostensibly, with stockpiles of nuclear weapons, perhaps numbering in the hundreds, and that inspires other nations to do so.” That seems a reasonable judgement. Strategic analysts in Israel have recently claimed, rightly or wrongly, that the major stumbling-block in the current Israel-Syria negotiations is Israel’s unwillingness to permit international inspection of its Dimona nuclear plant; it can refuse with impunity thanks to US support. How should “responsible statesmen” react to this threat? By bombing Dimona or Tel Aviv; or Washington, which provides the shield and support? By sanctions? By a faint word of criticism?

Proceeding, how should responsible statesmen, and responsible intellectuals in the West, respond to the threat posed by the one and only global superpower? As they know, or can easily discover, it is committed to first strike, including pre-emptive nuclear strike, even against non-nuclear countries that have signed the non-proliferation agreement, not to speak of the rest of the “nuclear posture” outlined by Clinton’s Strategic Command, which should be common knowledge in countries that value their freedom.

These are serious questions. There are many like them. When they reach the agenda, we will

know that the fine words are intended seriously.’

Our second question was about East Timor. In the past Noam Chomsky has written regularly on the question, continually pointing to the United States’ involvement in the Indonesian terror directed against the island. It is therefore unsurprising that he reacted with ill-concealed anger to our next question:

Minister Van Aartsen in his speech at the United Nations referred to the UN’s actions in East Timor as a hopeful example of the direction in which the UN should be developing when it comes to humanitarian interventions. How do you see the UN intervention in east Timor?

Chomsky: It is a familiar observation that the way in which questions are posed shapes the kinds of answers that can be given, often in quite misleading ways. I believe this is a case in point. The framework in which the question is formulated seems to me so misleading as to preclude a sensible consideration of the issues.

The alleged “humanitarian intervention” was in a territory under military occupation by an aggressor that had been ordered to withdraw forthwith by the Security Council, in December 1975. There was no issue of “sovereignty.” Indonesia’s “sovereign rights” were essentially those of Nazi Germany in occupied Europe. Its sole claim to sovereignty is that its aggression was ratified by the great powers, in violation of their formal stand at the United Nations, which in the case of the U.S., was a complete farce, as explained frankly by UN Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan in his memoirs 20 years ago.

Accordingly, if we are to be serious, there was no “intervention” (a fortiori, “humanitarian intervention”) in the Portuguese-administered territory, which should have been under effective UN jurisdiction in the first place. For 23 years, the US and its allies participated actively in expediting Indonesia’s aggression and the enormous crimes that followed: the generally-accepted toll is now about 200,000 deaths, almost a third of the population. At least as recently as 1998, the Clinton administration – in violation of congressional restrictions – was sending arms to Indonesia and training Indonesian army forces (ABRI, now TNI), particularly the elite Kopassus commandos, notorious for their brutality. By January of 1999, paramilitaries organized by Kopassus and other TNI units sent to East Timor were instituting a renewed reign of terror. Terror increased through the year, including such atrocities as the massacre of dozens of people who had fled for refuge to a church in Liquica. The UN tried to

send monitors in preparation for the scheduled referendum of August 30. Clinton delayed authorization, and the few hundred who were finally sent were unarmed. Washington's stand was that Indonesia was in charge. In the official wording, "It's their responsibility, we don't want to take it away from them." Of course, the US knew full well that TNI was implementing the atrocities; intelligence leaks from Australia make that more than amply clear, as do the reports of the UN observer mission and other sources.

On August 6, the East Timorese Church, which has been a reliable source of information for many years, estimated killings in the preceding months at 3-5000; for comparison, that is about twice the killings on all sides in Kosovo prior to the NATO bombings, four times the number relative to population (which means comparable to the deaths in Kosovo under NATO bombing). A few weeks later the US army and TNI carried out a joint "training exercise focused on humanitarian and disaster relief activities," the Pentagon reported. The lessons were put to use a few days later, when TNI-paramilitary atrocities escalated to new heights, destroying much of the country and driving most of its population to the hills or to concentration camps in Indonesian territory.

The US continued to support TNI, as did the British; as late as Sept. 20 British jets were being sent to Indonesia. In mid-September, under sharply mounting domestic and international (mainly Australian) criticism, Clinton finally signalled to the Indonesian generals that the game was over. Very quickly, they announced their withdrawal, an illustration of the latent power that had always been in reserve. At that point the Security Council authorized an Australian-led peacekeeping force. The US and Britain, which had primary responsibility for the massive atrocities of the years (to be sure, shared with France and other powers), refuse to lift a finger. There were no airdrops of food to hundreds of thousands of refugees starving in the mountains, and nothing more than a few rebukes to the generals controlling the concentration camps. They are offering no significant reconstruction aid, let alone the huge reparations that would be called for if minimal decency were to be even conceivable. Presumably, they do not want to prejudice their relations with the Indonesian military, which retains enormous power in a country that has been a "paradise for investors" ever since the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people, mostly landless peasants, in 1965, greeted with unrestrained euphoria in the West.

It is common to condemn the UN for the gruesome record; one of the functions of the UN for Western propaganda is to provide a way to deflect attention to Western crimes, by blaming the

UN. In reality, the UN can act only within limits permitted by the great powers, and as Ambassador Moynihan explained 20 years ago, “The United States wished things to turn out as they did, and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success” – knowing full well the human costs of the “success,” as he also made clear. Once again, in societies that valued their freedom, these words would be taught in every school – among many others like them.

The conditions Moynihan described persisted until mid-September 1999. To terminate the aggression and atrocities, it would not have been necessary to bomb Jakarta or impose sanctions; or even, very likely, to send a UN peacekeeping force. As in the case of ethnic cleansing within NATO in the mid-1990s, it would have sufficed for the US and its allies to have withdrawn their active participation and support, and to send the Indonesian military the message that Clinton finally became willing to accept, under enormous pressure, after the final paroxysm of terror.

Returning to your question, we can hardly look at this shameful record as indicating a “direction in which the UN should evolve when it comes to ‘humanitarian interventions’.” Rather, we should face up honestly to what we have done, and devote ourselves to an effort to compensate the victims for our enormous crimes. To recast them as proof of our remarkable humanism and dedication to human rights is beyond the describable heights of cynicism.’

To close we asked Noam Chomsky what he found to be the greatest dangers of the present tendency to see so-called humanitarian interventions as a solution to all the world’s problems?

Chomsky: ‘Again, the question is wrongly put, begging the basic questions. Has there been a “tendency to emphasize the desirability of the so-called humanitarian interventions”? No more so than in the past. After all, even Mussolini and Hitler justified their actions with impressive humanitarian rhetoric – taken quite seriously in the West, incidentally. In 1937 the State Department effusively praised Mussolini’s “magnificent” and “superlative... achievements” in Ethiopia, while depicting Hitler as a moderate standing between the extremes of left and right. A century ago the Concert of Europe basked in self-adulation as it set forth again on its task of civilizing the world through “humanitarian intervention,” with consequences that we can inspect. It is necessary to demonstrate – not proclaim – that today’s

calls for “humanitarian interventions” are of a different character. That requires investigation of the facts, as in the case of East Timor that was just too briefly reviewed. When we inspect the record, I think we find little basis for these self-serving pretensions; rather, we see variations on ancient themes.

As for “the desirability of humanitarian intervention,” one is tempted to borrow a comment attributed to Gandhi when asked what he thought about Western civilization: “it might be a good idea,” he is said to have responded. If the issue of humanitarian intervention arises in a serious way, which has not yet happened, we will then have to consider some of the more obvious questions, for example, those raised by the International Court of Justice when it considered the matter 50 years ago. The Court concluded that it “can only regard the alleged right of intervention as the manifestation of a policy of force, such as has, in the past, given rise to most serious abuses and... from the nature of things,...would be reserved for the most powerful states, and might easily lead to perverting the administration of justice itself.” Have matters changed in that regard? If so, let us see the evidence.

Perhaps it is worth restating the fact that these truisms – which is what they are – do not answer the question of what should be done in particular cases. These must be considered in their own terms, with their own historical particularities. A heavy burden of proof rests on those who advocate the resort to violence. Perhaps the resort to force is advisable, but one needs serious argument, not mere rehearsal of traditional exercises in self-adulation.

Part II : Conclusions

Hangover on the morning after Kosovo

'There is nothing that war has ever achieved that we could not better achieve without it.' –
Henry Ellis, British writer, 1859-1939, Selected Works

Some time in the near future the International Court of Justice in the Hague will pronounce judgement in the case brought by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia regarding the legality of Operation Allied Force (see also Part 1, Chapter 7). Without doubt questions will be raised which have already arisen elsewhere in this book. Were the NATO actions proportionate? Were no other methods than massive and persistent bombing possible? Was it really necessary to bomb factories, power stations, bridges, TV studios and other civilian targets? Was this carried out in conformity with laws of warfare? Was everything possible done to avoid civilian casualties? Why were times chosen for the bombing when it was known for certain that there would be people in the target buildings and on the target bridges? Is the term collateral damage always used correctly and was as much as possible done to prevent such damage? Why were cluster bombs employed, in the knowledge that these bombs would continue to create casualties months after the war?

The question of whether an alternative to bombing existed is important. In other words, was enough in reality done before the start of the war on the diplomatic and political front, as has repeatedly been asserted?

Before this last question can be answered it is of the utmost importance to have a good understanding of the prehistory of the Kosovo war. The interviews in the foregoing chapters have already made clear that a great number of misconceptions, oversimplifications and myths are in the air regarding this history. For this reason we shall now, on the basis of what we were told by the diversity of people whom we interviewed, attempt to reconstruct just what happened before our most recent war, enabling us to answer the question as to whether Operation Allied Force can now be counted a success, or not.

Many people begin this history leading up to the Kosovo war with the Battle of the Blackbird's Field in 1389. Yet as historian Raymond Detrez explained in Chapter 2 of Part 1 of this book, this famous battle had in fact little to do with the conflict – it was dragged into it much later by, amongst others, Slobodan Milosevic, for entirely opportunistic reasons. As for

Milosevic's historical awareness, we don't think much of it at all.

It seems to us to make more sense to go back to 1974, the year in which, under the leadership of Marshall Tito, Yugoslavia adopted a new constitution which extended to Kosovo, which formed part of Serbia, almost the same rights as one of the official republics of the Yugoslav Federation, such as Slovenia or Croatia. The reason for this autonomous status was a desire to rein in the power of what was, in both surface area and population, the biggest such republic, Serbia. As the Albanians formed a great majority within Kosovo, Albanian became the principal language, Albanian schools and universities were established, as well as an autonomous Albanian-language press. In addition, links with Albania were strengthened. Serbs living in Kosovo – including families who had been there for generations – felt themselves increasingly isolated by this process and forced into a corner.

After Tito's death in 1980 ever more centrifugal forces were released throughout Yugoslavia, as was explained by Kees van der Pijl in Chapter 3 of Part 1. In Kosovo, just as in other parts of Yugoslavia, nationalism grew rapidly. Calls for accession to Albania became ever louder. Though the police came down hard on demonstrators, this could not stop the outflow of Serbs from getting under way. In reaction to this, Milosevic, at the time Serbian President, decided in 1989 to rescind Kosovo's autonomy. And things didn't stop there. Many Albanians were sacked from state-owned enterprises and replaced by Serbs, once more adding fuel to the fire of the Albanians' nationalistic feelings. In 1990 the Albanians openly turned their backs on the official administration and called for independence. They held their own elections and set up a parallel society with its own schools and its own medical services. By halfway through the 1990s confrontations with the Yugoslav army were growing in both frequency and intensity. The UCK, the Albanians' liberation army, was attracting more and more support, and the violent struggle for independence and accession to Albania began to take shape. As Rob de Wijk, from the Clingendael institute, pointed out in Chapter 5 of Part 1, the growing success of violence directed against Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia played an important role in this.

Just as in Bosnia and Croatia, intensification of the violence led eventually to international intervention. As a reaction to the UCK's growing activities, the Serbian authorities in Kosovo began a round up of the separatists, resulting in numerous deaths and driving sections of the population from their homes. This prompted the Security Council to adopt Resolution 1199, demanding an end to hostilities. On 13th October of the same year, in the wake of the resolution, an agreement was signed between President Milosevic and the American emissary

to the Balkans, Richard Holbrooke. The agreement included the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from Kosovo, the establishment of peace negotiations, acceptance of the stationing of 2000 observers from the OSCE, and permission for unarmed surveillance flights over Kosovo. In neighbouring Macedonia a 2,300-strong military force, the so-called Extraction Force, was encamped in case the observers should find themselves in danger. In addition, on 13th October the North Atlantic Council (for which read the NATO leadership) issued its so-called Activation Order (Actord), Operation Determined Force. The Yugoslav army then withdrew, as agreed in the Belgrade accord outlined above, but no peace negotiations were set in motion. Worse still, the UCK had meanwhile continued its guerrilla activities, and Serb civilians were thus also made victims.

It can't do any harm here to recall that Foreign Minister Jozias Van Aartsen confirmed these developments at the time in letters to parliament. On 5th November 1998 he wrote: 'The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has in large part complied with the demand regarding the withdrawal of units and their heavy weaponry to the positions held prior to March of this year. In a number of instances the UCK has taken over these positions. Persistent fears exist regarding the fragility of the cease-fire, particularly as a consequence of provocations by the UCK. For the time being the FRY units are in general reacting with restraint.' And in a letter dated 10th November he wrote: 'At the same time despite the declaration by UCK leader Demaci, the position of the UCK as to whether it will hold to the unilaterally declared cease-fire remains a worrying point. The cease-fire has, it's true, been largely respected, but remains nevertheless vulnerable as a result of provocations by the UCK and reactions from the Serbian side. The positions of the withdrawn FRY units are for the most part being taken over by the UCK.'

Because the violence on the part of the UCK continues, including that directed at civilians, and yet Kosovo remains within Serbia, Milosevic has decided to send his security forces back into Kosovo, more determined than ever to stamp eradicate the UCK root and branch. Subsequent fighting cost many lives, and tens of thousands of people were put to flight. On 15th January 999 Yugoslav security forces took the small town of Racak. A day later the bodies were found of forty-five people who had been shot dead. These shootings, the perpetrators of which have never been identified, made a huge impression on the world. The leader of the OSCE observers in Kosovo, the American William Walker, took less than a day to draw the conclusion that those responsible must have been from the Serb side. His assumption was

entirely contrary to the opinion of French TV journalists who were present when the Serbs took Racak and said afterwards that the corpses were not yet there when the Serbs pulled out of Racak. The government in Belgrade was furious with Walker's overhasty conclusion and demanded his removal. They refused, moreover, to allow Louise Arbour, the Yugoslavia Tribunal's chief prosecutor, to cross the border from Macedonia into Kosovo.

There is a striking similarity between the murder of the civilians in Racak, and the attack a few years earlier on the market in Sarajevo. Each offered a major opportunity for a military intervention by NATO. The horrific bomb attack in Sarajevo, in which on 28th August 1995 thirty-five people died, was at the time the signal for NATO to intervene actively in the conflict in Bosnia and begin bombing the Serbian installations around Sarajevo. As we have seen, this decision was, for NATO and many politicians the beginning of the end of the war – a view challenged by a large number of experts, including Rob de Wijk and Sir Michael Rose. De Wijk and Rose are both of the opinion that it is possible indeed that the attack on the market in Sarajevo was in reality committed by Muslim forces seeking by this means to put NATO under pressure to take action. Sir Michael Rose: 'It's certainly possible that someone other than the Serbs did it. I don't, of course, know that for sure, but at the time I did indeed have evidence which pointed to it. In order to determine the direction from which it was fired you need at least four impacts. Only one bomb fell on the market. So in this case it's absolutely impossible to specify with certainty from which direction it came.' The positive assertion by our own Ministry of Defence that the bomb was certainly of Serbian origin he considers to be 'propaganda'.

And Rob de Wijk is still more definite. 'I have been with representatives of the OSCE and of NATO in Sarajevo, and they all said that it could only have been the Muslims.' On the killings in Racak he has the following to say: 'The UCK does not shrink from sacrificing its own people for the cause. I've spent enough time with them, have seen enough, spoken with enough people, studied enough cases, to know that that would be an ordinary occurrence. It mustn't take too extensive a form, but a few dozen people isn't so bad. That's how these people reason.'

Neither forensic experts flown in specially from Finland, nor other experts from the United Nations, from NATO or the OSCE could later give a definite answer to the question of who the perpetrators of the shootings at Racak had been. And because the definitive, all-inclusive report by the Finnish experts was never made public (a fact which in itself gives pause for

serious thought) this question will probably never be answered.

In the meantime the interpretation by the leader of the OSCE mission, William Walker, became generally accepted. And just as after the attack on the market in Sarajevo, a reaction from the Western powers was not long in coming. On 31st January NATO Secretary General Javier Solana was given full powers to take action against Yugoslavia. That it was then nevertheless almost two months before any intervention actually occurred was undoubtedly connected to the fact that the problems for NATO surrounding this new crisis were not small. Not every country, for example, was enthusiastic about military intervention. There existed moreover doubts over the strategy to be followed, and uncertainty over the role of the UCK.

That was the original reason why it was decided to increase the pressure on Milosevic by calling a conference in the Chateau of Rambouillet, just outside Paris. Under the leadership of the so-called Contact Group, created at the time of the war in Bosnia and consisting of representatives of the major powers, discussions were held at the Chateau from 3rd to the 23rd of February in an attempt to find an answer to the question of Kosovo. What was remarkable was that the parties to the conflict did not speak directly to each other, but only with the Contact Group negotiators, representatives of the United Kingdom (Robin Cook) and France (Hubert Védrine). Nonetheless, the first communiqués were positive, though by 23rd of February things seemed to have reached an impasse. On the one hand was Milosevic's refusal to allow NATO troops on to Yugoslav territory, and on the other the demand by the Albanian Kosovars for independence from Yugoslavia. The talks were therefore adjourned until 15th March. Both parties were told 'we have written an agreement and for you it's now a straight yes or no. On the 15th you can either sign or not sign.'

It is also quite remarkable that the details of this proposed agreement remain secret, even for example from members of parliament in the NATO countries. In the meantime the United States was talking ever more openly about a military intervention and pulling out all the diplomatic stops to ensure that the whole of NATO would adopt a single line, falling in behind the US. A great deal of pressure was put on the UCK representatives. It was made clear to them that NATO could do nothing if they continued to refuse to sign the accord. The Kosovo Albanians then managed to have included in the accord a clause specifying that within three years a referendum would be held in which the people of Kosovo could pronounce judgement on the future constitutional status of the region. This specification, and the pressure from in particular the United States, would lead in the end to the Kosovo Albanians' signing and thus

assuring themselves NATO support. This would turn out to be, from the perspective of the UCK, an inspired move: NATO would do their dirty work and independence would in time be unavoidable, something which NATO and the UN had both repeatedly stated that they decidedly did not want.

As is well known, the Yugoslav government did not sign the Rambouillet agreement. Although they were prepared to agree to the whole of the political section of the accord, which offered Kosovo autonomy, elections under international supervision, self-administration of the judicial system, the police, taxation, health care, education, culture, and yes, even the establishment of a free market economy, they refused to go along with the proposal for a referendum within three years. Moreover, they continued to express insurmountable objections to the role which NATO assigned to itself in the agreement. NATO would (as emerged when the military annexes of the accord were made public) receive extremely far-reaching powers, not only in Kosovo but in the whole of Yugoslavia. So, for instance, in Annex B, Article 6, it is stated that NATO would have immunity from all legal procedures; in Article 8. that NATO must be given free, unconditional passage throughout the whole territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in the air, on water and on land; and in Article 10, that the Yugoslav authorities must cooperate in all of this. The reality was that Yugoslavia must, therefore, give up its sovereignty.

Leon Wecke, a 'polemologist' – an expert on war – at the Instituut voor Vredesvraagstukken (Institute for Peace Problems) in Nijmegen, has said of this that it 'is a statute of occupation and would be acceptable to noone.' Professor Paul de Waart described it to us as 'a worgcontract'. Yugoslavia was joined by Russia, a member of the Contact Group, in rejecting NATO's demands. The Yugoslav government offered to continue to negotiate over the accord, but as it turned out, for the United States and NATO the limit had been reached. The OSCE observers in Kosovo were withdrawn and the NATO countries' embassies in Belgrade closed. The eyes and ears of the international community would in the first months no longer see or hear what was happening in Kosovo. On 22nd March Holbrooke did go to Belgrade, but nobody by then really still believed in the possibility of a peaceful solution.

On 24th March 1999, at around 7 p.m. local time, the bombing began. Because the NATO countries knew that the Security Council, as a result of Russian unease over the way things had unfolded at Rambouillet, would never give its approval for the action, no attempt was made to solicit the support of the United Nations. In the chapters that follow we will go into

the consequences of all of this for the new world order in some depth. But just as important as the question of the legitimacy of Operation Allied Force is the question of whether or not it was effective.

What can be stated for certain is that the months of threatened violence had put NATO's credibility at stake. As a result, and because for whatever reason there was no will to continue negotiations at Rambouillet, NATO had put itself under pressure. Something had to be done, but with what goal? As we saw in Chapter 1, the official interpretation insisted that the aim was the prevention of a humanitarian disaster in Kosovo and the exertion of pressure on Milosevic to agree even now to the conditions for a political solution laid down in Rambouillet.

Criticism of the NATO action concerned from the very beginning not only its lawfulness but also its efficacy. Two assumptions underlay NATO's chosen strategy, both of which turned out to be invalid. The first was that Milosevic would pay attention to violence alone. And the second was that he was so determined to stay in power that he would pay quick and close attention to such violence. NATO's estimation (and that of virtually the whole Dutch political caste) was that the deployment of a few bombs and rockets over a period of a few days would be enough to bring the Yugoslav government to its knees. As it turned out, nothing could have been further from the truth. Worse still, NATO provoked precisely what it said it wished to prevent: a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. When two elephants fight, the grass gets trampled underfoot. From the moment that the first bombs rained down on Serbia, the exodus from Kosovo really got under way. People fled en masse before the violence of a Yugoslav army and of paramilitaries intent on revenge for the alliance between NATO and the UCK, as well as from the NATO air-raids. Hundreds of thousands of people sought a safe haven in the neighbouring countries of Macedonia and Albania, and the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro. Remarkably enough, no relief, no emergency measures, awaited these refugees. Had NATO not taken into account this stream of fleeing people because they believed that Milosevic would immediately back down? Or had NATO indeed taken this into account, but did not accept that it was the job of its member states to do anything for the refugees? It remains a curiosity that millions were spent on an air war while at the same time the fact that wars create refugees was 'forgotten'. It was several weeks before there was even any talk of provisional relief.

During these first few weeks of the war nothing whatsoever happened on the political and

diplomatic front. Meanwhile NATO dropped its bombs and fired off its rockets, at first selecting military targets and then, ever more often, civilian targets; the Yugoslav army continued its campaign, sparing nothing and no-one, against the UCK and all who had any connection to it, while for its part the UCK pursued its guerrilla war, at first with the courage of the desperate, but gradually with more confidence and more success. Not until 6th May did Russia and NATO come face to face, at a conference of the G8. There an agreement in principle was reached over a UN-led military force for Kosovo. But a cease-fire only came into view when both parties to the conflict began to run into problems. On the one side was Milosevic's awareness that he was jeopardising Russia's support, and that moreover he was running the risk that if his country was further reduced to ruins, the mass support of the Serbian population, which thanks to the NATO bombings had fallen into his lap, would also be called into question. On the other side, NATO was beginning to face the problem that it had run out of targets to bomb (and also had ever fewer 'smart bombs' with which to do it), while at the same time some NATO member states, including the Netherlands, had decided that they did not want to send ground troops. Furthermore, another humanitarian disaster had appeared on the horizon: if the hundreds of thousands of refugees were unable to return to their homes in Kosovo before the winter, many would without doubt die from hunger and cold. It would then become extremely difficult to continue to speak in terms of a 'humanitarian mission'.

There was, in other words, a stalemate which offered neither party any option but to seek a diplomatic solution – just as Rob de Wijk states in his theoretical treatise on how wars end. After thousands had died, millions of dollars had been spent on bombs and rockets, and many more million dollars' worth of property had been destroyed or damaged, the Russian emissary Viktor Tsjernomyrdin and former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari finally made some progress at diplomatic level. On 1st June, at the Petersberg Hotel, the official guest-house of the Federal Republic in Bonn, they reached agreement on a new proposal with US deputy foreign secretary Strobe Talbott. The following day they presented this proposal to Milosevic, who agreed, as did the Serbian parliament a day later. It would be another week before the warring parties finally agreed on the detailed application of the accord, which would involve the withdrawal of military units and the stationing of KFOR, the peacekeeping force operating under a UN flag. On the 10th June the bombing of Yugoslavia was ended, the Security Council adopted a resolution which took the form of a mandate for KFOR, and the war was officially over. In the days which followed long columns of KFOR troops marched into Kosovo with

hundreds of thousands of relieved refugees in their wake.

But had NATO won the war?

In NRC Handelsblad – the Dutch equivalent of the Financial Times or the Wall Street Journal – of 12th June, 1999, Robert van de Roer, in a comprehensive reconstruction of the days immediately before the finalisation of the accord, described how the meeting with Milosevic on 2nd June had gone. According to the NRC correspondent, it had lasted four-and-a-half hours, The Finnish negotiator Ahtisaari informed Milosevic that he was not empowered to negotiate: it was a case of take it or leave it. According to the report Milosevic was calm and collected. He asked a few questions, such as ‘Would the UN rather than NATO represent the authority in Kosovo?’ Yes, said Ahtisaari, but NATO would have operational leadership. ‘Is the Rambouillet accord still valid?’ Milosevic wanted to know. Ahtisaari said that it had been replaced by the peace plan. In contrast with Rambouillet this plan gave NATO no freedom of movement within the rest of Yugoslavia, but only in Kosovo. Neither did it offer the Kosovars a referendum on independence after three years of autonomy, as had been agreed at Rambouillet. At this Milosevic relaxed and leaned back on his chair with a contented laugh.

What does all of this say about the efficacy of the NATO bombing? A humanitarian disaster was not prevented, but rather hastened and greatly enhanced. The political agreement has been achieved, but the question is to what extent this accord departs from the proposals which the Yugoslav government put on the table at Rambouillet II, and which were at that time described by NATO as unacceptable. The most important stumbling blocks for the Serbs – the referendum and the presence of NATO troops – had both disappeared from the new agreement. It would not be NATO but the UN which would be in charge in Kosovo, while the mandate for the presence of troops would apply only to Kosovo rather than to the whole territory of Yugoslavia.

And let’s just take a look at what the NATO actions achieved beyond this. How is the situation now in Kosovo? The Serbs, the Roma and other minorities have fled en masse or become the victims of UCK violence. It is no exaggeration to say that both political and social life are dominated by the UCK and persons and organisations allied to it. Meanwhile the UCK remains undiminished in its support for the secession of Kosovo from Yugoslavia and its accession to Albania. The political future of Kosovo therefore remains uncertain. In fact the area is now a sort of UN protectorate. The international community has invested millions of

dollars in the reconstruction of this stricken country, but what should the UN do when the rebuilding is complete and the UCK labels KFOR an occupying force and demands its withdrawal? Belgrade has no longer any say over Kosovo. How can the Yugoslav government's authority in Kosovo ever be restored, another worthy goal of the western powers?

The escalation of violence, to which the NATO bombings had made an important contribution, had further strengthened the mutual feelings of hatred between Serb and Albanian. Moderate forces on both sides go in fear of their lives as such nuances are no longer accepted. And wherever in Kosovo there continues to be any possibility of mixed communities, things can burst into flames at any time, as happened in the first week of February 2000, when Serbian and Albanian inhabitants of the provincial Kosovar town of Mitrovica fell upon each other with whatever weaponry was left over from the war, with deaths resulting on both sides. The KFOR troops present in the area could do little in the chaos which broke out in the hours of night, and were moreover themselves treated as targets by both sides. Nationalism and ethnically-based feelings of superiority – which have gripped so many in the Balkans in such a time – are all that gained strength from this struggle. In such circumstances the UN's striving for a multi-ethnic Kosovo in the first decade of the twenty-first century has become an unreachable goal. And it is unrealistic and even dangerous to pursue goals which are beyond achievement – the recent history of the Balkans has demonstrated that indisputably. All of the involved parties, with the exception of the UCK, have consistently maintained the standpoint that accession of Kosovo to Albania would be undesirable, leading as it would to similar ambitions amongst the Albanian minorities in Montenegro and Macedonia. It would, moreover, be difficult to defend allowing the Kosovo Albanians what had been denied to, for example, the Serbs in the Bosnian Serb enclave of Srpska, namely accession to the country of their own choice.

A last, but most certainly not officially proclaimed goal of the NATO actions was to deepen the isolation of Milosevic and his government. The thing is, however, that he was already completely isolated on the international level, while in his own country he lorded it over an irreparably divided opposition. Milosevic appeared to emerge from the fight anything but weakened, and now he could say, time after time, with the help of media which he dominated, that he and his people had been the victims of an international conspiracy hatched by NATO. Already, the leaders of the opposition had repeatedly made clear that the bombing had not

helped but on the contrary, weakened them, and that Operation Allied Force could not possibly be described as effective.

One of the people who came out with the most thoroughgoing war rhetoric during the Kosovo crisis was without doubt the man who succeeded the Spaniard Javier Solana as Secretary General of NATO, former British Defence Minister George Robertson. In an interview in NRC Handelsblad on 13th November 1999, he said: ‘We have at last demolished his military machine, and that was our goal.’ Strangely enough, no one was ever informed of this by NATO before that. If this had happened – and in an alliance of self-proclaimed democratic countries it should of course have happened – then immediately the question would have been ‘how much human suffering are you prepared to tolerate in order to reach your goal?’

And the question which Robertson’s statement poses now is this: does he himself really believe that Milosevic’s military machine (by which he meant, of course, the army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which Milosevic is president) – does the new Secretary General of NATO really believe that this army was destroyed by allied forces? Anyone who remembers the pictures of Serbian troops marching out of Kosovo will scarcely find this credible, when so many tanks rolled through the streets of Pristina and so much undaunted belligerence remained in evidence. As Clifford Beal, editor-in-chief of *Jane’s Defence Weekly* remarked earlier in this book, when it comes to Serb losses, there is every reason seriously to doubt NATO’s figures. Which means that even this sole, extremely limited, scarcely humanitarian goal, which was never mentioned prior to the air campaign, appears not to have been achieved. The former general Sir Michael Rose’s claim that there is a great deal of discontent within NATO over Operation Allied Force, seems to us then also rather more probably true than that Secretary General Robertson really believes what he says.

Exercise in discretion

'Too many moralists begin with a dislike of reality, a dislike of men as they are.' – **Clarence Day**

On 25th April 1999, fifty years after NATO was established to provide a shield against the Red Menace, its member states gathered in Washington DC to add their signatures to a new strategic concept for the alliance. Rob de Wijk has in the past had direct experience of NATO's decision-making and policy formation, so we asked him precisely when the Dutch government had had the opportunity to participate in the drawing up of this important document.

De Wijk: 'You shouldn't expect too much there. I myself worked on the 1990 draft and the preparations for the 1999 draft, but that was completed in its entirety by senior officials. The minister was only informed at a very late stage. There was, it's true, some political direction, but this came primarily indirectly from the NATO ambassadors under instruction from their capitals. The eventual text is a compromise document 80 to 90 percent of which was fully negotiated by civil servants. After that, during that kind of summit there remains a bit of tinkering to be done by the government leaders who will adjust a clause here and there. But grosso modo it's the work of civil servants, formally laying down what in practice has already been happening for a long time. Because with NATO, theory always trails behind practice.'

What exactly is new about NATO's new strategic plan? One of the most important changes in comparison to the past is undoubtedly the fact that the alliance will henceforth reserve the right to intervene wherever a perceived threat exists, or where the security of the Euro-Atlantic region is seen to be affected.

Furthermore, to the list of NATO's core tasks has been added, in part due to the efforts of the Dutch ambassador, the performance of 'crisis management operations' – both peace keeping and peace enforcing operations. In the new strategic plan it is further stated that intervention outside of NATO member states' territory should 'preferably' happen with a mandate from the Security Council. When on 21st April 1999 the Dutch parliament had an exchange of views over the plan, which was then being elaborated by NATO, SP Member of Parliament Harry van Bommel presented a motion demanding that the government make efforts to have the words 'for preference' replaced by 'by definition'. But this motion won no support outside of

our own at the time five-strong group of MPs. It was the last time that Parliament's lower house would concern itself with the matter, as the government is under no obligation to bring a NATO plan of this kind before Parliament for ratification.

With the adoption of the new strategic plan, NATO ceased definitively to be a defence organisation and became instead a military power-bloc permitting itself to act outside the territory of its member states in pursuit of its own economic or political interests. Or as the supporters of this new strategy would rather it were put, in pursuit of the enforcement of human rights, of the international world order, of peace. There is therefore a sizeable chance that in the framework of 'crisis management operations there will follow many more Kosovos.

In the letter to Parliament in which a report is given of the NATO summit in Washington, the Minister of Foreign Affairs puts it like this:

'The political, military and humanitarian approach to the Kosovo crisis were strongly supported, in the realization that these constituted the clearest manifestation of the policy that NATO has set out in the Strategic Concept for the coming period.'

It is, to put it mildly, remarkable that NATO has elevated its approach to the Kosovo crisis into its strategic concept for the future, given the approach's lack of effectiveness of this approach when measured against its self-formulated goals, a matter we looked at in the previous chapter. And the negative experience in Kosovo did not come out of nowhere. It seems as far as this goes that the international community systematically overestimates, in any case, the possibility of successful 'humanitarian' intervention. Rob de Wijk and others have elsewhere in this book already spoken many heartfelt words over this. Neither the United Nations nor any country or alliance can point to a single genuinely successful operation in the framework of humanitarian interventions. At best it appears possible to arrive at a freezing of the status quo, as with the UN in Cyprus (UNFICYP, present there since 1964), on the Golan Heights (UNDOF, present since 1974), in South Lebanon (UNIFIL, present since 1978) and in Bosnia (UNMIBH, present since 1995). In itself there is nothing wrong with this, except in cases where this freeze stands in the way of a definitive solution, which is the case in almost all of the above-cited instances.

This really becomes serious, however, when unchallengeable opinion – and this seems increasingly to be the case – asserts that countries, in alliance or singly, are capable through

means of massive violence of imposing peace on conflicting parties anywhere they care to. This is a dangerous kind of self-overestimation. It may therefore be that because NATO can drop bombs for weeks and weeks without having to incurring a single casualty, the temptation to think that it is in principle possible to impose one's will on whomever in the world, wherever in the world they may be. But the current situation in both Kosovo and Bosnia demonstrates that this is nevertheless, however, a misjudgement.

Military intervention is generally preceded by a diplomatic process, one based on the political analysis of the parties involved. Who all of these parties may be, each country or alliance of countries decides for itself on the basis of economic, political and ideological forces and interests. Interference in a conflict is therefore far from being inspired in all cases by the need to strive for peace and humanity – in fact it is for the most part not inspired by such considerations. The example of Western intervention in the crisis in the Balkans shows that it is easy to achieve the opposite of what was originally intended. An absence of any outside interference would very probably have been better than the halting interference from the EU, the UN and NATO which actually took place.

As we have seen, things were already going wrong when Germany, against the will of most other European countries, forced through the premature recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. Instead of tempering growing nationalism and separatism, it was decided to honour them. An all-embracing solution for the Balkans was no longer sought, but instead, at each new development, it was decided to try something new. If, in the knowledge that there were large ethnic minorities living in every republic, the argument had been presented for a confederal Yugoslavia in which there would be maximum freedom for the separate republics but also guarantees for the security of these minorities, then the volcano of ethnic discord might never have erupted. And in addition, if this confederation had turned out to be unachievable, and had Lord Carrington's proposed Yugoslavia 'à la carte' been attempted, the way in which things have run so horribly out of control, as has now occurred, could have been prevented. Because how things further developed in the Balkans is well-known. Europe, the United Nations and eventually also NATO became increasingly involved in the conflict and, in addition, with increasing frequency themselves parties to the whole thing. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van Mierlo did once speak about the danger of what he called 'hospitalisering'. Not really a Dutch word at all, and a rather annoying one in this context, its meaning was nevertheless clear: by becoming ever more emphatically mixed up in the

conflict, the EU and the UN were also with increasing frequency being held responsible for the failure of peace to materialise – including – or only – by the parties to the conflict who themselves continue unperturbed to secure their interests by violent means. Sir Michael Rose could, as we have read, confirm this.

Croats, Muslims, Slovenians, Macedonians, Montenegrans, Serbs, but also Turks, Jews and Roma have for centuries lived side by side in the Balkans. And notwithstanding a few conflicts, they have almost always done so in peace. The destruction of the old bridge in Mostar was for this reason extremely symbolic: during many centuries no-one had apparently felt the need to break the link between the different population groups in a violent manner. A very large part of the Yugoslav population consists, moreover, of people born from mixed marriages. The evil done in the Balkans was not shaped by the Serbs or the Muslims or by whatever population group, the evil in the Balkans was the evil of nationalism and of ethnically-based feelings of superiority consciously whipped up by irresponsible characters using the crudest of means. As these flames are fanned, escalation follows upon escalation, and will do so until a sound understanding is restored and prevails, and the idea that we all need each other wins out over mutual hatred. The possibility that the international community can force a solution in the midst of this process by means of violence and impose a pacification from without, as the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo proved, is non-existent. What happened instead was that the problems were exacerbated and prolonged.

Let us once again reconstruct the course of events in Bosnia. this time concentrating on interference by foreign powers.

On 14th October 1991, two weeks after the Bosnian parliament, in the absence of its Serbian members, declared itself in favour of independence (thereby following the examples of Croatia and Slovenia), the Carrington Plan came into being. Drawn up by British mediator Lord Carrington, whom we interviewed at some length in Chapter 4, the plan foresaw a division of Bosnia into three cantons, joined confederatively. It was endorsed by Croats, Serbs and Muslims. It was a moment in which a war in Bosnia appeared to have been prevented. But shortly afterwards the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, at the urging of the United States and European countries, reversed his standpoint. On further consideration he found (or rather the US and EU found) that a multi-ethnic Bosnia must be created. Instead, what they got was a war.

In August 1992 a renewed attempt was made to resolve the conflict through diplomatic means. The Vance-Owen plan foresaw a division of Bosnia into ten provinces: three for the Serbs, three for the Croats and three for the Muslims, with a multi-ethnic Sarajevo. Negotiations over this plan lasted until February 1993. On the 24th of that month Madeleine Albright, at the time the American representative at the UN, announced at a press conference that the United States saw no point in the proposal. 'This plan,' Albright said, 'comes down to the rewarding of aggression and the punishment of the victims.' And so the US voted in the Security Council against a French proposal to approve the Vance-Owen plan. The United States had 'other measures' in mind: the 'lift-and-strike' strategy, consisting of the lifting of the arms embargo for the Bosnian Muslims coupled with air strikes on the Bosnian Serbs. That this did not come about was because this strategy came up against insurmountable objections from the British who had, in contrast to the Americans, people in the field who could have become the direct victims of any full-blown war. In order nevertheless to do something for the ever growing numbers of civilians who were being driven from their homes, so-called safe havens were established in various places, about which we will soon have more to say. But peace, thanks to the American opposition to the Vance-Owen plan, did not return.

Next came the Owen-Stoltenberg plan. This plan looked very like the earlier Carrington plan rejected by the Muslims. It won the support of the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Serbs, but was rejected by the Bosnian Parliament in September 1993. The war intensified once more. Then, in March 1994, under American pressure, a federation of Bosnian Croats and Muslims was established, as a result of which the war became, formally, a conflict between two parties instead of three.

In that same year, 1994, the so-called Contact Group was established – consisting of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and the United States – in the hope that it might help bring an end to the contradictions in the approach of foreign powers to intervention in the conflict. The first proposal that the Contact group made was to divide Bosnia into two parts: one part, 51 percent of the surface area, would go to the federation of Muslims and Croats, while 49 percent went to the Bosnian Serbs. Because the Serbs, from the beginning of the war, had the military ascendancy, they held at the time this proposal was made, however, 70 percent of the land. They therefore refused to sign the deal, and once again the war dragged on – but behind the scenes a dramatic change was taking place.

In May of 1995 the Croats began – they had, as later emerged, been trained and armed by the Americans – a major offensive against the Bosnian Serbs in Western Slavonia, following it up in August with a still greater offensive in Krajina, by means of which 200,000 Serbs were driven out of the Croatian territory. Suddenly, the Serbs found themselves on the losing side. Almost four years after the beginning of the war, the situation was ripe for a solution which in 1991 had lain within hand's reach, but which, through the lack of understanding and the shortsightedness of the foreign powers (for which read the EU and the United States), was never realised. When Richard Holbrooke began his shuttle diplomacy in the autumn of 1995, this led at last, in October, to a cease-fire and to the Dayton talks in Ohio which started on 1st November. The Dayton accord that these talks produced divided Bosnia into two almost equal parts: the Republica Srpska and the Bosnian Federation, and differed only in details from what Lord Carrington had proposed four years earlier.

While this political-diplomatic process – greatly hindered by the many countries and organisations which found it necessary, as a result of their own interests and opinions, to interfere – unfolded, on the ground UNPROFOR, the UN peacekeeping, was active. With a mandate which was unclear, these soldiers (the so-called Blue Helmets), who came from many different countries, tried as far as possible to be of service to the population in general. As former UNPROFOR commander Sir Michael Rose made palpable earlier in this book, their work was rewarding in the sense that in the situation as they found it they were able to offer people help, but extremely unsatisfactory in the sense that they could not bring peace to the warring parties as long as these parties themselves did not want peace.

Of course, in this context, the 'Srebrenica' debacle must be mentioned. It would go beyond the scope of this book to go into this in any great depth, but because it concerns a national trauma, and because it demonstrates in a nutshell the limits of 'humanitarian intervention', we would like nevertheless to take a look at this most painful of Dutch peacekeeping operations.

On 4th February 2000 NRC Handelsblad carried the following announcement:

Survivors of Srebrenica are demanding that a number of (former) UN officials, as well as Dutch citizens Joris Voorhoeve (Minister of Defence at the time of the fall of Srebrenica) and Ton Karremans (commander of the Dutch UN troops in the enclave), be charged with genocide. A delegation of the survivors stated this this morning during an interview with Yugoslav Tribunal chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte.

With this began a new chapter of a book that, despite the Dutch government's best efforts, will simply not be closed.

On the morning of 11th July 1995 Bosnian Serb troops, under the leadership of General Mladic, attacked the village of Srebrenica, a so-called 'safe haven' established by the Security Council (on the basis of Resolution 819) for the benefit of fleeing Muslims. Dutch UN soldiers, operating under the name 'Dutchbat', had the responsibility for the safety of the people in the enclave, but in the face of the superior strength of General Mladic's Serb forces, they were powerless. The promised UN air support failed to materialise, and the inevitable happened: the enclave fell. Thousands of Muslim men of fighting age were separated from the rest of their family and led away. Almost without exception they were put to death, just as were many of the men who in the night before the fall of the enclave had slipped away but who later fell into Serb hands. At the moment when it was really needed, the UN could not offer what it had promised: a safe haven for the Muslims.

An important question which has still not been adequately answered is this: who knew that Srebrenica would be given up at the moment that the Bosnian Serbs were making preparations to catch the enclave napping? The UN does admit in its evaluation report, which appeared in 1999, to have frankly 'failed', but clarification on this matter is missing. Ignore the fact that those responsible were forced to abandon their responsibility. In our country it is, even five years after the event, not politically possible to question those responsible in a parliamentary inquest under oath.

During a meeting of Parliament's lower house a few months after the fall of Srebrenica, Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve announced that it had never been his intention truly to defend the enclave and that 'safe' – the English word always used to describe these 'havens' did not literally mean 'veilig' – the Dutch word which is, indeed, generally translated as 'safe' or 'secure'. He had already understood this when he was in Srebrenica just after he became minister. But did the members of Dutchbat and the Muslims driven into Srebrenica also know that? Apparently not. And if the minister indeed knew this, should he not have suggested to the Bosnian authorities that the enclave be cleared and the people there evacuated so that human lives could have been saved in advance? 'That's what we did,' was Voorhoeven's reaction when this question was put to him in Parliament. 'But they didn't want to do it.' If that is true – and it does accord with what Sir Michael Rose said about these events in Chapter 6 – then this would lay an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of the Bosnian leaders at

the time – though the question also remains as to the extent to which the Dutch Minister of Defence shares their guilt. Had he publicly sounded the alarm, the pressure on the Bosnian authorities could undoubtedly have been heightened.

Another question which must be put is this: how could it come to pass that the Netherlands ever allowed itself to be tempted to venture into this wasp's nest? To answer this we must go back to the days when Relus ter Beek was Minister of Defence. This was the time when our country was building up its Light-Mobile Brigade. And the time when almost daily pictures came to us of Muslims in flight from the Bosnian Serbs. And precisely at that moment the Canadian battalion that had Srebrenica under its protection wanted to return home. The Netherlands was the only country prepared to deliver troops to Srebrenica. Not one major country with influence within NATO and/or the UN believed that the enclave could be defended. But the moral outrage in our country over everything that was happening in Bosnia was so great that politicians and the media had lost sight of reality. Negative signals from NATO allies were not picked up, although we – if problems should arise – would certainly be dependent on these countries. Nobody knew then that the 'safe haven' concept was only dreamed up to conceal the fact that the Americans wanted out of the Vance-Owen plan.

On 7th September 1993, at the urging of Parliament's lower house, and under the leadership of the now late Labour Member Maarten van Traa and the Christian Democrat Thijs van Vlijmen, Ter Beek, against his better judgement, put Dutch troops at the disposal of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, at the time Secretary-General of the UN, for the purpose of defending Srebrenica. Lieutenant General H.A. Couzy, commander of land forces, put his thoughts about this decision into words in his memoirs as follows:

'In this way it was from the very start an impossible task: too few soldiers, who had once again their hands tied behind their backs. The Bosnian Serbs who had completely surrounded Srebrenica, had therefore a free run... As for the other assignment, the disarming of the Muslim fighters, from the start nothing much could be expected of this.'

In his book Couzy describes the operation as a 'mission impossible' and expresses his astonishment over officers on his own staff who supported the participation 'because it's good for the image of the Koninklijke Landmacht', the Royal Dutch Army. Couzy himself, however, took no further action consequent upon this standpoint.

Our country, as soon became clear in practice, had saddled itself with an impossible task.

Muslim fighters emerged nightly from the 'safe haven' into the surrounding hills to carry out attacks on Serb villages. Shots were also fired from within the enclave, in the hope that the Dutch forces and the Bosnian Serbs could be tempted to engage each other in battle. When the Bosnian Serbs were sufficiently persuaded that the UN and NATO would do nothing if they attacked the enclave, they decided at last to answer these provocations. The results are well known.

What other lesson can be drawn from this shameful episode in Dutch history than the lesson of discretion? But has it been learned? Hardly six weeks after the fall of Srebrenica Joris Voorhoeve brought out a book with the title *Labiële Vrede* ('Unstable Peace'). The conclusion of the last chapter reads as follows:

The most important means of exercising constructive influence available to a state like the Netherlands which is not all that powerful, to the advantage of the development of the global rule of law is to acquire a reputation as a credible partner. Which is to say, bring forward good proposals at just the right moment, covered by a consistent foreign policy, and supported by relatively large economic and if necessary military contributions to the solution of international problems... If the Netherlands wants to be influential, it can achieve this precisely by accepting the risks of joint responsibility in regard to the difficult questions. Those who carry the greater burdens have a greater weight. That goes also for international politics.

The lesson in discretion was then still not learned – but perhaps it was too late by then to stop the presses and revise the book. Whenever the international community seeks to interfere in internal and regional conflicts, discretion, caution and reserve are called for, certainly in cases where violence is involved. The danger that the cure will turn out worse than the disease is hugely present.

But the disease is so terrible, will come the cry from many. How can we adopt an attitude of discretion, caution and reserve in the face of so much horror?

The question here is, however, not one of morality. It is the question of effectiveness. In other words, what is it that makes us think that a society elsewhere in the world is indeed malleable when it comes to exceptionally complicated conflicts heavily burdened by history, while we do not believe the same if it concerns our own relatively simple national questions. Those who do not look at the issue of effectiveness and appeal only to moral motives can in the end

discover that they have themselves acted immorally. And the people around whom the whole thing began can sometimes end up much worse off than they would have been had discretion, caution and reserve been exercised. Morality becomes cynicism when one's own 'good conscience' is seen as more important than the reality of our fellow human beings. Moral politics without the filter of Realpolitik is mortally dangerous. And it is a cynical play of fate that the same political leaders who in their domestic policies seem to have sacrificed the last remnants of idealism in favour of the 'realism' of the market appear reluctant to draw such a lesson in their foreign policies.

Fortunately there are ever more voices raised by people who do indeed want to learn from past failures. Hans Achterhuis, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Twente, writes in his exceptionally interesting book *Politiek van de goede bedoelingen* ('The Politics of Good Intentions'), written in response to the Kosovo war: 'If you put the victims at the centre without looking at the political context, you can sometimes create more victims than you help.' BBC journalist Misha Glenny, who wrote the standard work on the events of 1992, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, had this to say:

Our understanding of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has, regrettably, been clouded by the level of suffering and the tendency of many witnesses to confuse the moral questions raised by the conflict with political issues which caused it... Yet a broad perception has developed outside the Balkans that these are wars fuelled by 'ancient hatreds', as British Prime Minister, John Major, has characterized them. In addition, the theory that the perpetration of atrocities is a central war aim (of the Serbs, in particular) has gained wide currency. This represents a failure of historical understanding which has led to a frequently crass interpretation on the part of the international players involved in the current drama. It has often been encouraged by the local authors to further their political ends, and together, this has ensured that, on the whole, the nebulous blob, which parades under the epithet 'the international community', has contributed to a worsening of the crisis. In order to comprehend the atrocities, we must understand the politics and not the other way round.

While the Dutch political commentator Paul Scheffer wrote the following in *NRC Handelsblad* of 11th December 1999:

The militarisation of philanthropy could make the world much less safe. Just as the goal for which one is striving can be unconsecrated by the means used... Humanitarian

intervention, which is to say war for human rights, cannot become a generally acceptable rule in international relations and must remain a major exception. The armed forces should then also not base their activities increasingly on this doctrine. Otherwise we run the risk that the military supply will begin to create a demand for intervention.

This last point especially should cause us concern. Not only the Netherlands but almost all NATO member states are in the process of transforming their armed forces into intervention forces, to be used for ‘conflict prevention’ and ‘conflict management’, or whatever other euphemism might be found in the meantime. In the parliamentary debate in 1993 in which then Defence Minister Relus Ter Beek urges the sending of Dutch troops to Srebrenica, the argument that the Light-Mobile Brigade was available played an important role, just as it did with some of the army top brass – as we have already seen above. And what should we think of Madeleine Albright’s now famous reproach in response to General Colin Powell’s somewhat reserved reaction to Albright’s proposal for a vigorous intervention policy in Bosnia? The most powerful woman in the Balkans said this: ‘What’s the point of having this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?’ Powell wrote in his book *My American Journey* in response to this incident: ‘I thought I would have an aneurysm. American GIs are not toy soldiers to be moved around on some global game board.’ The war in Kosovo showed that Colin Powell went unheeded, even if it was ensured that the American toy soldiers flew so high above the board of this game of Risk that they, in any case, escaped with their lives. And in the meantime in the tunnel a new team began to warm up for the broader game of geopolitical power-play – a team that can count the Dutch Ministers of Defence and of Foreign Affairs as being amongst their most fervent.

Europe saves the world (not)

‘There are people whom one convinces with towering gestures, but whom with arguments one makes suspicious.’ – Friedrich Nietzsche

On 29th November 1999 Minister of Defence Frank de Grave and his colleague from Foreign Affairs Jozias van Aartsen issued the ‘Defensienota 2000’, the defence memorandum for the coming year. A mistake was evident in the voluminous section dealing with the future of the national army.

In a separate letter to parliament’s lower house dated 8th December, this error was corrected: the latter part of the sentence, ‘The government is strongly attached to having a good basis in international law for military actions, but in the end puts humanity before sovereignty’ would have to be scrapped. No information was divulged as to the background to this amendment, but the most probable reason for it was that fortunately the cabinet was not willing to adopt this brief summary of the thoughts of De Grave and Van Aartsen as representing its own collective opinion.

The new world order which the two ministers had in mind, and which to a great extent was based on NATO’s actions in Kosovo, is for many reasons undesirable. In the foregoing chapters various people from a range of different disciplines have given their strongly critical views of the actions of the western countries in the Yugoslavia crisis. We have, moreover, on the basis of a reconstruction of the wars in Kosovo and in Bosnia, shown how limited in efficacy NATO’s military actions have been. We will now try to make visible the coherence which unites these various critical points, and from this to draw a number of conclusions regarding the new world order, or whatever remains of it. We will, furthermore, dwell on the important question of whether, if we do not favour opening the way to military humanitarian interventions, what can we do instead to help to reduce the number of humanitarian tragedies in the world? Because nothing provides such fertile ground for violence and terror as does indifference.

In the Amnesty International magazine *Wordt vervolgd!* of December 1999, Van Aartsen attempted to set out his vision of the new world order. His ‘essay’ on ‘humanitarian intervention’ was in fact a brief summary of his speech before the United Nations General Assembly (see Part 1, Chapter 9). And just as was the case for the speech, this article was full

of rhetoric about what was happening in the world today, with far-reaching suggestions regarding how it should be otherwise – without a moment's reflection on what the consequences might be if these suggestions were indeed taken up. A few examples.

The minister writes: 'Must we stand idly by as ethnic cleansing, and even genocide, take place because to intercede would perhaps be in conflict with international law? Of course not'.

The minister here suggests that international law under all circumstances advocates passivity, even if there is the likelihood of genocide. This is incorrect. The UN Charter in fact makes it obligatory for countries to act whenever such a possibility exists. But, and this is still worse, the minister further suggests that international law need not be taken all that seriously, that it is something which you can adhere to or not, as you wish. Such an attitude begs questions. What or who is the 'international community' without 'international law'. Who decides on this? Who then decides whether there is a possibility of 'ethnic cleansing, and even genocide', so that military intervention can be justified? And who decides to engage militarily? With whom lies the responsibility for this decision? Who ensures that there is no likelihood of a double agenda, and that rather than combating alleged systematic abuse of human rights, other strategic goals are not being pursued by means of military intervention in another country? To answer each of these questions is precisely why international law was created.

Yet the rhetoric goes still further. 'Because it surely cannot be,' the minister writes, 'that the crimes committed in the killing fields of Cambodia, Rwanda and Yugoslavia can be prosecuted after the event, but that the world community cannot take action against them earlier than that. International law without justice is no law.'

Let's just stop and take a closer look at the example of Rwanda. An estimated 800,000 people were slaughtered there in an appalling civil war. Everyone remembers the horrifying pictures. But where was the international community, where was the Netherlands, then? By January 1994 a flood of warnings was arriving at the United Nations. But it was only in April that the organised mass slaughter began. On 29th April, by which time the full extent of the atrocities had long been clear, the United States and Britain refused to support a proposal from the incumbent chair of the Security Council, the New Zealander Colin Keating, to recognise that 'genocide' was occurring, though such a recognition would have made it possible for the UN to act. The British representative at the United Nations went so far as to assert that such a declaration would open the Security Council to ridicule. In a report published in December

1999, written at the behest of Kofi Annan, who at the time was responsible for all UN peacekeeping missions, former Swedish premier Ingvar Carlsson concluded that the United Nations, and above all the Security Council, held joint responsibility for the bloody genocide in Rwanda. It was thus in this case not international law which stood in the way of a timely intervention, but the unwillingness of two major powers – by coincidence precisely the same two major powers which had cried loudest in the case of Kosovo that military intervention was absolutely necessary. It is of course possible that conclusions were drawn from the events in Rwanda, conclusions which pointed to the assertion ‘never again’. But is not more likely that this example demonstrates how opportunistic in reality the ‘international community’ is in its weighing up such events?

And Van Aartsen now asserts that we should have intervened militarily, in Rwanda, but also in Cambodia? Should the Netherlands then have supplied troops? Would we then have established a UN protectorate, just as in Bosnia and Kosovo? To none of these questions did the minister give an answer. And that is, indeed, understandable (it would have put him in an awkward predicament, given how big the Dutch armed forces would have to become if we really did want to play the policeman in the entire world), but equally unforgivable for someone who bears so great a responsibility and who is unfolding such ambitious ideas for the future.

The idea that ‘international law without justice is no law’ is an expression with which no-one can find fault. But what does it mean in combination with what is written before this? Does it mean that the ‘world community’ (once again, as to who or what that is, if not the United Nations which according to international law is so designated, the minister has nothing to say) must act sooner, because otherwise there is no question of justice? And just when is that then – ‘sooner’?

One last quotation: ‘The evolution of the concept of sovereignty,’ the minister states, ‘ does not end with this. In a globalising world we have not only to deal with the abuse of human rights. Consider also dilapidated nuclear power stations, mass deforestation, shortage of water, large-scale production of narcotics, or the so-called “failed state”. Must politicians sit and watch until the calamity is truly a fact? Or do they have the duty to take preventative action? The question is apposite. But who will give it a definitive answer?’

Here the minister is once more repeating his speech before the UN. Even if he has not yet

written it, Van Aartsen's answer to his own rhetorical question is clear: politicians must not sit around until a calamity has occurred. They have the duty to take preventative action. And you do not have to take this line of reasoning to its most absurd conclusions, as Noam Chomsky did in Chapter 9, to see that it's crazy. Because what would it involve? That we would send soldiers to Indonesia to protect the poor farmers of Borneo from the burning of their forests to create arable farmland? That we invade Russia because nuclear power stations there do not comply with the latest demands? One concrete example of where this sort of policy would in practice lead we have already seen, when the Netherlands gave the Americans the right to conduct war against the cocaine farmers of Colombia from the Dutch Antilles, in order to do something about 'the large-scale production of narcotics.' According to expert analysts, Colombia has since threatened to become a second Vietnam.

Where are these wise thoughts of the minister leading to in concrete terms? In his article he writes that he wants three things: the Netherlands Advisory Committee on International Public Law and the Netherlands Advisory Council on International Affairs to write a common advisory note on military intervention in the absence of Security Council authorisation, and for it to organise in addition an international seminar, and finally – and this is politically the only one of his wishes which is relevant – to open for discussion the right of veto of the five permanent Security Council members, because this right is an 'anachronism'.

As the result of the 'doctrine of humanitarian intervention' launched by the minister, this one concrete proposal is of course rather slender, but it is moreover open to question whether this proposal itself is all that intelligent. Naturally, at first sight it appears sympathetic and also democratic: why should the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and China, after all, have the right to impose their will on the United Nations in matters of peace and security? For this reason only: that the most significant result of the abolition of the right of veto in the current period would be that the Security Council would marginalise itself. Because it is of course not for nothing that these five major countries, each of which has nuclear weapons at its disposal, have been allotted the right of veto. This has everything to do with their exceptionally great political, sometimes economic and in each case military power. None of these countries would accept a declaration from the Security Council which went against the national interest of the state in question. Should these countries lose, therefore, their right of veto, what would be instigated would either be the life-threatening situation in which a decision by a majority of the Security Council meant that the major powers affected

would find themselves in direct opposition to the minority, and that they would then find themselves in conflict with each other, or the decisions of the Security Council would be regarded as unimportant and pushed to one side, so that the body would no longer mean anything. As a result the only podium on which the major powers currently speak to each other, the only place also where geopolitical developments can be seriously discussed, would disappear. It is therefore certainly not in the interest of world peace to treat the possibilities offered by this Council light-heartedly, or to speak about it in denigrating terms. .

Yet within the Dutch government it is evident that things are seen differently. That is not so astonishing, because the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia took place, as we have seen, without the approval of the Security Council. Russia and China had from the beginning major objections to the way in which the West, (for which read the NATO countries) was operating in the Kosovo crisis. They were unwilling therefore to give their approval to NATO military action. For NATO, and therefore also for the Netherlands, this turned out, however, not to be any reason to decide not to conduct such actions. On the contrary. The attack was now in a sense directed at the Security Council itself, while at the same time attempts were made to justify in international law the right to intervene on one's own count and to do so wherever this might be judged necessary, including therefore beyond the NATO states' own territory.

This change in the attitude of the Netherlands in relation to the Security Council was rapid. On 10th August 1998 Van Aartsen could still write the following in answer to a question from two Labour MPs, Bert Koenders and Gerrit Valk: 'The Netherlands' standpoint is that a Security Council resolution must be in place as the basis for military intervention.' Not six months later this standpoint has been exchanged for its opposite. In the Kosovo crisis a go-it-alone Western approach was preferred to cooperation within the Security Council.

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, has on a number of occasions expressed an extremely negative reaction to this development. He is seriously concerned about the constantly growing number of military actions by the United States, whether or not in cooperation with other powers: the rocket attack on Sudan, the persistent bombing of Iraq, the bombing of Afghanistan – with each American bomb becoming a foundation stone taken from beneath the fragile home of international dialogue within the UN. The Pax Americana is increasingly taking shape. The United States is no longer merely playing the role of international police officer, but sees itself in addition as the prosecutor of anyone who departs from the American norm, as the judge who sets the punishment, and as the one to impose this

punishment – as judge, jury and executioner rolled into one. And all of this without the least concern for what the long term consequences might be.

Michael Gorbachev, the last president of the Soviet Union, said the following about this at the time of NATO's action against Yugoslavia:

'This war demonstrates that the United States, which plays an authoritative role in NATO, is prepared not only to ignore the norms of international law, but also to impose its own norms on the world with regard to international relations. In fact the United States, in determining these norms, allows itself to be led by its own national interests and only takes account of the United Nations when the decisions and actions of the UN serve the interests of the United States.'

It must also be noted that the United States is the only country in the world capable of exercising financial blackmail over the United Nations, using its contribution as collateral. Of the 188 countries currently members of the UN and signatories to its Charter, the United States is by far and away the country with the biggest backlog of unpaid levies. The UN's claim against the US amounts at the moment to around a billion dollars, enough to pay the annual costs of the UN secretariat plus the costs connected with its peacekeeping operations. The US is prepared to pay this debt if first a number of things within the UN are changed in a manner which the Americans find desirable.

Now of course there is much to criticise about the United Nations: the slowness, the lack of efficiency, the financial waste, the limited power of the General Assembly, the dominant role of the Security Council, and the sometimes roundly cynical attitudes which prevail. But for the time being the United Nations is all we have. The world community has no other platform on which to discuss questions of war and peace than the UN. We must therefore make the best use we can of this institution and oppose all those persons and all those countries which undermine and ridicule the authority of the UN. The UN Charter includes a number of extremely useful moral anchors for international relations, amongst which is the ban on aggression, and even for the relationship between state and citizen. Responsible states might be expected to know the value of international law, but this can alas not be said of the United States and the other NATO countries. If we look at their actions in the Kosovo crisis, we can only conclude that these damaged both the interests of the UN, and international law itself. M. Bos, Professor emeritus in international law at the University of Utrecht and Vice-President

van de International Law Association, has the following to say about this:

A characteristic of the law is that it sets limits. The UN Charter does that in a way which is abundantly clear. Transgressing these limits means placing yourself outside of the law of the UN. Appealing to human rights along the way as grounds for justification for conducting a military intervention does not in itself exempt you from this. Such an appeal – assuming that this is *de jure* possible – can only succeed if the human right in question is enforced and the means of doing so are permissible under general international law. As for the first of these conditions, human rights can indeed be universal, but they do not have an ‘absolute’ effect... One always has to ask oneself what are the role of and prospects for the human right cited and what in the given circumstances is or could be just. From an historical perspective justice has never been anything other than “what works”. This must be the guiding principle of all implementation of human rights... The second point, the permissibility of the means, requires us to look into their proportionality. I have seen no analysis of this principle applied to the question of Kosovo.

As our Russian interviewees in Chapter 8 of Part 1 of this book admitted, the fact that the NATO countries had placed themselves outside UN law also had direct consequences for discussions with other countries on the question of what should or should not be allowed in the world. Many people have reacted with indignation to how the Russians have conducted their war against the Chechen rebels, but no proper discussion of this could be held, neither in the Security Council, nor in the OESC conference in Istanbul. One single reference to Kosovo was, for the Russians, sufficient for them to justify their assertion that they did not want to pass any responsibility on to the world community, simply declaring that this was an internal matter to do with nothing more than bandits and terrorists.

Precisely how extensive will be the consequences of the illegal actions of NATO in relation to the Kosovo question cannot yet be assessed. But that they will be exceptionally serious is already certain. Now NATO has been transformed from a security organisation to a sort of international intervention force of the rich west, the question is no longer whether new ‘Kosovos’ will arrive but simply when. After all, just as in the Netherlands has been demonstrated with the Light-Mobile Brigade and the mission to Srebrenica, the simple fact of the existence of an intervention force can mean that politicians – whether or not under pressure from public opinion – may decide more quickly to send troops to a centre of conflict.

The European Union, which is developing increasingly in the direction of a political union, is currently hard at work on its Common Foreign and Security Policy. In order to render decision-making within this framework more effective, there are moves to give the European Commission more powers. For this reason NATO ex-Secretary-General Javier Solana, whom we already know well from the Kosovo crisis, has been appointed as the first High Representative for the Common Foreign Policy of the European Union. Further, there are those who would abolish the right of veto enjoyed by the separate member states and move to a regime governed by qualified majority voting. As indicated above in discussing the Security Council, the abolition of the right of veto could have serious consequences and in the end turn out even to be counterproductive. Within Europa equally, the major countries will never allow the law to be prescribed by any supranational body whatsoever. And certainly not in relation to so important and, when it comes to the national interest, so sensitive a point as foreign policy.

There are nevertheless moves to proceed further along this path. What's even worse is that, anticipating the possibility of a true, allegedly effective common foreign policy, there is a desire to work on a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), a sort of Euro-army. No longer are Europe's leaders willing to be dependent in every respect on the US. They are demanding their own role in the geopolitical game. Europe must speak with one voice, and become more credible. The quote from Joris Voorhoeve, cited in the preceding chapter, shows how this credibility will be fleshed out: by providing major military adventures. And so a military arm must be added to the body of the common foreign policy.

Now we would be the last ones to say that we were happy with NATO, or certainly with the role of the United States in the alliance. But what is bizarre is that this Euro-army will not replace NATO, but supplement it. The intention is decidedly to continue with NATO, but in addition, as European countries, to make use of NATO resources – and if necessary quite apart from NATO to have a military capacity entirely their own on top of these resources. And, as we said earlier, more military potential – certainly in combination with ambitious politicians (by which we here mean politicians who want Europe to be make an impact in the world) – will provide more dangerous examples of exaggerated self-esteem.

In addition to enhancing the credibility of Europe's foreign policy, the ESDI will also have to provide 'the solution to conflicts on Europe's periphery' – a matter also currently spoken about quite openly. Where this periphery ends did not long remain a secret. The Caucasus is

generally seen as a region in which a European military presence is most certainly a possibility. To begin with Europe may establish a permanent presence in Kosovo, where the Eurocorps – in which Germany, France, Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg are already cooperating militarily – will for six months, beginning in April 2000, assume the leadership of KFOR. The Eurocorps can, just as did the Western European Union and the Anglo-French cooperation agreed at the French resort of St. Malo, be seen as one of the forerunners of the Euro-army. All of these initiatives will feed into this.

European business has now understood well enough the new possibilities offered by all of this. Manfred Bischoff, Chairman of the Board of Directors of DASA, said on 3rd February 1998, 'Give us a vision. Politicians must answer some obvious questions: Where does Europe want to go? What does Europe expect from high technology, from its defence industry? What products should be made?' In other words, Bischoff sensed that there was, after years of malaise resulting from the end of the Cold War, once again big money to be made by the war industry. The Clingendael Institute, also known as the Netherlands Institute for International Relations, published an essay on the Euro-army in December 1999 in which it said that 'From a military point of view numerous additional exertions are needed, which will demand billions of Euros.' The defence budget of the various European countries offers little space for this, so that carrying out all of these fine plans in reality would mean a huge increase in these budgets in the immediate future. The Clingendael Institute's researchers warn above all of European shortcomings when it comes to high technology, writing that:

Precisely because politicians make such exacting demands for the minimalisation of the number of civilian victims and the maximalisation of the pilots' security, high-value technology fulfils a crucial role.... Without American planes, equipped for electronic warfare... no combat mission could be carried out. No European country has available an in-flight ground-target surveillance system. Bad weather imposes serious limits on the carrying-out of air-raids by most European countries.

At the European Summit in Keulen on 3rd and 4th June 1999, it was then also decided that a 'substantial industrial and technological basis, a competitive and dynamic European defence industry' must be created. At the Helsinki Summit in December of the same year this decision was once more confirmed and further concretised: in 2003 the EU member states must have ready a total of 200,000 soldiers, so that at any time within sixty days 60,000 soldiers could be sent abroad for a lengthy period of time. More cooperation would be necessary, and gaps in

organisation, armaments and instruments to enable the gathering of data must be addressed. And this would cost money. Defence Minister Frank De Grave: 'The cost comes before the benefit: you first have to invest. After years of economies the financial space for this is lacking. It is time to make up the European bill.' Manfred Bischoff can thus sleep easily. But who else can do so?

There remains one more aspect of the desire of the EU countries to demand 'armed and therefore credible' space on the geopolitical playing field. If you want new space, you can only have it at the cost of another. And that simple fact leads to tensions, dangerous tensions. Were not both world wars after all violent expressions of the will to bring about a new division of spheres of influence? The Clingendael researchers have this to say about this: 'Tensions between the US and the European allies over the extent and direction of European defence cooperation are unavoidable.'

But there is more. Within the US Congress a more isolationist course is increasingly supported, one independent of Europe. The United States determination to develop a space-based defence shield is undiminished, despite the fact that this is in conflict with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. But on the economic front as well, friction between the US and Europe is growing. Accusations time and again over a more than alleged protection of each bloc's economic interest grow exponentially. And to these will be added the growth of European economic and monetary force now that the Euro will be competing with the dollar. Add to these the political ambitions of an EU becoming ever bigger and more powerful on the world stage, and you can only conclude that all of the ingredients for a future clash are in place.

A new ‘new world order’

‘As long as our world, which has the resources to end poverty everywhere, is divided into those addressing the problems of plenty and those confronted by the problems of scarcity, peace and freedom will remain fragile.’ – Nelson Mandela, 24th July, 1998, at the Mercosur Heads of State Summit, in Ushuaia, Argentina

In the foregoing chapters we have seen that in the West in general, and within NATO and the European Union in particular, a great deal is expected of the potential of military intervention in domestic and regional conflicts. NATO’s new strategic concept and the EU’s efforts to develop its own ‘military capacity’ flow directly from this.

On the basis of the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo we have tried to make it clear that these expectations are unfounded, dangerous and shortsighted. Unfounded because the political goals have not been achieved (see Kosovo); dangerous because the violent imposition of peace unleashed new tensions, which in time will lead to new conflicts (see Kosovo and Bosnia); and shortsighted because only short term and limited solutions are considered, with no estimation of the geopolitical consequences (such as for example in terms of relations with Russia), while insufficient account is taken of the history and other aspects of the background to conflicts (see almost all recent military interventions).

In order to achieve a lasting peace – or more modestly, to prevent conflicts – other means than violence are much more appropriate. That is why to close this book we want to put forward a few initiatives towards a fundamental debate around a more structural approach to international tensions, and by those means the prevention of violent escalations in the future.

Relations between ethnic and/or religious majority and minority groups within states, but also relations amongst states, are often seen in stereotypical terms. Too often tensions are described on the basis of a limited observation of a few incidents, as well as on the basis of platitudes and myths which do no justice to the complex reality. Precisely because it is not straightforward, given this complexity, to develop a truly effective insight into the background to problems elsewhere in the world, it is imperative to operate in international politics with the greatest possible caution. The byword of responsible members of governments should be heeded: better no foreign policy than a bad foreign policy. It is after all true that the greater the distance, both geographic and cultural, the smaller the empathy. And without empathy it is

wellnigh inevitable that each intervention will eventually turn out badly, as has been the case time after time during this decade.

When in Rwanda the Hutus and the Tutsis became enemies, many thought that what we were dealing with were tribes who had for years lived in discord with each other, that people were being identified only by their appearance and on that basis considered each other friend or foe. These are dangerous simplifications. The historical and socio-economic background, involving poverty, overpopulation and social inequality, continues to be seriously underestimated in many analyses of Rwanda. This has also been the case in the Yugoslav crisis, in the conflicts in the Caucasus, in Indonesia, in short in almost all conflicts which have demanded the attention of the international community over the last few years, despite the fact that it is precisely this socio-economic background which is so extremely important for the forming of a correct picture of the causes of these conflicts. And without knowledge of the causes there can be no adequate solutions, without a good diagnosis, no good medicine.

The Pakistani development economist Mahbul ul Haq says with regard to the violence that has flared up in so many places in the world in the past ten or fifteen years that ‘You can call these conflicts ethnic or regional, but the real causes are social and economic.’

If that is the case, and the ‘international community’ is truly concerned by all of the injustice to which people subject each other, then you might expect that everything would be done to ensure a fairer division of the world’s wealth, in order to help the poor countries in their development, and to create opportunities for those who currently have none.

Nothing, however, could be further from the truth: the contradictions in the world continue to grow. The immense debts owed by poor countries to rich ones mean that each year 200 billion dollars net is transferred from South to North, from poor to rich. The average income in 1960 in the richest countries was thirty times greater than in the poorest; in 1990 the ratio was 1:60, while by 1997 it had further deteriorated, to 1:74. The United Nations’ Human Development Report for 1999 included – by way of further illustration – the following bizarre comparison: the wealth of the three richest people in the world is greater than the value of the economies of the thirty-five poorest countries combined.

The army of the world’s really poor currently numbers 1.3 billion people, and that figure continues to climb. What does the expression ‘global village’ mean in such a perspective? In what village is one person in three allowed to suffer miserably from hunger, while at the same

time a minority can abandon themselves to their hearts' content to the thorough enjoyment of life? The expression 'global village' was invented and propagated in order to describe so-called globalisation, and to depict it as a *fait accompli*. This globalisation forms in its turn a justification for the carrying out of a free trade which goes ever further and the lifting of all restrictions on the movement of capital, with no regard to the social consequences for the 'village'. Or as Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, one of the compilers of the Human Development Report 1999, puts it: 'Globalisation has great advantages for some but for most of the world's citizens it means only further exclusion and impoverishment.'

At the end of the 'nineties a major financial crisis hit Asia. The managers of the enormous quantity of money – 1.5 trillion dollars per day – from wealthy countries which roams the digital highway in search of the highest profit levels, were for a number of reasons afraid of losing their money, and decided over a short period of time to withdraw it from countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and South Korea, once known collectively as the 'Asian Tigers'. Within a few days millions of people in the countries involved had lost their jobs and local currencies tumbled to record lows. The crisis resounded long afterwards – not in the rich West, where there was relief and an almost triumphalist assertion that the world economy could indeed survive some rough-handling, but far more in the affected countries themselves. According to the UNDP report discussed above, the crisis led to 'erosion of the social fabric, to social unrest and to a growth in criminality'.

The flaring up of all sorts of 'ethnic-religious' conflicts in Indonesia in recent times cannot be seen as unrelated to the economic crisis in which the country has found itself. When as a result of this crisis the Suharto regime fell, countless western experts (amongst whom was the biggest boss of Dutch bank ING's subsidiary in Jakarta) all knew precisely what had gone wrong in Indonesia: the country was corrupt through and through, its 'democracy' was a farce and there was no respect for human rights. The crisis was, in other words, the fault of Indonesia itself. This analysis stood in stark contrast to everything that had been called for in preceding years in regard to the country of Suharto. Human rights activists had been told not to moan and whinge, and Development Cooperation Minister Jan Pronk got a dressing down for his trouble when he had the nerve to approach the Suharto government about the massacre in East Timor. During a royal visit to Indonesia in the year that the country celebrated fifty years of independence, a heavyweight delegation of Dutch entrepreneurs travelled in the footsteps of Her Majesty in order to do business in what was then still referred to as an

exemplary growth economy. Top Philips boss Jan Timmer took this opportunity to announce that if he were still young he would certainly set out for South East Asia in order to seek his fortune. We heard not a word then about corruption, while human rights also went unmentioned. As long as there was money to be earned it would turn out time and again that concern over the fate of one's fellow human beings would melt away like snow on a sunny spring day, only to be wheeled out when the situation deteriorated and foreign investments and earnings were at risk.

In order to put an end to the vicious circle of lopsided economic growth, exploitation, poverty, migration, instability, crisis and violence in which so many countries are trapped, it is necessary that the western powers at long last show the courage to take a critical look at their economic interventions in those countries. It will then emerge that structural measures are needed if the constant repetition of humanitarian tragedies is to be prevented.

In the first place the developing countries must have – and retain – the freedom to determine their own development strategy. This would stand in complete opposition to the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI), which the OECD – the organisation representing the richest industrialised countries – and the World Trade Organization currently have in mind. The countries of the Third World must no longer be pressured to accept the International Monetary Fund's neoliberal prescription before they are given any support by the wealthy countries. Even Henry Kissinger, ex-US Secretary of State, criticises the shortsighted approach of the IMF as being 'just like a doctor specializing in measles [who] tries to cure every illness with one remedy', as he wrote not so long ago, complaining that the Fund always prescribes 'moderation', large increases in interest rates to counter capital flight, and strong devaluation in order to discourage imports and stimulate exports. This, he argued, always leads to a dramatic fall in living standards, explosive growth in unemployment and a growing malaise in the general population, undermining the very political institutions that must carry out the IMF programme. Kissinger sides with a long line of former political leaders who, no longer being in office, suddenly begin to say things which are both intelligent and critical.

Organisations such as the WTO and the IMF currently represent exclusively the institutionalised 'market think' and interests of the countries which stand to gain most from their approach. They talk constantly of total freedom of trade as opposed to a total lack of freedom, but equal rules for unequal countries simply perpetuate inequality. Moreover

globalised free trade means little more than the ability to set worker against worker throughout the world in a new race to the bottom when it comes to wages, social security, social provisions and working conditions. Not only people but nature and the environment will inevitably pay a high price for this.

Poor countries must have the right to protect their own domestic markets from cheap western products, in order that they can have enough time to build up their own industries and security of food supply. On the other hand low income countries must have the right and means to sell their products on the markets of wealthy countries without being confronted with barriers in whatever form. In 1976, 7.2 percent of the European Economic Community's total imports originated in developing countries, while in 1995 this percentage had fallen for the European Union to 4.5 percent. It is completely morally objectionable that we continue to think that we should protect our European markets from cheap products from these countries, while we at the same time force them into an unlimited opening of their own markets to our products and corporations. The foreign exchange which they could earn through their exports is indispensable, for example for acquiring new technology.

A concrete possibility to do something about inequality in the world could be provided by the introduction of a solidarity levy. Whenever countries gain a competitive advantage through their indifference to social rights or to the interests of the environment, their products should be excluded from the international market by means of a levy imposed at the borders of the importing country. In keeping with the unequal economic position of different countries the size of this levy should be proportionate with the size of the Gross National Product of the exporting country. All of this should be conditional on the poorest countries – as we have already argued – being at all times given free access to 'rich' markets. If we are then also prepared to pay a fair price for their products, so that they too have the chance to work on building a just society, we will have provided ourselves with an effective means of bringing about a redistribution of global wealth and thereby a safer world.

Another possible measure is the taming of what former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt described as 'predator capitalism'. This could be achieved by means of a reintroduction of restrictions on international capital movements, so that economies can no longer – as a result of the herd behaviour and blind hunger for profit of owners of capital – be brought to ruin in a single day. Even the former senior adviser to the GATT (now the WTO), American economics professor Jagdish Bhagwati, seems to have grasped this, as he shows at the end of a lengthy

article in the Dutch business daily *Financieele Dagblad* of 26th September 1998:

‘And despite evidence of the risks attached to the free flow of capital, the Wall Street financial complex continues to make the self-serving assumption that the ideal world is indeed one of free capital flows, with the IMF presiding over all. But the weight and the force of logic points in the opposite direction, towards limits on capital flows. It is time to shift the burden of proof from the opponents to the supporters of free capital.’

In order to limit these capital flows we must be able to move towards the introduction of the so-called Tobin Tax. James Tobin, American economist and Nobel Laureate, proposed at the beginning of the ‘seventies the imposition of a 0.1 percent tax on international monetary flows. By these means situations such as that in Asia in 1997 and 1998 would occur less frequently, while, still more importantly, the United Nations, which would have to collect this, would for example for the year 2000 have available over 188 billion dollars, twice as much money as experts argue would be necessary to combat the world’s most severe poverty.

In conclusion, a development plan for the Third World’s countries must be established under the aegis of the UN – it goes without saying that this should be done with the involvement of the countries in question – and financed by the wealthy countries. Under the slogan ‘debt clearance is the best conflict prevention’, a start could be made on debt forgiveness for low income countries, the central demand of the Jubilee 2000 initiative. Annual interest and repayments hang like a millstone around the neck of these countries and prevent them clambering up out of the depths of poverty. A country such as Ethiopia is currently forced to pay four times as much money in interest and debt repayment as it does on health care, to give just one harrowing example. And while we are on the subject of a development plan under UN supervision, we should not refrain from calling on this same UN to screen for once instances of multilateral development aid for efficiency and effectiveness. As things stand development cooperation – bilateral and multilateral – is in general a hotchpotch of good intentions, as emerged in practice in, amongst other places, former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia, for example, there are no less than 450 different aid NGOs and consultancies active in spending the 10 billion Deutschmarks which has in total been made available by the various donor countries. The fact that the results fail to meet expectations is logical, as is the fact that there are exceptionally high levels of waste. While corruption thrives in luxury, the reconstruction for which the money was intended stagnates.

As we have already said, an ‘international community’ which was really concerned about the humanitarian tragedies unfolding in countless parts of the world, would put a comparable measure high on the political agenda. That this is not happening says as much about the sincerity of the politicians involved as it does about the relations of power in the world since the fall of the Berlin Wall. A nice illustration of how these relations currently lie was provided by the WTO negotiations which took place in Seattle in December 1999. Corporations such as Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, General Motors and Northwest Airlines belonged to the exclusive community of sponsors that by means of a payment of less than 100,000 dollars assured themselves of the necessary privileges. They each took a place on the front row as well as gaining – to the advantage of their lobbyists – direct access to the informal circuit for direct contact with the heads of state, government leaders and other delegates present. Meanwhile an enormous force of police held the thousands of demonstrators back, while the demonstrators outside the conference building gave voice to the huge dissatisfaction which is growing in ever broader circles over the monomaniac way in which the WTO operates. If we really want to move towards a truly new world order, then this gap between participants to the WTO negotiations and those demonstrators must be closed. Only then will the one-sided fixation on free trade, if needs be at the cost of state sovereignty, and with no regard for the political, social, ecological or safety consequences, have to give way to an awareness of the interests of all of those now ground down by the unrestrained forces of the free market.

If it is the most important causes of many conflicts with which we are concerned – poverty, neglect, lack of development and absence of hope – then there is still a world to win. But if this ‘new world’ is really our goal, we cannot avoid first of all answering the question, ‘Who do we want to rule this world?’ Is it the rich countries within which this service is provided by those who possess the economic power? Is it organisations such as the WTO, the IMF, the OECD and the G7 in which the wealthy countries set the tone and impose their will on the rest? Or is it the political forces, legitimised by democracy, which are striving for development and progress within and for all countries, for a fair distribution of wealth and for protection of nature and of the environment?

Earlier in this book various people stressed the role of the United Nations and of regional organisations such as the OSCE. The Netherlands Advisory Council on International Affairs had this to say about this question: ‘Both the UN and the OSCE have a coordinating responsibility in relation to the preservation of international peace and security. The UN is the

sole global forum in which security and stability, human rights, sustainable socio-economic development and environmental problems are on the agenda in their internal cohesiveness.’ Everyone – with any knowledge of these matters – will only be able to agree with this assessment. But this assessment should also have consequences for policy. Anyone who takes these words seriously cannot at the same time defend a situation in which countries off their own bat and whenever it suits them break the UN’s monopoly on the use of violence and with no legitimacy enter into conflicts in foreign countries. By such actions international law is desecrated, the position of the Security Council undermined and geopolitical stability placed in the balance.

The Pax Americana, by which the monopolar world which has existed since the fall of the Wall is characterised, has led in the west to the arrogant belief that we can do everything on our own. The manner in which the west has behaved since the departure of Gorbachev, is therefore illustrative: the enlargement of NATO towards the east; the disregard of the Russian (and Chinese) standpoint in relation to the conflict in Kosovo; using, certainly, Russia’s diplomatic offices in solving the conflict but granting the Russians no significant role in the framework of KFOR; the continuation of the development of a defence shield in space by the United States, despite the fact that this is in conflict with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; the development of a new frontline to the south of Russia as a result of strategic interests connected to the oil which is to be found in that region. Where these policies have led within Russia was made clear in Chapter 8 of Part 1 of this book by Georgi Arbatov en Vladimir Lukin; to what foreign policy consequences it will lead only the future can tell us.

Although many criticisms can be made of the functioning of the UN – we have written about this above – it is as things stand (and probably this will remain the case) the only place in which the major powers and other countries can together discuss geopolitical questions. Intelligent foreign policy must include the goal of strengthening the United Nations and its institutions, as well as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE.

Max van der Stoel, OSCE High Commissioner for national minorities, takes every possible opportunity to complain about the lack of interest from the international community in investing in inter-ethnic cooperation directed at the early prevention of conflicts. In his lonely struggle he finds it absolutely impossible to assemble financial resources for such projects. ‘The states which must contend with economic stagnation or even decline, with as a consequence the threatened loss of of the hope for a better future, deserve particular attention,’

said Van der Stoel in his inaugural professorial address at the University of Leiden. ‘In such situations political extremism thrives. Giving new impulses through outside aid can help to turn around such dangers and belongs in a modern security policy.’

The fire brigade have a popular saying: ‘Any fire can be extinguished with a bucket of water if only you get there quickly enough.’ For those who really want to contribute to a safer world there are therefore two questions to be answered: do we have the will to get there early? And do we have a bucket of water?

In order to ‘get there early’ we must create a worldwide early warning system, which will enable the UN and regional organisations such as the OSCE to offer timely help in the prevention of conflicts and – where conflicts already exist – the avoidance of further escalation. It will then be necessary for the UN and the OSCE to have access to sufficient financial resources to enable them to offer effective help.

After the war in Kosovo the Western countries established a Stability Pact for the Balkans, excluding the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The question is this: why is there now a willingness to put billions into this region, while this was not the case earlier? Would Lord Carrington’s plan not have had more chance of success when we were prepared to extend also a helping financial hand? It is a question which can no longer be answered with certainty, but what is certain is that the billions which are now being used to bring about damage and destruction is many times more than the sum that at the start of the 1990s would have been needed to reshape a declining economy into a growing economy. Had such a sum been provided at the time, and had the European countries put their efforts into the establishment of a confederation instead of the independence of all of the republics, the human tragedy now unfolding in the Balkans could very likely have been prevented.

To make a comparison with the development of armaments, preventative diplomacy, peaceful intervention, and structural aid and advice are perhaps at the level of the invention of the Colt around 1850. That brings us to our last point: the reopening of the arms race. Just as the ubiquity of firearms is cited as one of the most important causes of the exceptionally high degree of violence in American society, so the ample stocks of weaponry provide us with one of the explanations for the violent escalations of regional and/or ethnic conflicts. Despite the fact that the Cold War, which held the world in its grip for decades, and the arms race which was linked to it, are now almost ten years in the past, the worldwide trade in arms continues to

grow. The Netherlands plays a leading role in this, despite assertions from the ministers responsible that the Dutch defence industry is limited in size in comparison with other European countries. In 1998 our country was sixth in the league table of the world's biggest arms exporters. With no scruples our country supplied and continues to supply weapons to Turkey, and to Indonesia under Suharto, as well as to countries which spend a disproportionately large share of their GNP on buying weapons, such as Israel, Oman and Qatar. In addition regulated supplies go to areas of tension, such as South Korea and the Middle East. In 1998 licences were issued for the export of military goods with a total value of something over 350 billion dollars. And the Netherlands is no exception – neither in the West, nor in the world as a whole. Almost all countries, or, to put it better, the arms producers in these countries, are still profiting daily from armaments and the arms trade.

The member states of the European Union together spend almost 100 billion dollars a year on 'defence', of which a large proportion goes on armaments. It is high time that worldwide arms spending, and above all disarmament, came under international political attention. The extent and quantity of arms exported must be reduced, and in time the entire international arms trade perhaps indeed forbidden. The development of ever more new attack weapons must be stopped, beginning with those countries which have made the greatest progress in the development of sophisticated, 'smart' weapons. The further spread of existing, and the introduction of new, weapons of mass destruction can only be resisted if the nuclear powers are prepared to sign a no first use declaration and at last begin to run down their arsenals. Who are we to send inspection teams to Iraq to track down illegal weapons of mass destruction if we ourselves maintain major arsenals of nuclear weapons? In NATO's new strategic concept nuclear weapons are seen as essential to the preservation of peace. This is in conflict with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which asserts that states which have signed the treaty have an obligation to conduct negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international monitoring. Through the explicitly stated unwillingness of NATO to proceed to complete nuclear disarmament the fundamental precepts of this treaty have been jettisoned. And at the very moment that the United States Senate has rejected the Non-Proliferation Treaty, India and Pakistan are embroiled in a nuclear arms race, while the Russian nuclear policy, as we have seen, is being accentuated.

The course which Western military experts are now following in the area of non-nuclear armament, which is described in this book by, amongst others, the Editor-in-Chief of Jane's

Defence Weekly, Clifford Beal, will lead without doubt to still more violence. Perhaps Clifford Beal will in the end have to recognise that whenever the West increases its 'lead' over other parts of the world, this inevitably provokes a reaction. This does not always necessarily take the form of a similar pursuit of smart weapons by those who resist the West, such as China, Iraq, Russia or India. It can just as easily be what has been called an asymmetrical response – such as the carrying out of terrorist attacks.