

The Brunswickan International

The Brunswickan's man in Kosovo



Patrick FitzPatrick at the KFOR Press and Information Centre, in Pristina, Kosova, August 2000.

Bob Lockhart

The Brunswickan

This story was run in last weeks issue. However, due to production problems, some of the format was lost, and this story was cut short. Here is the story in full.

On a steep and rocky hillside in the Kosovar village of Janjevo, a Roman Catholic priest leads the remnants of a once-prosperous Croatian community in a fight for survival. It is here that Pat FitzPatrick, a UNB graduate student majoring in Balkan history, has come seeking primary sources. His interview subject is Father Matej Palic, a moderate spokesman for *rapprochement* between Serbia and Croatia and parish priest to 370 stubborn parishioners who refuse to leave.

The meeting takes place in the dining area of the rectory. As the youthful looking "Father Mateo" enters the room, his clear, blue eyes search the visitors' faces with a frank curiosity and he acknowledges English greetings with a friendly nod.

Finally, his eyes settle on the young civilian whose shaved head, and red whiskers are complemented by a gentle smile. "Faljen issu" (Greetings in Christ!), says FitzPatrick. The response is instantaneous: the priest laughs out loud and the two begin a spirited exchange in Serbo-Croatian. It is a unique event: Pat finished his Serbo-Croatian language course at Zagreb University only ten days previously! His mark for the course? A+.

With Pat translating, the priest describes the systematic repression of Croats in Kosovo by the Serbian government and the steady flow of refugees into Albania. They will never come back to Janjevo, he says, because there is no employment. In Janjevo, most survive with the help of overseas

relatives and by selling a few vegetables and livestock at the weekly market.

With pictures taken and farewell hugs performed, the military caravan rattles down a narrow trail into the village and back up the highway to Pristina.

Ten days later, Pat accompanies a British army detachment into Devet Jugovica, a northern enclave of Kosovar Serbians who have lived there for almost seven hundred years. The patrol is welcomed by the Serbs who, away from the influence of both Belgrade and Pristina, reject all politics. Despite Pat's Croatian pronunciation the Serbs welcome him with cheek-kisses, homemade vodka, and too many toasts. Equally sincere is their welcome for the British soldiers: constant patrolling keeps the Kosovar Albanians from wreaking revenge for atrocities suffered in 1999. In the Balkans, memories are long...

Back in Pristina, Pat talks about the support provided by UNB that allowed him to acquire language skills for his studies abroad. "I was able to combine a Celanese Fellowship with a grant from the Military and Strategic Studies Program. I also have a new part-time job as the Chief Editor for MediaScan, a daily analysis of regional media and politics with a particular focus on Croatian links. The company is also studying the feasibility of opening the first English-language newspaper in the Balkans." This fall, Pat is scheduling more courses at Zagreb University and "a lot more thesis writing" to complete his MA at UNB. "To Messrs Milner and Charters my thanks for academic support; to my family and friends, thanks for lessening the occasional bout of homesickness." Pat FitzPatrick returns to Canada in 2001.

Sudanese women allowed to work in public

KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP) - Sudan's highest court on Saturday temporarily suspended a week-old decree by Khartoum's governor which banned women from working in some public areas.

The decree, criticized by Sudanese rights groups and the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch, banned women from working in public sector jobs

where they are in direct contact with men, including gas stations, hotels and restaurants.

The Sudan Constitutional Court said women should continue their work in the public sector until the court makes a final ruling on the legality of the decree.

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In fighting that saw 18 West Side Boys killed British paratroopers free 7 hostages

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) - Launching a dawn strike on a swampy base belonging to a maverick army gang, British troops ended a two-week hostage drama Sunday and freed all six British officers and a Sierra Leonean soldier held captive. One British paratrooper was killed.

The rescue mission, authorized by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Sierra Leone President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, was carried out after the captors "threatened repeatedly to kill the hostages" in this war-ravaged West African country, British Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon said.

Helicopter-borne British paratroopers exchanged heavy fire with the Sierra Leone renegades, who called themselves the West Side Boys, at their creek-side base surrounded by mangrove swamps and jungle, British Chief of the Defense Staff General Sir Charles Guthrie said.

A paratrooper was killed while

carrying out the rescue operation and another was seriously injured although his wounds were not considered life-threatening, a British Defense Ministry spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Another 11 British soldiers suffered less serious wounds.

"These casualties are regrettable, but are at the low end of the scale for such a difficult and complex operation," the spokesman said.

Twenty-five members of the West Side Boys, including three women fighters, were also killed and 18, including gang leader "Brigadier" Foday Kallay, were captured by the British, the spokesman said.

A senior U.N. peacekeeping officer, Jordanian Brig. Ahmed Serhan, said an unknown number of renegades surrendered to U.N. troops.

Those who did not voluntarily give themselves up "face the full penalty of the law," Sierra Leone Information Minister Julius Spencer warned without elaborating.

"It was a very difficult operation," Spencer said. "We hope this sends a message to (Sierra Leone rebel groups) to give up their arms."

Blair praised the forces carrying out the rescue and said his prayers were with the families of those involved. "This was an operation carried out in circumstances of immense danger, in the face of armed resistance," the prime minister said.

The rescue mission centered on the West Side Boys camp in the Occra Hills, where the hostages had been held since Aug. 25. The base is some 45 miles east of the capital, Freetown.

British paratroopers freed the hostages during the first 20 minutes of the operation by swooping into three strategic points near where the hostages were held, Guthrie said. Yet nine hours later, British army spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Tony Cramp said the mission was still continuing "in its conclusive phase" to retrieve British vehicles and weapons

captured by the rebels. He did not elaborate.

Serhan said U.N. and British troops continued to patrol the area to assure there were no remaining pockets of renegades. Jordanian U.N. soldiers were reinforcing all roads into the area.

The operation came after the West Side Boys captured 11 British soldiers and a Sierra Leonean soldier Aug. 25. Five British officers were freed Aug. 30.

Britain coordinated closely with Sierra Leone government forces and the U.N. peacekeeping force here, said Brig. Gordon Hughes, commander of British forces in Sierra Leone. He said his troops carried out their task with "surgical" precision.

British officials feared for the safety of the hostages. The West Side Boys are a notoriously undisciplined faction with a reputation for widespread drunkenness and drug-

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Fighting rages in Afghan North Taliban sue for peace

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) - Fighting raged on three northern fronts between Afghanistan's Taliban rulers and their northern-based opposition even as the Taliban appealed to their rivals to lay down arms for peace in the war-battered country.

"This country has seen enough of bloodshed," Mullah Abdul Mannan, a Taliban commander, said at the Old Road front-line, just 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of the Afghan capital of Kabul, where the two sides exchanged heavy artillery fire.

Vans loaded with bearded Taliban warriors, armed with assault rifles and rocket launchers, were seen heading toward the front lines.

"We urge the opposition to stop fighting and lay down their weapons for peace," Mannan said.

The opposition has rejected all such offers by the Taliban in the past.

Afghanistan, one of the world's poorest countries, has been devastated by two decades of civil war. The warring factions have

rejected United Nations' repeated pleas for an end to the protracted conflict and formation of a broad-based government.

Mohammed Abil, a spokesman of the anti-Taliban alliance, said the Taliban attacked the strategic Salang Pass, connecting Kabul with northern provinces, early Sunday. But they were beaten back, he said.

At least 28 Taliban were killed or wounded, he said by telephone from the northern province of Takhar. Several opposition soldiers were also injured, but he refused to give details.

No comment was available from the Taliban regarding fighting near the Salang Pass, 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Kabul.

The Taliban, who follow a strict version of Islam, now rule more than 90 percent of Afghanistan, including Kabul. They are Sunni Muslims and mostly Pashtun, the country's majority ethnic group.

The opposition comprises ethnic and religious minorities and control

the northern province of Badakhshan and a few other small pockets in the north. In recent weeks, the opposition has lost several key towns to the Taliban.

Overnight, opposition fighters destroyed few Taliban posts in a guerrilla attack near the Old Road front-line, Abil said. "At least eight Taliban were killed and several wounded," he said. "All our fighters came back safely."

But Mannan denied any losses at

this front, saying the two sides pounded each other only with artillery fire.

Also overnight, the opposition said its fighters fought back a Taliban attack near the northern city of Taloqan, the capital of Takhar located 270 kilometers (162 miles) north of Kabul.

The Taliban tried to advance toward Ahandara, 15 kilometers (9 miles) north of Taloqan, but were beaten back after several hours of fighting. There were no details of casualties.



A Taliban tank heads towards Kabul, August 28, 2000.

In a country where 10% are HIV positive

Mbeki rejects HIV as the cause of AIDS

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) - President Thabo Mbeki, already under fire for courting fringe AIDS theorists, said in a magazine interview to be published Monday that he does not think HIV alone causes AIDS.

In the interview, conducted by Time magazine earlier this month in Pretoria, Mbeki was asked whether there was a link between HIV and AIDS.

"This is precisely where the problem starts. No, I am saying that you cannot attribute immune deficiency solely and exclusively to a virus," he was quoted as saying.

There is "a whole variety of things (that) can cause the immune system to collapse," he

told Time. He cited "endemic poverty, the impact of nutrition, contaminated water" and "repetitive infections of malaria, ordinary STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) - syphilis, gonorrhea etc.," as conditions resulting in immune deficiency.

"Now it is perfectly possible that among those things is a particular virus. But the notion that immune deficiency is only acquired from a single virus cannot be sustained. The problem is that once you say immune deficiency is acquired from that virus your response will be anti-retroviral drugs," Mbeki said.

"To say this is the sole cause therefore the only response to it is anti-retroviral drugs, I am saying

we'll never be able to solve the AIDS problem," he said in the Time interview, which was available on the Internet Sunday.

Mbeki has been strongly criticized for his government's AIDS policies and for including people who reject the widely accepted notion that HIV causes AIDS on a panel established to advise him on dealing with the pandemic. About 4.2 million South Africans - roughly 10 percent of the population - are HIV positive.

The South African debate flared in the two weeks ago after Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang sent provincial health ministers a

document claiming that an international conspiracy which included aliens introduced AIDS in Africa to reduce the African population.

Tshabalala-Msimang's spokeswoman Patricia Lambert said it was routine to distribute the document, a chapter of a book by William Cooper that had been sent to the minister anonymously, and that the distribution did not mean the minister agreed with the content, the South African Press Association reported.

The government has also been criticized for refusing to give anti-retroviral drugs to pregnant HIV-positive women.

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