

# Last night Mr Blair hailed our intervention in Bosnia as a success. As this alarming report reveals, the reverse is true

WHAT will happen if the Allied bombing succeeds and the Belgrade leadership agrees to the international plan for Kosovo, putting Nato in charge of running the region?

The Allies hope to copy events in Bosnia, where the use of overwhelming military firepower was followed by the imposition of international administration.

But the lesson of Bosnia is that a peace achieved by an international army of administrators and peacekeepers won't work in the long term. An artificial statelet, dependent on international regulation, can only ever be a temporary solution, sucking in international resources to police a divided territory.

The Dayton Agreement that ended the Bosnian war was drawn up under US leadership and imposed on the parties, using threats of sanctions, political isolation or renewed bombing campaigns.

It had little support from any citizens in Bosnia. Serbs and Croats favoured closer links to their neighbouring states, while Bosnian Moslems did not believe

## 'A vicious circle is created'

that the new nation had a long-term future.

Foreign nation-builders have yet to learn that redrawing the map of the Balkans is a lot easier than creating inter-ethnic co-operation on the ground. Breaking up existing states is a lot easier than creating new ones.

Three-and-half years after the end of the fighting there, Bosnia is now run by an international administration whose transitional role has turned into a permanent one as ethnic divisions have been institutionalised under international trusteeship.

The international community was meant to cede self-government to the Bosnian people after

By Dr DAVID CHANDLER

a year of transition, followed by democratic elections. However, the deadlines for international withdrawal have been constantly extended and now democracy in Bosnia has been postponed indefinitely.

The regular elections held are little more than consultative opinion polls and if the wrong people receive the democratic mandate the international community is free to dismiss them.

The presence of 50,000 international troops and administrators drawn from every leading institution from the UN and Nato to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund has not been able to turn the tiny Bosnian state into an integrated economic or political entity.

Despite the overwhelming powers of the international administration, reconciliation and stability are no nearer in Bosnia.

The Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Moslems have all had their autonomy restricted, their political parties and media emasculated by international vetting and censorship, and seen their institutions overruled and undermined by international edicts.

They are effectively ruled by

ONE of Serbia's most brutal figures is reforming his band of hated paramilitary killers and moving back into Kosovo. Zeljko Raznjatovic, known as Arkan, and his paramilitary 'Tigers' were responsible for some of the worst atrocities in the Balkan conflict.

His freelance units were accused of torture, murder and rape during the war in Croatia - forcing thousands to flee their homes.

Arkan, pictured, retired his forces in 1995 at the end of the Bosnian war. But Nato has learned that the 46-year-old warlord has now offered

## The warlord

his services to Serb military commanders in Kosovo. It is understood that he was inundated by volunteers in Belgrade, furious at the Allied bombing.

Belgrade television said this week that Arkan had reactivated his Serbian Volunteer Guard. It reported him as saying: 'We are all as one in the defence of Kosovo. It will be an honour for us.'

A report into war crimes in 1991 quoted witnesses who claimed: 'Arkan shot down people and

laughed as they fell. He was like a possessed man, a butcher. He would make wives and children watch as he fired into the heads of their husbands and fathers.'

During the Balkan conflict the 800-strong Tigers were the most enthusiastic and sadistic practitioners of ethnic cleansing across Bosnia. They are believed to have executed up to 2,000 Moslems in a gymnasium, with machine guns and pistols. Arkan, a convicted bank robber, is sought by Interpol for extortion and murder, and is on the United Nations' list of most wanted war criminals.



the international community's High Representative, empowered to draw up legislation and to impose it against the will of all three ethnic constituencies.

Every decision, from housing policy to schooling and sports, is covered by a stream of international edicts from the burgeoning international bureaucracy. The more edicts are imposed above the heads of elected representatives, the less basis there is for any inter-ethnic co-operation.

A vicious circle is created in which international regulation, far from being transitional, becomes more and more necessary to hold the entity together.

Far from being an answer, the Bosnia model of conflict resolution would tie down international

resources and perpetuate a stalemate instead of a solution. But Nato's air strikes have ruled out other solutions to the problems of Kosovo.

No one thinks that bombing alone will secure peace in the Serbian province. The destruction of Serb military and industrial infrastructure by Nato forces is hardly likely to encourage reconciliatory feeling amongst the Serbian population.

The separatist Albanian forces, and their military arm, the Kosovo Liberation Army, are likely to be further encouraged by this show of international support and emboldened in their claims against the Belgrade regime.

Peace in Kosovo, under these conditions, will come only through transforming Kosovo into an inter-

national protectorate, along Bosnian lines. But this approach has failed in Bosnia, and will also fail in Kosovo.

Western interventionists will then claim that they can not leave Kosovo because of ethnic intransigence. Withdrawal, they will say, will discredit Nato and the Allied leadership.

The lessons for Kosovo's future is clear. The temptation to solve the problems of the Balkans by re-drawing maps and nation-building may provide a mission for Nato and other international institutions. But that mission postpones a long-term settlement and reinforces divisions rather than overcoming them.

Dr David Chandler is author of *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton* (Pluto Press, £14.99)