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Individuals and institutions wishing to receive PER publications should write to:

**PROJECT ON
ETHNIC
RELATIONS**



15 Chambers Street
Princeton, New Jersey, USA 08542-3707
Telephone: (609) 683-5666
Fax: (609) 683-5888
E-mail: ethnic@compuserve.com
<http://www.netcom.com/~ethnic/per.html>

R e p o r t

MAY 22, 1999



ROME, ITALY

CATASTROPHE IN THE
BALKANS: SERBIA'S
NEIGHBORS AND THE
KOSOVO CONFLICT

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PREFACE

The meeting that is the subject of this report took place on May 22, 1999, in Rome, at the height of the expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians by Serb forces and the air war conducted by the NATO alliance. The atmosphere was one of suspense, alarm, and determination. Would the Yugoslav political and military leadership ultimately surrender to NATO's bombing, or would the consensus among NATO members unravel—some had already proposed a bombing halt—because of Yugoslav resistance and Western revulsion over casualties among Serb civilians? Would the bombing stop or accelerate the expulsions in Kosovo? Was a land war inevitable? How much more damage would a continuation of the war do to relations between NATO members and Russia? What would be the fate of Yugoslavia's neighbors? And of Serbia and Kosovo? What would be the state of interethnic relations in the region at war's end?

The discussions in Rome brought together political leaders from all the countries around Serbia: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, and Romania. Even Yugoslavia's Republic of Montenegro, itself a target of NATO bombs, was represented. They were joined by participants from Greece, Italy, the United States, and the European Union.

The report captures and records the fears and aspirations of these political leaders during the latest, and presumably last, Balkan war of the millennium. Although this publication comes after the war has ended, future historians will find in it the immediacy of the private discussions that were taking place among those who were caught in the war's backlash.



From left to right: Dragisa Burzan, Gorgi Spasov, Paskal Milo, Arben Imami.



From left to right: Elena Zamfirescu, Victor Jackovich, Roberto Toscano, Jadranko Prlic.

One of the surprises of the meeting was the near unanimity of the group that the bombing had to be continued without pause until Belgrade had agreed to NATO's conditions, despite the serious material and political disruptions that the war was causing for their countries. And, while they disagreed on some other matters, they were unanimous in insisting that there could be no lasting solution to interethnic conflicts in the region until Slobodan Milosevic had once and for all disappeared from the political scene. (Five days after the meeting, on May 27, 1999, the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, announced that it had indicted Milosevic as a war criminal.)

More important, the meeting confirmed that a new generation of leaders has emerged in Southeastern Europe. The participants shared a remarkable knowledge and highly nuanced understanding of the regional and global stage on which the current drama is being played out, as well as a strong determination to build democratic political systems. The quality of their leadership, and of those who follow, could turn out to have the most decisive long-term influence on the region.

We record our gratitude to Dr. Alessandro Silj, Secretary General of the Italian Council for the Social Sciences, who rendered indispensable practical assistance and support in arranging the meeting and who was a participant in the discussions. The report was written by Alex N. Grigor'ev, PER program officer, who helped to conceive and plan the meeting and who also participated in it. The report was edited by Warren R. Haffar, also a program officer and Robert A. Feldmesser, PER's senior editor. PER assumes full responsibility for the text, which has not been reviewed by the participants.

Allen H. Kassof, *President*

Livia B. Plaks, *Executive Director*

Princeton, New Jersey

July 1999

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In this report, the name "Macedonia" is used for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; "Yugoslavia" or "F.R.Y." for Serbia-Montenegro, or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; and "Bosnia" for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In general, the English (and Serbian) spelling of the name "Kosovo" is used in this report. However, in references to the institutions of the Albanians from Kosovo, the Albanian spelling "Kosova" is used. The term "Kosovar" is used as an adjective for Kosovo and as a noun to denote inhabitants of the region, whether Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Turks, Roma, or others.

In order to encourage frank discussion of the issues on the agenda, it was agreed that the participants would not be individually identified in this report. However, in order to make sense of the viewpoints expressed during the meeting, some form of identification of the speakers is necessary. For this purpose, participants from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Romania, and the Yugoslav Republic of Montenegro are identified simply as "participants." Participants from Italy and the European Union are identified as "West European participants," and those from the United States as "U.S. participants."

INTRODUCTION

The meeting took place at a time when the suppression of the rights of the Kosovar Albanians, which had begun in 1989, finally erupted into open armed conflict, with serious negative effects on all the states in the region. Serb forces were carrying out a brutal ethnic cleansing campaign in Kosovo. More than half a million refugees had been forced out of the country. The talks in Rambouillet, France, between the Serbian government and the Kosovar Albanian leaders had collapsed, and NATO had been bombing targets in Yugoslavia for two months.

A U.S. participant opened the discussion by asking a set of questions about the larger picture of the conflict in Kosovo. What will the political landscape of the Balkans look like when the Kosovo crisis is over? How will this latest Balkan war, which is taking place in a relatively small area but is having such large consequences, change Europe, and how will it change the U.S. relationship with Europe? He invited participants to assess and evaluate the impact of the war in Yugoslavia on the other countries in the neighborhood. What are their hopes and fears for Southeastern Europe? How will the war affect their domestic politics and their relations with one another? What will happen to the divisions between Western Europe and Southeastern Europe? What should happen to those divisions? Will this latest catastrophe create unexpected opportunities for Southeastern Europe, or will we all be left only with damages? Finally, this U.S. participant noted that there is a larger framework in which the Kosovo conflict is unfolding. The war is producing an intricate and complex system of effects in world politics. Recent events in the Balkans have affected the United States, Russia, and even China, their domestic politics and relations with each other.

ASSESSMENT OF THE NATO ACTION IN YUGOSLAVIA

One might expect that the most debated issue at the meeting would have been the appropriateness of NATO's air strikes against the F.R.Y. But with few exceptions, the participants were emphatically opposed to any bombing halt, which they believed would amount to a victory for Slobodan Milosevic, Yugoslavia's president. Participants feared that even a "temporary" pause could lead to a prolonged period of bar-

gaining that would keep Milosevic in power for a long time. This kind of unity on such a fundamental issue was a surprise to the participants themselves.

Situation on the ground

The discussion was opened by one of the participants describing the situation in Yugoslavia from an "insider's" perspective. He characterized the last three months of events in Yugoslavia as a political earthquake, a disaster that will have long-term negative effects. The NATO action, he argued, has brought significant change to the political system in Serbia. Milosevic has solidified his support; moreover, his supporters have been radicalized. Civil society has disappeared from Serbia, the free media have been shut down, and any prospects for a society of tolerance have been killed. The F.R.Y. is being completely isolated.

The mess that was created by Milosevic in Kosovo, this participant continued, has had adverse effects on all the neighboring countries, but first and foremost it has endangered Montenegro, the other republic in the F.R.Y. The government of Montenegro understands the will of the international community to establish civilizational principles in that part of Europe. Belgrade cannot and will not agree with such an approach. There are signs that the Yugoslav government and its allies within Montenegro had prepared a coup to oust the republic's government. Units of the Yugoslav army that are stationed in the republic interfere with the work and daily responsibilities of the Montenegrin government. The army has committed a number of terrible crimes against ethnic Albanians living within Montenegro and, for the first time, has produced refugees from that republic. This speaker concluded that, nevertheless, thanks to the policy of the government of Montenegro and its president, Milo Djukanovic, a civil war there has been avoided so far. The government continues to carry out its vital functions.

A number of other speakers agreed that Milosevic has solidified his support and strengthened his position since the start of the bombing. He has managed to get rid of a significant part of the Kosovar Albanian population, and he has created humanitarian disasters in Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro. One participant blamed NATO and the bombing for these outcomes. He reminded others that, before the bombing, Serbia had a free press and Milosevic was

becoming weaker by the day. However, with the start of the military campaign against Yugoslavia, Milosevic and his coalition became stronger and basic freedoms in Yugoslavia were curtailed. Another participant took issue with that view. Serbia cannot be strong, he maintained, when its military and economic machinery is being destroyed with accelerating speed every day.

Impact on the neighboring countries

Many participants pointed to the effects on their countries of the conflict in Kosovo. One noted that, even though his country does not have a border with Kosovo, it has nevertheless received 58,000 refugees from the province since the fighting started. As an example of the economic effects, he said that before the war, people entering the country produced some 1,600 customs declarations daily. Now, this number is down to 200. Another participant testified that the Kosovo war has enormously weakened the economy in his country, too: 28 percent of workers have lost their jobs because their enterprises had worked very closely with their Yugoslav counterparts. Consequently, this participant argued, his country should be granted some compensation for the economic losses it has suffered. The situation will be even worse, he added, if Milosevic allows 400,000 Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia to leave Yugoslavia. He estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 would come to his country, which would create an economic catastrophe there.

Another participant said that by producing such huge numbers of refugees, Milosevic was seeking to destabilize the neighboring countries, especially Macedonia. Refugees now account for 12 percent of that country's population. Belgrade has managed to mobilize ethnic Serbs in Macedonia and has tried to bring war to that country. Other participants noted that refugees amount to more than 10 percent of Montenegro's population.

Military options

As already noted, almost all participants supported the NATO bombing and opposed any halt. Some conceded, however, that there was opposition to such views in their respective countries, arising out of pro-Serb sentiment, anti-American sentiment, or concern over "collateral damage."

Most participants also agreed with a U.S. speaker who said that the international community had a moral obligation to act in the face of the atrocities being committed in Kosovo by the Yugoslav army, the Serbian police, and the Serb paramilitary forces. The international community had to step in even if to do so might have been in violation of international law.

A participant from the region characterized the action of NATO as a "war for" rather than a "war against." It is a war for democracy, for respect for human rights, for minority rights, and for the rights of refugees—and, he added, it is also a war for Serbia and the Serbian people. (One participant said that it is also a war against the last dictator in Europe.) It is of course a fact that you cannot bomb a government without bombing the country and the people. This fact has been especially evident in Montenegro, where NATO had to destroy some important military objects even though it wholeheartedly supports the leadership of that republic of Yugoslavia and its policies.

After the atrocities committed by the Yugoslav forces in Kosovo, any compromise with Belgrade would be a failure of the international community.

Another participant said that the Milosevic government had been terrorizing the Balkan region for almost a decade. It has been a source of the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and now Kosovo. The international community tried to deal with Milosevic conservatively for many years, but it finally reached the point where it lost all trust in Milosevic's promises and had to act with force.

Another participant added that, although war is not the only remedy for such humanitarian disasters, in this case it was the best remedy. This war should stop only when a clear solution is in sight. After the atrocities committed by the Yugoslav forces in Kosovo, any compromise with Belgrade would be a failure of the international community. NATO is "condemned to win" and might have to consider the deployment of ground troops to achieve its goal. This was supported by many at the meeting. One participant contended that if ground troops entered Kosovo, they would not encounter any significant partisan activity. Among the Kosovar Albanians, who constituted almost 90 percent of the population in the province at the beginning of this

year, there is overwhelming support for the NATO action.

One of the participants objected that the deployment of ground troops would not solve the problem. The only way for NATO troops to enter Kosovo is through Macedonia, and that would mean bringing Macedonia into a war with Serbia, leading to the collapse of the Macedonian state and still greater instability in the Balkans. If the reason for introducing NATO troops into Kosovo is to gain autonomy for the province, he asked, why not try to achieve it by other means? This participant, however, was very skeptical that Albanians would accept autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia or Yugoslavia. But an independent Kosovo will be possible only after an international conference that would undertake a complete redrawing of the Balkan map.

Another participant congratulated NATO for taking a serious moral stand on Kosovo. There is no oil or gold in the province, but there has been a humanitarian disaster, created by one of the world's most brutal dictators, and the Western alliance decided to put an end to it. He called on NATO not to repeat the mistake of the Gulf War, when the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, was left in power in Baghdad. As a result of that mistake, Iraq continues to pose a threat to its neighbors. NATO has to go all the way and not leave Milosevic in power. The unconditional surrender of Serbia might be a useful tool for achieving that goal.

This participant also cautioned against any pause in the bombing. An overwhelming majority of the participants supported this view. One added that any halt in the bombing would have extremely negative consequences for NATO unity and for individual member states. Wealthy members of the alliance will survive a continuation of dictatorship and ethnic cleansing in Serbia, but the poor members and Yugoslavia's neighbors will suffer from a further deterioration of the situation in the Balkans.

One participant declared firmly: The bombing should continue until Milosevic accepts NATO's ultimatum. This is the only language he understands. It was the only way to stop him in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. It will be the only way to stop him in Kosovo, too.

A few participants, however, took exception to this view. One of them said that the countries of the region found themselves in a strained situation with the beginning of the war. Hungary, for example, is a Yugoslav neighbor but also a member of NATO, having joined only recently, after the decision to begin the bombing had already been made.

Meanwhile, there are 300,000 ethnic Hungarians living in Vojvodina, a northern province of Serbia. Hungary must be concerned with the fate of those people and with the reaction of Serbs in Vojvodina to the NATO bombing. It is possible that they will turn against their ethnic Hungarian neighbors during or after the Kosovo conflict.

But even this participant agreed that Milosevic and his dictatorship should be defeated, though he was opposed to the bombing campaign. He emphasized that Milosevic does not represent all Serbian people. NATO should be very careful not to humiliate the Serbian people; it should reach a compromise with them, but not with Milosevic.

This participant concluded by saying that he was against any use of military force in Yugoslavia. He called for stabilization of the situation through diplomacy. In this context, a clear picture of autonomy for Kosovo would be very helpful. He strongly supported the proposal of Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema to stop the bombing temporarily and initiate talks with Belgrade. Another participant added that the bombing has seriously degraded the image of Europe in the Balkans. NATO is a powerful force, and a stop in the bombing would not weaken it.

The situation in the region will not improve as long as he [Slobodan Milosevic] remains in office.

Reacting to the previous speaker's remarks, another participant said that there are other opinions in Hungary. Once Hungary joined NATO, it had a responsibility to support the NATO action fully and with no reservations. He agreed, however, that NATO should not fight the Serbs. Hungary, he argued, should take a more active role in the conflict. Hungary supports the bombing because there is no alternative. According to him, the D'Alema proposal would not work, simply because Milosevic cannot be trusted. The Yugoslav president has signed agreements on many occasions but has not done anything to fulfill his obligations.

This speaker, however, criticized NATO for not being fully prepared for the bombing. He stressed that NATO had not sufficiently explained to European publics its goals and intentions. A clear statement that there is no plan to change international borders and that there will be no support for the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) would help calm fears in some neighboring countries that NATO is creating

a new “doctrine of national minorities.¹ Nevertheless, the bombing should continue, this participant said, and Milosevic should be removed; the situation in the region will not improve as long as he remains in office. Politicians in NATO and other European countries

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should be concerned with the lack of immediate success in the bombing and the signs of decreasing public support for it. If the deployment of ground troops is necessary for ultimate success, then they should be deployed. NATO should forget about an exit strategy. NATO and

the international community should be prepared for years if not decades of military presence in the former Yugoslavia. Nobody is questioning the presence of U.S. troops in Germany fifty-four years after the end of World War II. Why, then, should there be concern about troops in the Balkans if they are there to keep peace?

This exchange served as confirmation of a statement by one of the participants that the Kosovo war had a serious impact on domestic politics in his country. On the one hand, it has divided the opposition, yet on the other hand it has led to a strange coalition of the extreme right, the extreme left, and the pacifists. He particularly expressed regret that the pacifists found themselves in the same camp with these extremists. When the war is over and a huge number of mass graves are discovered in Kosovo, he said, the pacifists will be ashamed of their present position.

SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS

In discussing possible outcomes of the Kosovo crisis, participants were unanimous in the view that there could be no stable settlement so long as Milosevic was in power. The participants also cautioned against any outcome that would lead to a partition of Kosovo or to international administration by sector. With few exceptions, they were opposed to the support, encouragement, or inclusion of the KLA in any postwar arrangement.

Several speakers pointed out that it was difficult at present to determine what would be the best solution for the situation. One of them

said flatly that the destructive policies of Milosevic should be ended and UN troops led by NATO should be deployed in Kosovo. Another proposed a short-term formula under which an international security force would be deployed in Kosovo; the KLA would not be involved in the implementation of the settlement; and there would be no change of borders—Kosovo would be autonomous, not independent. “Self-determination should be inclusive, not exclusive.”

Another participant emphasized that the Albanians in Kosovo should be given basic rights and freedoms and should never be put under Serb rule again. The Rambouillet agreement should be brought back to the table. With some modifications, it has all the elements needed for a solution of the problem. However,

political normalization should begin only after the refugees are returned to Kosovo and a peace-keeping force is stationed there. A

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UN Security Council resolution would be useful but not necessary in order to initiate such a process. This participant criticized the Russian proposal to deploy international forces in Kosovo in three zones, which he said would lead to a division of Kosovo. He also questioned the willingness of Albanians to return to a zone controlled by Russian peacekeepers.

In response, another participant said that a UN Security Council resolution was actually the best formula not only for the settlement but also for Russia and China to get involved, in terms of both their international responsibilities and their domestic policies. The point was also made that the conflict in Kosovo should not be called a “Balkan” war. It is not a Balkan war, but a Kosovo war or a war in the F.R.Y. This participant also asked whether the idea of Kosovo as a third republic within the F.R.Y. had not exhausted itself.

All of the participants agreed that the return of refugees is an essential element of any short-term plan for ending the Kosovo crisis. As a U.S. participant put it, this is needed “not only for Kosovo but also for Serbia.” One participant declared, however, that Serbs and Albanians are clearly not capable of living together. As the Albanians return to Kosovo, the Serbs will leave the province to go to other parts of Serbia, including Vojvodina. For that reason, said this participant, the Vojvodina issue should be part of any Kosovo agreement.

Another participant suggested that the latest G-8 statement had all the conditions necessary for a short-term solution. It is important to keep Russia as a player in any diplomatic process concerning Kosovo. This speaker added that any workable solution would have to be negotiated, not imposed, and it should be negotiated first of all between the Kosovar Albanians and Belgrade. Another participant disagreed, saying that NATO is capable of producing and imposing a settlement. Indeed, he said, NATO should play a leading role in any Kosovo-related negotiations. A colleague of his, however, was critical of the Rambouillet accords and especially of the manner in which the negotiations there were conducted. He said that if the West had agreed to

Any support for the KLA would violate the West's commitment to creating a civic and multiethnic state.

some changes in the accords, Milosevic would have accepted them, and that would have weakened his power tremendously.

Two participants engaged in a sharp exchange on the issue of the KLA. One reiterated his previous

statement that no support should be given to it and that it should not be involved in any peace settlement. If it were involved, problems similar to the ones with the Taliban in Afghanistan would arise. Any support for the KLA would violate the West's commitment to creating a civic and multiethnic state. Another participant strongly disagreed, arguing that the KLA is not dominated by religious fundamentalism, which is at the heart of the Taliban ideology. The KLA, in contrast, is based on an ideology of national liberation. However, he did agree that if there was an international presence in Kosovo, there would be no need for the KLA.

A West European participant observed that it was extremely important for NATO to clarify its relationship with the KLA. How can democracy be guaranteed, human rights secured, and civic multiethnic states be established in the Balkans while supporting the KLA? If the West helped the KLA establish an ethnic state, it would be playing into the hands of Milosevic and others like him and against the principles and ideology of the European Union. The future of the EU is of a common state with common foreign and defense policies. Countries that are striving to join the EU should be prepared to respect and cooperate with such common policies. This participant concluded by saying that the region needs a serious strategy for resisting nationalism.

Participants were united in their view of Yugoslav President Milosevic and his policies, and they agreed that any workable solution had to include the removal of Milosevic from office. No negotiations should be conducted with him. In this regard, one speaker expressed his disagreement with the widespread belief that there are no alternatives to Milosevic in Serbia. Many people held a similar belief about Hungary during the Janos Kadar era and in Romania during the time of Nicolae Ceausescu. Yet now, ten years later, the region consists largely of flourishing democratic and pluralistic societies. Another participant recalled that, in the former Yugoslavia, it was Belgrade, not Zagreb or Ljubljana, which was the center of free thinking and democratically oriented reformers.

Commenting on this exchange, another participant warned that Milosevic is not to be trusted in any negotiations. This speaker had participated in several talks with the Yugoslav president. He recalled the Crete summit in 1997, at which Milosevic was asked to implement the education agreement that he had signed the previous year with Ibrahim Rugova, the moderate leader of the Kosovar Albanians. Despite promises made on this and several other occasions, the Serbian government has never fully implemented that agreement. If it had, the situation in Kosovo would have been entirely different from what it is today. There would have been some possibility for Serbs and Albanians to live together in Kosovo.

Another participant with extensive personal experience in dealing with the Yugoslav president agreed that the major problem is Milosevic and his "family dictatorship." Nevertheless, he questioned whether the bombing of Yugoslavia would put an end to the regime in Belgrade. The Serbian people should be given a chance to do this themselves. Milosevic cannot be a negotiating partner of the international community. If he is accepted in that role, all Serbs, including the Serbs of Bosnia, will be in danger. The people who are in power in Belgrade are not interested in Serbia or the Serbs; they are interested only in their own personal wealth. However, he continued, it is not enough to isolate Milosevic. After all, Fidel Castro and Saddam Hussein are also isolated, yet they are firmly in power. Nor should Milosevic and other nationalists in Serbia, including Vojislav Seselj, be allowed to run in future elections. This rule has been applied in Bosnia, where Radovan Karadzic was banned from running for the presidency of

Republika Srpska. The international community, however, should bear in mind that Milosevic is not the only one who instigated wars in the Balkans. Nationalists in other countries should be dealt with in a similar manner.

This participant disagreed with the judgment that Serbs and Albanians cannot live together in Kosovo. There was a similar interethnic problem in Bosnia, but the people there have made some progress. Their experience should be drawn on in any Kosovo settlement. The participant added that more and more Serbs in Bosnia understand that their future lies in that entity. Of course, there is a need for close economic, political, and cultural cooperation with Serbia, but Bosnia is regarded as the country of the Bosnian Serbs.

Continuing with the issue of dealing with Milosevic, another participant was very skeptical that investors would be interested in Serbia after the war if the Yugoslav president remained in power. Who would want to shake hands with him? Who would trust him? The people of Serbia must understand that. Prolonged rule by Milosevic would mean the total isolation of Serbia from Europe and from the currents of European integration, even from the European transport corridor.

Another participant cautioned against viewing Serbian society in black and white. Europe needs a new Serbia, and Europe and the United States could be important factors in bringing it about. In the Republika Srpska, the international community has chosen to talk not to Radovan Karadzic but to Milorad Dodik and other moderates, even though Karadzic and his party enjoy significant support. This view was seconded by another participant from the region, who criticized the West for not providing sufficient support for the opposition in Serbia after its victory in local elections in 1996, or during the Zajedno demonstrations that followed, or after the victory of Milo Djukanovic in Montenegro. To some extent, "Milosevic is our own creation," this participant concluded.

A U.S. participant pointed out that, as the international community struggles to find a way to resolve the conflict in Kosovo, a surprising source of help presents itself in the constitution of the F.R.Y. Under its provisions the two constituent republics, Serbia and Montenegro, have equal representation in the House of the Republics, the upper chamber of the federal parliament, the Skupstina. The constitution

also provides that if the federal president is a Serb, the prime minister must be a Montenegrin. Until 1998, the Montenegrin delegation in the federal parliament was made up of Milosevic supporters. Following the victory of the coalition "For a Better Life" last year, the Montenegrin parliament elected a new delegation, consisting entirely of members of the coalition parties. Milosevic, however, managed to prevent the delegation from taking its seats and instead retained the previous delegation, in violation of the constitution. He then chose as prime minister Momir Bulatovic, who, though a Montenegrin, was a crony of his—and had been the losing candidate in the 1997 and 1998 Montenegrin elections. In response to these crude actions, Montenegro cut off all contacts with the federal government.

These constitutional provisions create an opening for negotiations to end the conflict in Kosovo. The international community, including especially Russia, should press Milosevic to respect the constitution of his own country and accept a prime minister chosen by the Djukanovic coalition. It should be made known that Milosevic is violating the fundamental law of his own country. A Djukanovic-appointed prime minister would be in a better position to resolve the Kosovo crisis and would surely strive to do so, as well as to institute new domestic and foreign policies and to improve relations with other European countries and with the United States. Attention should also be called to the fact that according to the Yugoslav constitution, the F.R.Y. is a parliamentary republic rather than a presidential one. One participant commented, however, that this was a rather legalistic view that did not take into account on-the-ground political reality.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS AND THE FUTURE OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

The conference then turned to matters of regional security, long-term solutions for the Kosovo problem, and the future of Southeastern Europe. Several participants said that any viable postwar settlement would depend on a reconstruction program for the entire region, including a democratic Serbia. They expressed a hope for serious, sustained, and sympathetic interest in the region from what they called "EU Europe" and the United States. They acknowledged that there would not be a "Marshall Plan" on the scale of U.S. aid to Europe at

the end of World War II, but hoped that Yugoslavia's neighbors would receive substantial economic assistance and private investment. They also supported the eventual inclusion of a democratic Yugoslavia in such a program. They fully recognized the need in their countries for continuing fiscal and economic reform,

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a positive regulatory and legal climate, and vigorous efforts to seize control from the various economic mafias that have arisen. There was general agreement on the need to speed up Euro-Atlantic integration and on the hope that the present

emergency would persuade the European Union of the importance of giving a clear signal about fast-track provisional membership.

Many participants called for a regional approach to the Kosovo crisis and to related problems in the Balkans. Most of the ills of the region cannot be overcome on a purely national basis; the regional dimension must be taken into account. One participant introduced two rules for dealing with the problems. First, there is no point in seeking fixed solutions; what is needed is a process. Second, a half solution is not a solution at all.

A U.S. participant conceded that the West has not succeeded in surrounding Serbia with a zone of prosperity. The region needs something like a Marshall Plan that has been thoroughly developed by the Americans, the West Europeans, and the Southeastern Europeans together. Another participant asserted that without a reconstruction plan in the style of what was done after World War II, it would be impossible to achieve peace and prosperity in the Balkans. He warned, however, that this was going to be a long and complicated process, though it is important that it be started. Another participant observed that the deterioration of the economies in the Balkans had not started with Milosevic. It began in the former Yugoslavia in the 1980s and was characterized by a sharp decline in the gross domestic product, bankruptcy of many enterprises, and mounting inflation.

A number of participants called on West European businesses to increase their investments in the region. Foreign investments, as one participant noted, not only provide much-needed money, but also change mindsets and bring the progressive air and the work ethic of the West.

A West European participant said that first and foremost the countries of the region need to improve their economies in order to deal successfully with their minorities. He presented the example of South Tyrol, an Italian province with a German-speaking majority. The success of South Tyrol, which is often cited by politicians in Southeastern Europe as a model for ethnic relations, came about because the Italian government put millions of dollars into the economy of that region. The emphasis of any regional program should be on an economic development in which minorities share in the wealth of the countries they live in. A couple of participants took exception to this view. One cautioned against overestimating the impact of economics in producing social harmony. He emphasized the power of nationalism in winning over the minds of people (including politicians).

Another participant pointed out that the Marshall Plan was not merely economic and financial support for Europe but also included specific requirements for democracy and an open society. Financial assistance to the Balkans should be part of a very comprehensive plan that should touch upon environmental problems, develop an energy network for the region, and help fight organized crime and corruption. It might be useful to think about a Central Bank for Southeastern Europe and a free-trade area. What is more important is that such a plan be set in a larger framework for European integration.

One participant declared that no plan will be successful if it excludes the many ethnic minorities of the Balkan region. The Europeans as well as the Southeastern Europeans need to establish successful ethnic policies. How can we impose on Milosevic something that some of NATO's members in this part of Europe do not respect? A common set of standards on the treatment of ethnic minorities should be developed. The governments of the region should be concerned with the economic development of territories populated by large ethnic minorities. Attitudes toward minorities should be changed, too; this would require a major public-education program. The people of the Balkans should be brought from the nineteenth century into the twenty-first.

This view was seconded by others, who, for example, said that politicians in the region should consider seriously how to keep other Milosevices from appearing in the future. One technique is the kind of bilateral treaty that has worked successfully between Hungary and its neighbors—Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

One participant said that the war in Yugoslavia had brought a number of positive outcomes. One of them is a unity among Serbia's neighbors vis-à-vis Milosevic. Never in history have the Balkans experienced such unity. This makes it all the more important, he went on, to listen to opinions from the Balkans while drafting assistance plans. He proposed that PER establish a permanent consultative body consisting of experienced politicians from the region that could give useful advice to NATO, the EU, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Several participants commented on the stabilization program designed by the EU, formally known as the Stability Pact. One said that the adoption of such a plan was a personal victory for the newly elected chairman of the European Commission, Romano Prodi. The EU has shown that it is ready to make a substantial commitment to the achievement of both short-term and long-term stabilization in the region. A West European participant and a participant from the Balkans described the Stability Pact. It includes all the nations of Southeastern Europe, the EU, the United States, Russia, and a number of international organizations. The F.R.Y. will be welcome to participate as a full and equal partner when it has met the conditions set by the international community. One such condition is the solution of the Kosovo crisis. One participant suggested that a way of drawing the F.R.Y. closer to membership is to make the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro a beneficiary of the pact. The pact contains three major areas: democratization, economic reconstruction, and security. The first of these includes protection of minority rights, return of refugees and displaced persons, and the development of civil society, the rule of law, an efficient administration, and good governance. Economic reconstruction includes development of free-trade areas, cross-border transportation, energy conservation and supply, promotion of the private sector, and environmental protection. The security provisions call for a fight against organized crime and corruption, appropriate immigration policies, observance of the Dayton accords and any future Kosovo settlement, and active participation in the Partnership for Peace and the North Atlantic Partnership Council.

Participants welcomed the fact that the EU and the United States have made the Stability Pact a priority of their Euro-Atlantic agenda. The launching of the pact will give a firm European anchor to the Balkan

region. Its ultimate success will depend largely on the efforts of the individual countries of the region to fulfill its objectives. It is clear that the future of the region lies in a united Balkans integrated into a united Europe.



From left to right: Csaba Tabajdi, Adrian Severin, Josip Paro.



From left to right: Pekka Hakala, Mihai Dobre, Milorad Dodik.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Republic of Albania

Arben Imami, Minister of State for Legislative Reform and Relations with the Parliament; Member of Parliament (Democratic Alliance Party)

Paskal Milo, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Milorad Dodik, Acting Prime Minister, Republika Srpska

Jadranko Prlic, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Republic of Bulgaria

Assen Agov, Member of Parliament (Union of Democratic Forces); Chairman, Committee on Foreign and Integration Policy, Parliament of Bulgaria

Evgeni Kirilov, Member of Parliament (Bulgarian Socialist Party/Group of the Democratic Left); Foreign Affairs Secretary, Parliamentary Group of the Democratic Left

Republic of Croatia

Josip Paro, Assistant Foreign Minister

Hellenic Republic

Alexandros Sandis, Ambassador to Italy

Republic of Hungary

Matyas Eorsi, Member of Parliament (Alliance of Free Democrats); former State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Csaba Tabajdi, Member of Parliament (Hungarian Socialist Party); Deputy Head of the Hungarian Socialist Party Faction; former State Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

Tamas Wachsler, State Secretary, Ministry of Defense

Italian Republic

Roberto Toscano, Head, Policy Planning Unit, Secretariat General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Gorgi Spasov, Member of Parliament (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia); former Minister of Justice

Romania

Adrian Severin, Member of Chamber of Deputies of Parliament (Democratic Party); Head, Romanian Delegation to the OSCE; former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Elena Zamfirescu, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

United States of America

Victor Jackovich, Ambassador, Southeast Europe Initiatives, Department of State

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (from the Republic of Montenegro)

Dragisa Burzan, Deputy Prime Minister, Republic of Montenegro

Ranko Krivokapic, Member of Parliament of Montenegro (Social Democratic Party); Chairman, Human Rights and Freedoms Committee, Parliament of Montenegro; Vice President, Social Democratic Party

European Union

Pekka Hakala, Administrator, Interparliamentary Relations, Europe Division, European Parliament

Project on Ethnic Relations

Livia Basch Plaks, Executive Director

Alex Grigor'ev, Program Officer

Allen Kassof, President

Dan Pavel, Director, Bucharest Office

Italian Council for the Social Sciences

Alessandro Silj, Secretary General

Europe and the Balkans International Network

Stefano Bianchini, Director

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Jon Blyth, Program Director, Central and Eastern Europe

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