

PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS

The Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) was founded in 1991 in anticipation of the serious interethnic conflicts that were to erupt following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. PER conducts programs of high-level intervention and dialogue and serves as a neutral mediator in several major disputes in the region. PER also conducts programs of training, education, and research at international, national, and community levels.

PER is supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, with additional funding from the Starr Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the Council of Europe.

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**MONTENEGRO ON THE BRINK:
AVOIDING ANOTHER
YUGOSLAV WAR**

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RELATIONS**



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YUGOSLAV WAR

BUDVA, YUGOSLAVIA

DECEMBER 3-4, 1999

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PREFACE

Montenegro is a small republic—with a population of 635,000—which, together with Serbia, makes up today's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is at a crucial moment: the present government leadership is considering how to re-define its fundamental relationship with Serbia.

On December 3-4, 1999 the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) organized a meeting in Budva, on Montenegro's Adriatic coast, about the status of Montenegro in Yugoslavia.

Some 40 leading officials and policymakers from Montenegro, Albania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, the United States, Italy, the OSCE and the United Nations, as well as from the Serbian democratic opposition, participated. They addressed Montenegro's relationship with Serbia, its role in the western Balkans, and how Montenegro is managing interethnic relations, especially with its Albanian minority. The tenor was one of cautious candor, with an emphasis on positive accomplishments. Indeed, the uncertainty and lack of unanimity that characterized reactions to political developments in Montenegro reflected the open nature of the dialogue.

In prepared remarks, Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic opened the session, stating Montenegro's preference for remaining part of Yugoslavia, subject to adjustments in constitutional arrangements. But he emphasized that the ongoing crisis in Serbia was creating grave problems for Montenegro.



From left to right: Milo Djukanovic, Livia Plaks, Kiro Gligorov, Allen Kassof.

One solution, the president said, is separation from Serbia and the establishment of an independent Montenegro. Two factors, in his view, contribute to the likelihood of this option: the entrenched nature of Milosevic's rule, which could mean a very long wait for changes in Belgrade, and the impatience among Montenegrin voters for material improvements that are impossible in present-day Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, Djukanovic emphasized, Montenegro wants to stay in Yugoslavia, wants a confederation on equal terms, and does not want to separate. He pointed out that Montenegro had made a proposal to Belgrade for such a confederation and is still awaiting a reply.

Reaction from the participants to the possibility of a bid for independence was thoughtful and varied. Kiro Gligorov, former president of Macedonia, provided a personal perspective from his experience there when Yugoslavia began to break up in 1991. While he recognized some parallels between Macedonia then and Montenegro now, there are also some differences that suggest a need for great caution by the Montenegrins. Other foreign participants urged a slow approach, as well.

Foreign participants also expressed concern that a proclamation of independence could not only produce unrest within Montenegro, but destabilize the whole region. Inevitably, the discussion turned to Kosovo. The fear was that Montenegrin independence would help to legitimize similar claims from Kosovo, which would, in turn, have repercussions in Macedonia. Further problems could be anticipated in Vojvodina and even as far as Slovakia and Romania.

Most participants from the Serbian opposition looked unfavorably on Montenegrin independence. They praised the efforts of the Djukanovic government in creating a democratic and Western-oriented Montenegro, but they opposed Montenegrin claims to independent statehood. Instead, they urged cooperation in the fight against Milosevic, and—once success has been achieved on that front—consideration of reform of the federation.

On the domestic side, Montenegrin representatives explained their interethnic initiatives and emphasized that the government minister in charge of ethnic minority policies is an ethnic Albanian. Many participants praised Montenegro's open-arms policy of receiving Kosovar Albanian, Serb, and Romani refugees during the war in Kosovo. Still, the discussion made clear that, despite some positive signs, the interethnic

situation in Montenegro is fraught with potential problems. Unfortunately these problems may fester if they are overshadowed by the political crisis between Montenegro and Serbia.

Foreign participants applauded current efforts to create a democratic multiethnic system of governance in Montenegro, and they praised Montenegro's ongoing political and legislative reform. But they stressed that further economic reforms, and immediate measures to eliminate crime and corruption, were necessary for the encouragement of Western business investments.

We are grateful to Miodrag Vukovic and Milan Rocen, advisors to the president of Montenegro, as well as to Dr. Dusan Janjic, who provided indispensable assistance and advice in organizing the meeting and who were also participants. Srdjan Darmanovic also helped with arrangements. Professor Steven Burg of Brandeis University, a participant, prepared the report. Alex N. Grigor'ev, PER program officer, contributed to editing this report. Louise Handelman, PER information consultant, provided additional editing. 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
March 2000

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. These designations are strictly for the sake of simplicity.

In addition, “Serb” and “Croat” are used as ethnic terms, whereas “Serbian” and “Croatian” are employed when referring to countries. This report also uses “Muslims/Bosnjaks” to denote ethnic Muslims living in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.



From left to right: Dusan Janjic and Miodrag Vukovic.



From left to right: Pellumb Xhufi and Sokol Dervishi.

PRESIDENT DJUKANOVIC'S OPENING REMARKS

The meeting opened with formal remarks by Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic. These remarks helped define the dimensions of the growing conflict between the government in Podgorica and the regime in Belgrade, and drew attention to some of the issues that confronted participants in the Budva meeting. (See Appendix for the full text of the remarks.)

President Djukanovic emphasized the commitment of his government to democratization and toward the building of “a multiethnic, civic society” distinguished by “good interethnic relations and multiethnic harmony.” Evidence of progress in this direction, he suggested, could be found in “the electoral support given by ethnic Muslims and Albanians to our democratic project, rather than to their respective ethnic parties.” His statements indicated that the government of Montenegro sincerely wished to resolve outstanding issues with its neighbors in a peaceful fashion, and it looked to establish mutually beneficial cooperative relations.

President Djukanovic also contrasted the Montenegrin approach to that of the Milosevic regime. “What we, in effect, have here is a confrontation between two strategic concepts. ... Montenegrin: democratic, reformist, oriented toward normalization of relations with neighbors and toward integration into Europe and the international community, and ... Milosevic's concept: autarchic, dictatorial, isolationist, quarrelsome, which for the sake of maintaining an uncontrolled power, feeds on nationalism and false myths.”

The government of Montenegro, he argued, had proposed a peaceful program for reforming relationships within the Yugoslav federation, but Belgrade had not yet shown “anything like a serious willingness” to negotiate. As a consequence, the president reported, “In order to protect the economic and overall interests of the country and the interests of its citizens, the Montenegrin authorities are taking over the responsibilities of the federation, which is, openly or covertly, pursuing the agenda of Milosevic's antidemocratic rule.” He called upon the international community to come to the support of “Montenegro's democratic policy” with “efficient economic and financial assistance.”

The ensuing discussions focused on a number of important issues and themes raised by President Djukanovic. Representatives of ethnic minor-

ity parties in Montenegro and Serbia, members of the Montenegrin government, as well as other participants addressed the challenge of establishing a multiethnic democracy in Montenegro. In view of recent events in Kosovo, the issue of the Albanian minority presence in Montenegro drew particular attention and inevitably led to consideration of the Kosovo issue. A great deal of discussion also centered on the relationship between Montenegro and Serbia and the effects of Kosovo's status on relations between Serbia and Montenegro. In addition, participants addressed whether Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic might attempt to suppress reform in Montenegro by force.

In discussing these issues, participants looked at the future of Milosevic and Serbia. Many participants viewed the experience of Macedonia as a model for achieving a successful and peaceful transition from a Yugoslav republic to an independent, democratic, and multiethnic state. Others turned to the Middle East and the ongoing Arab-Israeli peace process for relevant lessons. All participants agreed that the West could play a crucial role in determining the outcome of events in Montenegro, and the discussion repeatedly turned to questions of if, why, and how the West should act.

A sense of openness characterized the discussions, even those concerning the most sensitive issues. Montenegrin officials sometimes expressed opposing views, and one senior member of the government actually saw this lack of consensus as a positive indicator. "The free democratic process has already started here," he said. The differences that emerged in the course of discussions also revealed a great deal of common ground. Upon this foundation of shared interests, solutions to the issues under discussion could be constructed.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES TO STABILITY IN MONTENEGRO

Montenegro is a multiethnic republic. According to the 1991 Yugoslav census, Montenegrins comprise 61.8 percent of the population, with Muslims/Bosnjaks constituting 14.6 percent of the population, Serbs 9.3 percent, and Albanians 6.6 percent. Significantly, ethnic minorities represent an important constituency of support for democratic reform. One has only to look at the October 1997 presidential elections. President Djukanovic won in the second round with 50.8 percent of the popular vote, a margin of just under 5,500 votes. But in the predominantly

Muslim and Albanian municipalities of Rozaj (Muslim/Bosnjak), Ulcinj (Albanian), and Plav (Muslim/Bosnjak and Albanian), the President won by a margin of some 22,000 votes.

As a result of the May 1998 parliamentary elections, the electoral coalition "For Better Life" gained a majority of the 78 seats. ("For Better Life" is comprised of Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists [30 seats], the People's Party [seven seats], and the Social Democratic Party [five seats].) The coalition achieved this feat with significant electoral support from the Muslim/Bosnjak, Albanian, and Croat minorities. "For Better Life" assumed power and included in the government the two Albanian parties: the Democratic League of Albanians (one seat in the parliament) and the Democratic Alliance in Montenegro (one seat).

The establishment of stable relations between the state and its minorities is essential for securing the electoral support of the governing coalition and stabilizing democracy.

The establishment of stable relations between the state and its minorities is, therefore, essential for securing the electoral support of the governing coalition and stabilizing democracy. Yet in this key area, several participants noted that some minorities were discontented with the state of interethnic relations in Montenegro.

One ethnic Albanian participant from Montenegro responded to a discussion of a multiethnic society in Montenegro by noting the support of Muslims/Bosnjaks and Albanians in the last election for the government coalition rather than for their own national parties, and suggested that this should be better recognized. "The demands of the national parties of the ethnic minorities concerning their status in Montenegro do not go beyond the democratic standards of Western Europe. These parties value the territorial integrity of Montenegro," he said. At the same time, he asserted, "Montenegro must take into account that, parallel to the definition of its relations with the republic of Serbia, it must define its internal character" because "there could be a clash over this."

This participant hoped this clash would not occur. "Albanians in Montenegro are people on our land, on their land," he said. "Our land was given to Montenegro by the great powers at the Berlin Conference in 1878 and the London Conference in 1912. There was no referendum

about that, of course.” Nonetheless, he declared, “We are ready to respect Montenegro as our state to the level that it respects us as its citizens and as a part of the Albanian national body. . . . Our main political demand is for a special status of Albanians in Montenegro, which would not endanger the territorial integrity of Montenegro, but which would make Albanians feel responsible for the political future of Montenegro. We want to integrate Albanians into the state of Montenegro, to have them proportionally represented in the state administration, and we think it can be achieved through positive discrimination.”

A Montenegrin official directly involved in the administration of nationality affairs acknowledged, “There is inadequate representation of minorities in the state administration. . . . It is especially disturbing that in some institutions there are no minorities at all. There is not a single member of a national minority among the 49 employees in the Supreme Court. With all the investment, all the effort by the government to resolve the minority question, one must point out that not a single member of the national minorities works in the office of the president of the republic, where 23 people are employed. In the office of the president of the parliament, where 59 people are employed, there is not a single member of the national minorities.”

He went on to say, “Montenegro has moved to solve this. For the first time, we have ministers who are members of national minorities, and who are in very, very responsible positions.” But he noted that there was internal opposition to these efforts. “With every effort to solve the minority issue,” he said, “the government is denounced as secessionist, as an ‘alien’ government, or a government that helps ‘Muslims’ and Albanians.”

A senior Montenegrin leader underscored the constraints imposed on Montenegro by this domestic opposition. “There is now a stable political majority in Montenegro that is oriented toward democracy,” he said. “We do not dare to forget, however, that alongside the stable majority in Montenegro there is a significant minority, which cannot be underestimated. . . . It is a minority shackled to the past, . . . which today—at a moment when it is historically evident that the policy personified by Milosevic has been rejected—nonetheless supports that policy, and is ready to start yet another war in the Balkans on his account. This puts us . . . on additional guard.”

The appeal for fuller integration of the ethnic Albanians into

Montenegro was accompanied by a demand that Albanians be allowed to display their national flag. “If tomorrow, Albanians in Montenegro were able to use their national flag together with the flag of Montenegro, it would be a great sign for them that this current government is trying to say to them that they are equal in Montenegro, that they are free in Montenegro,” an ethnic Albanian political activist said.

Another participant reported on a controversy that also demonstrates the sensitive nature of public symbols. “Currently, there is an incident concerning a cemetery in Podgorica,” the participant said. “It is called the Turkish cemetery, but it is a Muslim cemetery. There are no Turks buried here, only people from old Podgorica. Now there is a proposal to create a city park on this site. It is probably not a bad idea to build parks—let them build parks. But there is no provision for any kind of marker that once there was a Muslim cemetery on the site. There have been contacts among the Muslim community, the Islamic religious community, and the current government. But up to now, they have not been successful. There has been a certain degree of animosity, a kind of fear, that it would not be good to have a marker here indicating that there had been a Muslim cemetery on the site.”

Such sensitivity is evident in education, as well. An ethnic Albanian participant reported, “A textbook that my daughter used, which is used for the fifth or sixth grade . . . [contains] a sentence that says our ancestors were Slavs. I had great difficulty explaining to my kids that this is not true, without abandoning the concept of good neighborliness with the Slavs. I said to my children that we think we are different. I am morally obligated to be correct about this. That sentence was translated directly from a Serbian text into Albanian, and is in Montenegrin texts. . . . We cannot build a stable future if we do not broaden our history. If I return to history, it is only in order to construct a future without hypocrisy, without sycophancy, in order for us to speak to one another about what we are and what we were, to overcome the boundaries of ignorance.”

“The situation with the Croats is much worse,” said a government official of Croat-Montenegrin background. The official cited instances of violence against individual Croats; popular discrimination against ethnic Croat organizations; and pressure against outspoken ethnic Croats who are in government.

But another Montenegrin official disputed this view. “When the Croatian community on the coastline celebrated 100 years of cultural

progress a year ago, the event was attended by senior officials from many coastal communities and President Tudjman of Croatia,” he said, adding, “There is a Croatian consulate in Kotor. Our Croatian population enjoys the highest level of Mediterranean culture and lives among architectural treasures. They do not live in any kind of danger. ... The community is some 400 years old and

The claims for special status associated with a historical ownership of land and the recognition of national symbols of statehood evoked memories of similar demands put forward by Albanians in Kosovo at earlier stages of their conflict with Serbia and the Serbs.

has its own culture, its own way of life. There are complaints arising out of incidents. I don’t want to say that everything is milk and honey, but—”

Inevitably, the claims for special status associated with a historical ownership of land and the recognition of national symbols of statehood evoked memories of similar demands put forward by Albanians in Kosovo at earlier stages of their conflict with Serbia and the Serbs. An American participant pointed out that the Albanians in

Montenegro and the Albanians in Kosovo had been described in these discussions as “living on their own land.” “This is a formulation I have heard many times from Albanians in Macedonia and from Albanians in Kosovo long before the war,” he reported. “And in many of those conversations, my Albanian friends made it clear that the solution of the Albanian national question in the Balkans meant for them the unification of Albanian lands in a single Albanian state. So I wonder whether this view of the status of Albanians in Montenegro does not eventually lead us to questions we have seen raised before in Kosovo, questions we continue to hear in Macedonia, and questions that I hope will not therefore be raised in Montenegro.”

Another American participant made a similar argument. “Albanians—wherever they live—have to be careful about their rhetoric and realize why it reminds some people of rhetoric that Serbs and others have used in the past 12 years,” he said. “I’d have no problem with saying that Albanians and others in Montenegro are living on their own land if I heard Albanians say that Serbs and Turks and Roma in Kosovo are living on their own land, as well. To say otherwise, I think, invites the kind of fear of nationalism that we’ve had way too much of in the Balkans.”

The comments of an ethnic Albanian participant partially counterbalanced such demands on the Montenegrin state. These statements conveyed a sense of gratitude toward the government for its actions during the war in Kosovo and for its generally progressive policies. “It was of great importance for us that Montenegro had open doors for our brothers during the Kosovo crisis,” the participant said. “The government did its best to help Albanian refugees from Kosovo, and we won’t forget that. There are forces in Montenegro who would be ready to harm us, but the government has not allowed it. One must say that [this] is the first time that minorities in Montenegro feel safe under the current government. Therefore, if someone wants to help minorities in Montenegro, he must help the current government. That help must be concrete and immediate.”

Montenegrin and other participants challenged the legitimacy of some of the demands by the minorities. A senior Montenegrin government official noted that his government is a coalition in which every ethnic and religious group is represented, including representatives of the national parties of the minorities. Leading positions in state institutions are distributed among individuals from the various communities.

Another official argued, “Operating simply on a principle of proportionality would be very bad because in such a system, politics would not work.” This participant added, “If Albanians went to university in Podgorica instead of Pristina, they would not be so underrepresented in the Montenegrin state administration.” He also asked whether the government, in attempting to represent the Albanian minority, should respond to “the three-fifths of Albanians who voted for the government coalition, or the two-fifths who voted for the national parties.” His answer was direct. “The national parties should not be given the role of representing the Albanians.”

A Montenegrin official directly involved in nationality affairs said that the constitution of the republic of Montenegro provides solutions to ethnic issues, but these solutions had not yet been implemented. For example, he noted, “There exists a presidential council for the protection of members of minority ethnic groups. According to the constitution, the president is also the president of this council. But up to now, the council has not met even one time.”

He suggested that minority educational issues and demands for “special status” could also be resolved. “If mechanisms existed by which to imple-

ment the provisions of the constitution concerning minorities, these mechanisms would allow for the use of national languages, alphabets, and symbols; and they would afford closer ties to the countries where the ethnic groups are a majority,” he said. “The state would help with this implementation since it is constitutionally guaranteed. But the instruments by which to carry out these constitutional measures do not exist. Certain legal regulations are necessary.”

Another participant noted, though, that the still uncertain state of relations between Montenegro and Serbia, and consequent uncertainties surrounding jurisdiction over the republics, had delayed passage of critical legislation in this area.

The call for proportional participation of ethnic minorities in the state administration provoked an annoyed response from another Montenegrin official. “It is true that the constitution provides for ‘positive discrimination,’ and that it calls for ‘proportional representation’ of ethnic minorities in the organs of government,” the participant said. But he immediately added, “In the opinion of some constitutional experts, such provisions constitute a direct assault on parliamentarism. ... It means that the ethnic minorities don’t have to enter into elections. They only have to wait while we members of the ethnic majority compete in the elections. ... Then, whoever wins has to give seven percent of the seats to those who did not enter the elections, all because the constitution guarantees their representation in government—even without any kind of elections.”

The official conceded, “There is insufficient representation of ethnic minorities in state administration.” Nevertheless, he countered, “We have the opposite problem in some areas.” He gave as an example the situation in Ulcinj, a city with a majority of ethnic Albanians. The ethnic parties controlled local government there, he said, but refused to share power with representatives of the Montenegrin majority parties. On the other hand, his own party, which is the governing party in the republic of Montenegro, has “included representatives from these ethnic parties in the state structure.”

Several participants expressed their support for the principle or concept of a multiethnic state. A senior official from a neighboring country declared, “Without multiethnicity, democracy is impossible.” But another participant asked, “What do we mean by multiethnic democracy? Is there a multiethnic democracy that the Balkan peoples can point to

and say, ‘That is what we want’?”

A participant from Serbia questioned whether a multiethnic state is at all possible in the Balkans. He answered, “Theoretically speaking, for the majority of people, there is no doubt that it is.” But he noted a discrepancy between the ideal and reality. The reality is that from year to year, the number of multiethnic states is decreasing in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. He called for discussions on a practical level. In particular, he directed attention to three changes that he considered necessary for improving conditions in the Balkans: first, speedy economic aid from the West; second, demilitarization; and third, reform of educational systems of the Balkan states. He elaborated on the urgency for demilitarization, saying, “In the Balkans, arms are not some kind of museum exhibition. Sooner or later, they are always put to use.”

SERBIA, KOSOVO, AND THE THREAT TO STABILITY IN MONTENEGRO

All participants agreed that the violent, authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic is the single greatest threat to stability in Montenegro. It undermines the success of the democratization and reform efforts now underway in that country, as well as the continued participation of Montenegro in the F.R.Y. Participants in the meeting devoted a great deal of attention to the relationship between the reformist leadership of Montenegro and the democratic opposition in Serbia. They also dealt with the status of the opposition and the prospects for its success.

Almost all participants considered that the key to stabilizing and democratizing Montenegro—and the region as a whole—was the successful democratization of Serbia. “We cannot reach full stability and security only for Montenegro,” said one participant from a neighboring country, adding the same was true for any other country.

The contradiction between the reformist and democratizing inclinations

The contradiction between the reformist and democratizing inclinations of the Montenegrin leadership, and the anti-reformist, anti-democratic character of the Milosevic regime raised the prospect of a Montenegrin effort to secede from the F.R.Y.

of the Montenegrin leadership, and the anti-reformist, anti-democratic character of the Milosevic regime raised the prospect of a Montenegrin effort to secede from the F.R.Y. That prospect produced deep, internal contradictions in the positions taken by participants from Serbia, including members of the Serbian democratic opposition.

The comments of one prominent Serbian democratic activist reflected the difficulty that most liberal Serbs have in recognizing the distinctiveness of Montenegro and the Montenegrins, let alone the possibility of Montenegrin independence. "If the question of relations between Serbia and Montenegro is portrayed as one between two completely separate nations—historically, culturally, ethnically distinct—there can be a problem," the participant warned. "This question is not the same as the question between Slovenia and Serbia. If we examine those who hold responsible positions in Belgrade, we will find many Montenegrins, starting with Milosevic himself. There are probably more Montenegrins in the Serbian leadership than any other group, such as Serbs from Sumadija, a region in central Serbia. ... We must take into account the deep historical, political and especially familial connections between Serbs and Montenegrins in shaping relations between these two states."

He went on to say that Serbian and Montenegrin democratic forces must struggle together against Milosevic. "We cannot do what the Slovenes did: democratize ourselves and let others worry about themselves."

Surprisingly, even a political activist from one of the ethnic minority parties of Serbia accepted the inherent logic of a Montenegrin-Serbian relationship. "The establishment of Serbia and Montenegro as a common community is the product of historical forces, and not the product of Communist ideology," he argued.

A senior Montenegrin official disputed this perspective. The situation for Montenegro is worse than it was for Slovenia when it seceded, he said. "[Vojislav] Seselj, the extreme nationalist, [and the leader of the Serbian Radical Party] was outside the government, was in the opposition, when we created the current Yugoslavia, and now he is in the leadership. He threatens Montenegro with tanks. And now he is completing his project inside the state, which is manipulatively called 'Yugoslavia,' to abolish the federal chamber of republics. Knowledgeable people must take these things into account," said the participant.

The leader of one Serbian opposition party congratulated the Montenegrins for their wisdom in carrying out changes in Montenegro.

"It is exclusively the right of the Montenegrin people to decide their own future as long as that decision is taken by democratic means. In that case, any decision by the people of Montenegro must be supported by a democratic Serbia." But he went on to state, "What is important is that we define some framework for the two states—Montenegro and Serbia—that will allow the democratization process in Montenegro to continue, and allow that process to begin in Serbia."

This participant drew an implicit connection between developments in Montenegro and resolution of the Kosovo conflict. "The main task of all democratic forces in Serbia is to define a policy that will uphold the integrity of the Serbian state and its multiethnic character," he said.

An Albanian political activist from Montenegro made it clear, however, that for ethnic Albanians, "The Kosovo issue ... is not a minority problem. It is the national problem of the Albanians in the Balkans." A few moments later, he noted, "Kosovo is an Albanian land, and two million Albanians in Kosovo must become a subject in the Balkans, in Balkan relations. ... Kosovo must be a new subject in Balkan relations."

A Serbian participant offered a somewhat different view of the Kosovo question and its impact on Montenegro. "In essence, we have two options. I don't see a third. One option is an independent Kosovo. This is an option that many fear, with good reason, because an independent Kosovo would be part of a rapid integration of the Albanian lands. There is no dispute about this. ... The strength of ethnicity among the Albanians is enormous. The feeling that it is now the right time, that the price has been paid, is also enormous. Thus, such a solution, if there is no regional framework, means the further alteration, de facto or formally, of the existing state of Macedonia. (Serbia is already done, as Kosovo is no longer part of its territory.) And it would raise the question of what would happen to some of the counties of Montenegro. The concept of the independence of Kosovo, if one wants to avoid problems, must be viewed from the perspective of a wider, regionally based solution. The Albanian-Serbian question cannot be separated from Bosnia or from Dayton, and to think so is an illusion," he said.

The participant continued. "I personally recommend—although it will have consequences for tensions in Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro—the stabilization of the current special status, the establishment of institutions of democratic self-governance, and postponement of the solution of the question of final status for five - 10 years."

An American participant agreed. “The discussion between Albanians and Serbs about the future of Kosovo has to be postponed until there are legitimate leaders on each side who can discuss it. That means on the Serbian side—not Slobodan Milosevic. No one can seriously suggest that Albanians should have to sit down with Milosevic or his representatives to discuss this issue. And this means on the Albanian side, there has to be an elected, legitimate representation of Albanians and not people who have simply assumed a position or given themselves a title.” He further argued, “You can’t develop democracy in Kosovo without having elections. You can’t ask people to behave responsibly if you give them no responsibility. There have to be elections, first at the local level, later at the national level, if Kosovars are to learn how to administer their own province.”

A participant from Italy noted that while “sovereignty is still important” in Europe, “It has become derivative, secondary. This is a major shift, and a European shift. In Europe, sovereignty is relative because it is on three levels: the supra-national, the national, and the local or regional. Borders are where they were when the process of integration started. But the borders don’t mean anything anymore (even where there used to be ethnic issues, as in northern Italy) because they are open. Autonomy is still debated in Europe, even hotly debated. But from Catalonia to Scotland, and even Northern Ireland, Europe provides a framework in which no outcome is excluded a priori, but where issues tend to be dramatized and conflict is less possible.”

Linkage with Europe, he suggested, therefore may eventually be seen as a means to address issues such as territory and sovereignty in the Balkans in a nonviolent way. “And maybe things that seem impossible today will seem possible,” he concluded.

A senior Montenegrin leader took a far more uncompromising position on this issue. “I am not sure that today, at this moment, the international community understands the subtleties of the problem in Kosovo,” he said. “The preservation of a multiethnic Kosovo is the precondition for peace not only in Kosovo and Yugoslavia, but in the whole Balkans, and a precondition for the success of the new Balkan politics that the international community is trying to realize through the Stability Pact. To the degree that Kosovo remains multiethnic, I think the chances are significantly greater that Kosovo will retain that state status which guarantees long-term stability in the region. In my view, a status of qualitative

autonomy for Kosovo as an integral part of federal Yugoslavia guarantees the long-term stability of the region,” he said.

“All the proposed alternatives that open up the possibility of independence for Kosovo—because of uncertainty over the destruction of the Milosevic dictatorship—are not sufficiently thought out,” he continued. “I think that despite good intentions, they will produce many problems in the region for a long time. I am not among those people who believe in the independence of Kosovo. Kosovo as an independent entity is unsustainable. It is more logical that the border between Kosovo and Albania will be difficult to maintain. Kosovo will turn toward a greater Albania project, which will not be completed with the integration of Kosovo and contemporary Albania as the homeland state of the Albanian people. I think it is completely realistic to expect pretensions toward western Macedonia and even toward some parts of Montenegro. I say this not just as a person worrying about the integrity of Montenegro, but as a person who knows that the opening of another greater state project is the worst thing for the Balkans. We are all aware of how much the greater Serbia project cost us. We must not underestimate this other problem. Albanian nationalism is no less dangerous than Serbian nationalism or any other nationalism in the Balkans.”

He further argued, “The extent to which the Kosovo Albanians are permitted to unite with their ethnic homeland state rightly raises the question of the moral basis of preventing the Serbs and Croats in Bosnia from doing the same. Such a solution calls into question the survival of the Dayton Accords and the survival of a united Bosnia.” He suggested, “The international community often accepts too easily the idea that Kosovo can have a new status because of their animus toward Milosevic.”

One Belgrade Serb participant stated that the policies of Milosevic were not fueled by Serb nationalism. “It is not a question of nationalism, but of totalitarian style of power,” he insisted. At the same time, he discounted the possibility that Milosevic would use force against Montenegro. “Milosevic would not necessarily do anything to prevent Montenegrin secession. No one from Serbia would go to fight against, to shoot people in Montenegro. This is simply inconceivable. Ninety percent of Serbian public opinion says that if Montenegro decided to secede it would be very sad; it would mean that we have failed in our century’s long, joint national project. But if they want to go, good for them; it is their right.” He went on to say, “Milosevic, who has always been economical in his use of power, would like to see that Montenegrin

separation—if it comes—be achieved more like Macedonia, and keep trade routes and economic links open.”

The leader of an ethnic minority party in Serbia also suggested that Milosevic might adopt a benign approach toward Montenegro.

“Milosevic will let the Djukanovic leadership make a mistake, let it choose its own timing to hold a referendum, and then let it deal with the consequences,” said the participant. He even suggested that Milosevic might withdraw the Yugoslav army from Montenegro and leave the Montenegrin leadership “to deal with the many tribal clans in Montenegro.”

Another prominent Belgrade activist argued against viewing the conflict between Montenegro and Serbia in ethnic terms. In his view, the conflict is one of status and control of territory.

This participant was clear that his party “will support every democrat-

ic decision of the Montenegrin people and the peoples in Montenegro, just as it supported the election of the president and parliament of Montenegro. There is no doubt about this.” But he pointedly reminded the Montenegrins, “Besides this political support, the opposition parties cannot give you anything else.”

Another prominent Belgrade activist argued against viewing the conflict between Montenegro and Serbia in ethnic terms. In his view, the conflict is one of status and control of territory. He argued that the democratic opposition in Serbia is searching for allies. “Montenegrin democratic forces are more important as an example, a model of possible reform and democratization even in impossible conditions,” he said.

A Serbian opposition leader supported this view. “Citizens in a non-democratic Serbia desperately need a democratic Montenegro,” he said. “Montenegro is a kind of mirror for the Milosevic regime and for all citizens in Serbia. If we are together ... people in Serbia will be able to compare what is going on in Montenegro and what is going on in Serbia. ... We have to have a mirror to present the nature of the Milosevic regime and what can happen in Serbia. ... Serbia and Montenegro are too closely connected to be able to develop our two societies separately.”

This participant’s advice to the Montenegrins demonstrated his opposition to separation. “The Montenegrin government should avoid that very well-known tricky game of Milosevic. It has to protect its interests,

the normal life of its citizens, but it has to be to be patient,” he said. “Patience is the mother of wisdom, and Montenegrins have to stay formally in Yugoslavia, but with the purpose of defeating Milosevic. Separation will only help Milosevic find a new alibi for the tragic results of his policy. It is not the mentality of the Montenegrins to leave a battlefield. I cannot support separation because it will only help Milosevic by prolonging his power.”

Still, a decision by Montenegrin democratic forces to separate from Serbia seemed inevitable to some participants. One Belgrade activist argued, “There are two realistic scenarios for constituting a federal Yugoslavia. One is by agreement. This would begin from the platform put forward by the Montenegrin leadership and would mean a weak federation. Such a federation can be concluded either with Milosevic, Milosevic and a reformed socialist party, or with a democratized Serbia. The problem is that time is running out for this scenario to be implemented.

The participant was less than sanguine about dealing with a democratized Serbia. In his view, achieving agreement with a democratized Serbia “is on the level of a fairytale as far as the needs of Montenegro are concerned. Montenegro cannot remain in the federation and help us to the extent required to democratize Serbia.”

He then elaborated on the possibility of separation. “This can be achieved by agreement with Milosevic or whoever is in power in Belgrade, with the assistance of the international community, or by conflict. I don’t see another scenario.”

A Montenegrin participant also held a pessimistic view concerning future relations between Montenegro and Serbia. “There is little likelihood of Milosevic being ousted. Because there is no prospect of cooperation from elements inside the [ruling party], the military, or the police, the opposition is too weak and cannot change the balance of power in Serbia,” he said. “Milosevic will not just ‘give up,’ and crises are essential for his survival. The federal idea is dead here. Montenegro and Serbia are two states with different interests, and negotiations over future relationships will be very tough.”

Indeed, a senior Montenegrin official described these negotiations with a powerful metaphor: “We offered Serbia a serious proposal for a new community. And what has happened? Something similar to what Indira Gandhi once said: Montenegro offered an open hand to Serbia, with the

idea of shaking hands, and Serbia offered a fist. And no one in history has ever succeeded in shaking hands with a fist. That, metaphorically speaking, is the situation with Serbia and Montenegro. We offer our hand, but there is no one who will shake it. Our hand will not be accepted by those who decide our fate.”

To the extent that you refuse to support Montenegro, that represents support for Milosevic.

Another Montenegrin official used his own metaphor. “The ball is in the Serbian court. Independence or not will depend on the Serbian answer and not because we are seeking independence.”

The implications for the Serbian opposition, according to him, were clear. “For too long in Serbia, we have been complacent, thinking that we can cure the illness by elections—local, federal, or whatever. Now we are faced with a dictatorship. The sooner we confront it, the lower the cost; the longer we wait the more difficult, the more bloody it will be,” said the Serbian participant.

A senior Montenegrin official also expressed impatience with the Serbian opposition. “I cannot understand why a very relevant part of the Serbian opposition ignores the Montenegrin position that the federal parliament and federal government no longer exist; why it enters the federal parliament in order to vote against Milosevic, who has discarded the parliament, and thereby thinks it is helping Montenegro. What kind of help is that? It’s like blowing on a fire in an oil refinery,” he exclaimed.

A participant, who commands widespread admiration and respect for his long political experience, summed up the importance of the Serbian question for Montenegro. “The dispute over whether Montenegro will remain federated with Serbia or come to an agreed separation or eventual decision to secede is an important question for many reasons—historical, contemporary, and because of the memories of a good people over centuries. And we must not neglect this perspective. But I think that the basic questions are why Milosevic remains in power and why it has been impossible to achieve the goal of getting him out of power and start the process of renewal of Serbia,” he said.

“I am not among those who think that after all that has happened in the Balkans, Serbia is some kind of secondary question,” he continued. “I think that much depends on whether Serbia begins to turn around

toward democratization, toward respect for human and minority rights, toward returning institutions to the people of Kosovo, and toward the creation of a parliamentary democracy so that Serbia itself can function in a legal and clear manner.”

This participant chastised the Serbian opposition. “The opposition must immediately unite in order to exert the kind of pressure that will bring change, changes that must remove Milosevic from power.” In his view, past demonstrations have not been effective because the opposition is divided. And they will remain ineffective, he warned, as long as a significant part of the opposition remains outside them.

At the conclusion of a long discussion of this question, a Montenegrin official rejected the tendency of participants to link the question of Montenegro to the question of Serbia and, more importantly, to Milosevic. “To the extent that you refuse to support Montenegro, that represents support for Milosevic,” he said. “Just the statement that the key to the independence or sovereignty of Montenegro is [found] in Belgrade is—if not dangerous—very, very difficult. Like the other states of the former Yugoslavia, Montenegro has a right to its own independent path.”

An American participant, in contrast, counseled patience. “There are huge risks and huge unknowns to proceeding toward independence too rapidly. ... I would like to suggest that a greater dose of patience and possibly a greater dose of ambiguity would be helpful for this republic. ... The risk is not just that there could be overt fighting between the second army of the Army of Yugoslavia and Montenegrin police forces. That’s a possible risk; [but,] in some ways, I think it’s the least likely risk. Consider that the policies Milosevic promoted in Bosnia and Kosovo each started with the use of paramilitaries, common criminals organized loosely, allowed to loot, allowed to steal, allowed to kill, and that this is the way things began in both Kosovo and Bosnia, and in Slavonija for that matter. Milosevic is certainly capable of this kind of tactic.”

This American referred to an earlier remark by a participant from Serbia that Milosevic might allow the Montenegrin leadership to “make a mistake.” The American warned, “There is the possibility that Milosevic is preparing the case, preparing the argument that he showed great patience, but that the Montenegrin government took one step after another, until finally, he was forced to respond. If he is successful in making that argument to his own people and to some of the people of Montenegro, and some in the international community believe it, that’s

a very different situation for Montenegro than if he fails in making that argument. Who throws the first stone is a big factor, and one that this government [Montenegro] has to bear the responsibility for thinking through very carefully. ... I don't agree that it's more dangerous, that it runs a greater risk of violence, to stay in the federation under unfair conditions than it does to leave it. There is a tremendous emotional issue involved for both Serbs and Montenegrins when you take a formal action to leave the federation. It becomes an emotional issue that can provoke irrational responses and that can provoke violence."

A senior Montenegrin leader summarized the Montenegrin attitude toward Milosevic and Serbia this way: "We have to prepare a realistic project, not for a struggle against Milosevic, but a struggle for democracy in Montenegro. Milosevic is not our preoccupation. Our preoccupation is democratization of Serbia and Yugoslavia. Milosevic stands in the way. ... Of course Montenegro makes every effort possible to strengthen the democratic front in Serbia. We do this in the belief that in this way, we are helping the democratization of Serbia, and we are also helping ourselves. ... Whether Montenegro will be independent or part of a community depends on the decisions of the other part of the Yugoslav community. ... I am inclined not only to preserve this Yugoslav community, but to achieve a wider integration in the space of the former Yugoslavia and the Balkans as a whole—if we are bound by shared political principles. ... But, if the Serbian regime survives, ... then it is completely obvious that Montenegro must continue independently along the path of democratic and economic reform."

MACEDONIAN LESSONS

Some participants suggested that the successful, peaceful Macedonian secession from the former Yugoslavia—in which a democratically inclined Macedonian political leadership confronted the Milosevic leadership in Serbia and the Yugoslav army—offered valuable insights, lessons, and warnings for the contemporary dispute between Montenegro and Serbia.

A Macedonian participant suggested two main reasons why Macedonia had been able to avoid conflict. First, Macedonians had "never waged war against the Albanians. We have worked together; we have a tradition of mutual tolerance and respect among many religious communities." Second, there was a successful external intervention in Macedonia.

For Montenegro and the rest of the Balkan region to avoid further violence, "The political geography of the region would have to be stabilized in a clear, principled way, with no doubts and a clear commitment by the international community, according to universally accepted principles," he said.

He defined these principles as "no use of force to change borders, peaceful resolution of conflicts, open dialogue about all outstanding issues, and mutual respect." He also called for "democratization, marketization, and respect for human rights and minorities." Respect for minority cultures, he suggested, had to be sufficient to make minorities "feel they are in their own house."

Nevertheless, comments by this participant illustrated the difficulty in overcoming the sense of grievance shared by all the peoples of the region. Specifically, he complained that not a single Macedonian-language school existed in any of Macedonia's neighboring countries, and that "100,000 Macedonians were expelled from a neighboring country after the civil war there, and they were stripped of their citizenship and property."

This participant suggested, "A good basis for the future activity of the High Commissioner on National Minorities [of the OSCE] [might be] a comparative study of minority rights in the Balkans." In his view, the incentive for Western powers to act resided in the fact that, "The Stability Pact project cannot be successful, at least not to the degree desired, until the democratic transformation of the region is underway."

Another Macedonian participant noted that the Macedonian experience suggests that a government must create conditions in which members of the minority feel that the state is their own state, and that they have the same economic, political, business, educational, and cultural chances as all other citizens. "In Macedonia," he pointed out, "there are political parties that articulate the interests of the Albanians. They are represented in parliament and in the government. They participate in the whole area of administration, including the military, the judiciary, and diplomacy because they are conceived of as an integral part of society, and not because of some quota. This is a concept that minorities are a kind of wealth for our society, not just a number."

Nonetheless, he acknowledged, Macedonia is "confronted with extreme demands that minorities be declared a constituting nation, that the constitution be changed, that federalism be adopted, and that special status

be granted in the form of territorial autonomy.” In addition, Macedonia is faced with the problem of local ethnic parties attempting to exert dominance. The participant cited a recent problem in Gostivar, an ethnic Albanian-dominated city in northwestern Macedonia, saying, “[It] was not a problem of the flag. It was a problem of the ethnic autocracy of the local administration of Albanians. An Albanian became the mayor. But he was not the mayor for all the citizens, he was the mayor for the Albanians. The very first day the local administration changed hands, he cut off use of the Turkish language. And the reaction was in direct response to that, to protect all others, and to protect the Albanians themselves against such an autocratic political elite.”

Several participants compared the Macedonian experience with the present situation in Montenegro, but they arrived at differing conclusions. A Macedonian participant observed, “We did the same things in a very similar way in Macedonia. . . . Those steps strengthened the self-confidence of the people in Macedonia that we could make our own decisions and decide our own fate. But conditions in Montenegro are different, more complex. Our decisions [in Macedonia] led to a decision by Milosevic to withdraw the army from Macedonia in a peaceful manner so as not to open a second front and complicate matters in the Balkans.”

He went on to speculate tentatively. “I cannot say whether things can be resolved in a peaceful manner in Montenegro. Someone might decide that it would be easy to arrest a few dozen people overnight, because Montenegro does not have an army. We had 200 or 300 rifles and nothing more. If some misguided soldier had decided to carry out such action overnight, it would have been easy to do—to arrest [the president], the prime minister, the president of the parliament, other political leaders, and the job would have been done. At that time, I thought that that could have been the reality.”

Fortunately, he reported, an agreement was reached with the Yugoslav defense minister. The Yugoslav army peacefully withdrew from Macedonia in exchange for being allowed to remove all its equipment from the country. The participant warned, however, “The degree of difficulty associated with decisions will be comparable, but the situation is not the same.” In the case of Macedonia, he reminded participants, “There were conflicts in Croatia and in Bosnia at the same time. The situation in Serbia was also very difficult because of demonstrations, etc., and Serbia would have had to open a third front in Macedonia or Kosovo

with all associated complications.” These moderating factors are not present in Montenegro today.

PEACE REQUIRES GRASSROOTS ACTION

One participant, drawing on his experience with the Arab-Israeli conflict, recalled that it had taken 10 years of negotiations to implement peace in the Middle East, and that there is still a long way to go.

“Peacemaking begins after an agreement is signed,” he cautioned, adding that peace is “based on mutual trust and equal interdependence, and this process is long and arduous. People need to work to make peace happen; it does not evolve automatically from leaders’ signatures on peace agreements.” Furthermore, it is based “on the building blocks of countless small projects between people.”

The message was thus: through grassroots cooperation, people build mutual trust and learn that each can share in and benefit from the resulting prosperity.

Through grassroots cooperation, people build mutual trust and learn that each can share in and benefit from the resulting prosperity.

A Balkan participant, who has extensive diplomatic experience in the region, echoed this view. He observed that regional cooperation has to be based on common projects. Even though specific infrastructural projects may not be important for development, they “are important for learning how to work together.”

The participant continued. “We cannot change mentalities only through seminars and roundtables. We can change mentalities at the popular level, at the mass level, only by doing things together, by common deeds, common projects.” By establishing common, project-oriented organizations and institutions at the regional level, shared elements of identity can be forged. Compromise over practical matters is more easily accomplished than compromise over identity, he reasoned.

An American participant supported this view. “We must find activities [and] projects through which the de-politicization of ethnic identity in favor of civic identity can be encouraged,” he said. “Why did the Marshall Plan work? It worked because it was based on European, cooperative decision making about—and prioritization of—common projects. Cooperation, and especially cross-border cooperation, led to more

cooperation. Can the Balkan states achieve such cooperation?”

SHOULD THE WEST HELP MONTENEGRO?

A senior Montenegrin official addressed the situation in Montenegro from the perspective of the Western powers. “Montenegro is a very, very small country with no resources—such as oil—to speak of, and of no geostrategic significance for the West,” he acknowledged, but, “It is exceptionally important for Western political philosophy, ... for the struggle to establish democracy based on human rights.” Montenegro can provide proof, he argued, “[that] it is possible to cultivate that delicate plant.”

To allow Milosevic to defeat Montenegro would damage Western philosophy, and the participant drew parallels to the 1956 uprising in Hungary and the 1968 Prague Spring and the failure of the West to protect these countries. “Montenegro is much more significant to the West because of the situation it is in, than because of its own intrinsic value,” he said.

A Western participant cautioned against the emphasis on “Western” values. He wanted to avoid having to define where the borders of the “West” lay on a map. The conflicts in the Balkans are “about values, and values do not recognize geographical borders,” he said. Montenegro, having chosen these values, can be “a plant; a promising plant, but in a hostile territory. Such plants demand and deserve to be protected. But this option entails long years of tension and conflict. The other option is—instead of being a plant—to be a seed. And the seed means the influence of the smaller part extends to a wider area.” He agreed with earlier speakers, stating, “The regional approach is the only one that is possible. And regional means functional.”

An American participant focused on the scenarios that would be pleasing from an international perspective. “What is the interest of the international community? At the moment, independence is not in their interest. There is too much disagreement among members of the international community for them to act, and there are some major players who are very much opposed to independence. But failure is also not in their interest. ... The international community—or at least the Western powers—must therefore be clearly on the side of confederation. But they do not have any idea about what

that would mean or how to design a confederation that would work.”

Given this lack of knowledge, the participant asked the Montenegrin participants to come forward with proposals for “what a confederation among Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo would look like.” The participant asked them to identify their “minimal needs” or what they would accept.

This request produced an indignant response from a senior Montenegrin official. “I’d like to answer the question, ‘What will Montenegro accept?’ with a counter question. Who is to propose the form of the state in this region? Montenegro? Ask Serbia—either the leadership or the opposition—[if] it will create a confederation of Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo. Ask Serbia! Not us! Why should Montenegro propose something they will not accept, with or without reason? Who will compel Serbia to be equal with Kosovo?”

This pointed question prompted one Serbian opposition leader to interject, “Serbia will not accept!”

The Montenegrin continued his protest, arguing that Montenegro should not be expected to do what the international community cannot or will not do. But the American participant insisted, “I am not asking Montenegro to do something that Serbia will not do. I am asking you, ‘What you want is a confederation, but what are the details of this confederal program?’ In order to bring the international community on board, this program will probably have to [include] Kosovo.”

The American participant stated firmly that negotiation was a prerequisite for any solution. “It cannot be, ‘Here is ours. Serbia says no; therefore we can’t have it. The ball is in Serbia’s court.’ No, it has to be step, by step, by step of very difficult negotiations. ... It has to go through many stages. But at least we could prevent war. So I am asking, ‘What are the details of what you would never give up? What is your minimal demand, and what are the specific issues of what it would look like, given that the first attempt has already failed?’”

Another Montenegrin government official responded. “What do we want from the great powers? ... That they recognize that Montenegro and Serbia are not Siamese twins. It is unbelievable that not one great power has said that Montenegro, if it wants, has all the conditions—historical and economic—to be an independent state. They always begin from the position that Montenegro is fortunate [to be] part of

Yugoslavia. They think of Montenegro as some kind of service agency that will assist in the democratization of Serbia.”

The prospect of Montenegrin independence raised certain fears for some participants. “Neighboring countries fear that independence would give impetus to border changes in the neighborhood,” said one participant from a neighboring country. “The echoes could be immediate in Vojvodina and Slovakia. And since we should always look from the Balkans to the Caucasus, we might have a South Ossetian or Abkhazian declaration of independence in reaction to such an independence declaration.”

The participant also worried about repercussions for aid distribution. “We are afraid that a new, emerging state—with all the fragilities that are attached to it—might attract Western resources. This might leave some other countries in the region without support, [including] human resources and security resources of all kinds,” he said. “A new state is fragile by definition. This new state will require some international support after independence, and the resources are limited. So if resources are directed here, they cannot reach some other countries in need.”

The bottom line, in his view, was unintentional support for Milosevic. “Independence would give a new excuse to strengthen the Milosevic regime,” he said. “So this is the basket of fears, and maybe some of these fears are not simply illusions.” Still, the participant saw a means to combat this fear. “Most probably a confederation solution ... will be a solution which could solve some of our anxieties,” he said.

In the end, even this participant returned to the Serbian question. “We have talked a lot today about Serbia, even though we are invited here to talk about Montenegro, but this is not an accident,” he said. “This is exactly because the key to this problem is in Belgrade. What the international community has to do is put pressure on Belgrade to enter into negotiations not for independence but for a confederative solution. But what kind of leverage can the West currently put on Milosevic to [make him] accept this confederation? This might require a new policy.”

WHAT THE WEST CAN DO

A government official from a Balkan state emphasized that Western rhetoric was raising expectations among the populations of the Balkans. But this situation is dangerous because the expectations cannot be achieved without greater direct assistance from the West. The Stability Pact, while intended to secure peace, is “front-loaded with complex projects and documents that few people can understand,” he said. Moreover, the pact was building up popular expectations of economic improvement, and, “Unless these expectations are fulfilled, there will be a crisis of credibility.” He called for a donors’ conference to ensure the achievement of concrete, visible economic outcomes.

Similarly, a Montenegrin government official argued that in the absence of evident progress, popular frustrations are likely to boil over in Montenegro. “The people of Montenegro feel they have wasted 10 long years of their lives, and they are not ready to waste any more of their time. So that’s why the movement for independence of Montenegro is a reality, why it is increasing, why 65 percent of the population already supports it,” he said.

Another Montenegrin government official listed three things the West could do to aid Montenegro. “[First,] let the great powers openly say that Montenegro has all the prerogatives to become an independent, sovereign state—which does not necessarily mean that it will become a state. Such a statement is not important for encouraging Montenegro, but for discouraging Mr. Milosevic. Second, let the great powers lend Montenegro money, so that it can successfully complete the transition to a convertible currency that is independent of the Yugoslav National Bank and thereby establishes economic independence. Third, if the democratic world believes that Montenegro deserves its interest and trust, then the democratic world should find a way to invest capital in Montenegro.”

Another official underscored the need for financial assistance. “The next three months are crucial for Montenegro,” he said. “We have to cope with an enormous problem, and that is the economy, the financial system, the currency system. ... And we cannot cope with them without urgent and sufficient international support. We need short-term support for our currency project, for monetary stability. ... Medium-term needs require a donors’ conference [calling] for at least \$200-250 million of

foreign investment in profitable projects,” he said. “If this does not happen, we will have significant economic problems, and political leaders will have problems.”

A Montenegrin political leader suggested that the West could provide concrete support for “the monetary project,” including “direct budgetary help.” Specifically, providing government guarantees to private investors and granting Montenegro access to international financial institutions would increase the level of capital investment in Montenegro. More immediately, the international community could increase its presence in Montenegro by opening offices in Podgorica “as an umbrella against aggression,” and by using Montenegro and its port of Bar as a logistical base for supplying international forces in neighboring Bosnia and Kosovo.

A Serbian opposition leader said that to change conditions in Serbia, the West needed to implement more direct efforts. Instead of calling for international assistance for the Montenegrin government or for the Serbian opposition, the meeting should emphasize the need to draw Milosevic directly into discussions of reform, he said.

A Montenegrin political leader seemed to agree with this point of view. He noted, “For a rational person, to be president of an isolated state, to be on a wanted poster as a war criminal, would be horrifying. But, for an irrational person who has done everything that [Milosevic] has done in the last 10 years, a different kind of reasoning is at work. He does not want the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to open up toward the international community because then the whole model of power that is concentrated in his hands would collapse. For him, it is completely compatible that Yugoslavia is isolated. For him, it is better not to have more contact with representatives of the international community. ... Now no one has any contact with him, and I have the impression that he is very lucky because of that.”

This Montenegrin leader went on to say, “The international community should put maximum pressure on Milosevic to call elections because ... the opposition would be guaranteed to receive more votes than Milosevic. ... After defeat in the elections, the international community would have to show a higher level of operational decisiveness and talk Milosevic into giving power to those who won the election. I do not exclude the possibility that there would be casualties, but I think that is

no reason to accept quietly and timidly the present situation.”

An American participant described the support already being provided Montenegro by the West. “First, there is technical assistance. The United States and the European Union bi-laterally and multi-laterally are adding many new programs to assist the government of Montenegro in areas like agriculture, customs [and] technical expertise on banking and taxation reform; [they are] sending in teams to help develop basic information on the economy that can make this economic reform a success; and, perhaps most importantly, [they are] providing good advice on how you can not just reform a currency. Introduction of a new currency is only part of a reform. It is not a reform of the economy. It’s a step, and there are an awful lot of things that have to be done in this economy before the level of economic reform in Montenegro comes close to the level of democratic reform that has been achieved here,” he said.

“Second, in terms of financial support, the United States did spend in the fiscal year that ended two months ago, about \$45 million in direct support to Montenegro. There’s only one country in the world that got more economic support per capita than Montenegro did,” the American said, referring to Israel. Nonetheless, he conceded, “The West has to do more generally in terms of investing in Montenegro, making clear that Montenegro can prosper economically, even if it’s still formally tied to an economically declining Serbia.” But, at the same time, this participant noted that Montenegro and other states in the region had to confront “the issue of organized crime and corruption.” He stated that it would be impossible “to provide long-term, major economic aid to any state in the Balkans whose government financing or economy depends to a huge extent upon the black market or the gray market.”

Another American participant underscored the importance—and limitations—of international action. “I think we have a lot we can learn from the history of the last nine years. ... In every case, international community action was decisive. Those who were able to obtain international community support for their cause won. What the international community will do in this case will also matter. But international community support was never sufficient. Those states or communities that did not also get their internal order in place first, failed.”

With this caveat in mind, this participant suggested some very specific action. “We know from experience in Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor,

that if you do not have a preventive international military deployment on the ground at the time of a referendum, you have war,” he said. “I don’t think that the argument of just some economic assistance to signal political support to Montenegro is sufficient.” This participant urged that Montenegrin leaders come up with a list of demands for specific international actions and to articulate those demands publicly. Such a listing would make their expectations of the West—expectations that influence local behavior—a matter of public record. It would also help to prevent Western players from disavowing their moral and political responsibilities at a later date.



From left to right: Kiro Gligorov, Allen Kassof, Alex Grigor'ev.

APPENDIX

Opening Remarks by Milo Djukanovic, president of the Republic of Montenegro

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Mr. Allen Kassof, owing to whose effort this important meeting has been organized in Montenegro. It is a result of the successful cooperation that Montenegro has with the renowned U.S. NGO [non-government organization], Project on Ethnic Relations. That this meeting is taking place in Budva, as well as the participation of high level representatives from neighboring countries, the United States, the European Union, major international organizations—along with representatives of democratic forces in Serbia—should, I believe, be viewed as a tribute to Montenegro and its democratic project.

My warm greetings to you all, along with my wish for a pleasant stay in Budva and for every success in your work.

Allow me to greet in my name, as well as on your behalf, Mr. Kiro Gligorov, who, during the relatively long period that he served as president of the Republic of Macedonia, made an important contribution to the establishment and stability of his state and, thus, to the stability of the region.

This meeting is yet another in a series of efforts taken by the international community and the countries of Southeast Europe—within the framework of the Stability Pact and through other modalities—toward rehabilitation of the situation in the region, and its economic and political reconstruction and integration into mainstream European and Euro-Atlantic structures. For Montenegro, it is particularly important that representatives of our closest neighbors are taking part in this gathering. This, I believe, reflects respect for the Montenegrin program of democratic and economic reforms, whose major component is the revitalization of a relationship and cooperation with the neighboring countries.

I also view this as a tribute to the successful building of a multiethnic, civil society in Montenegro. Despite the ethnic and religious antagonisms that have resulted in bloodshed in our neighborhood—including

in Kosovo within Yugoslavia—Montenegro has distinguished itself in the region and in the democratic world community with its good interethnic relations and multiethnic harmony. Our democratic project is, to a large extent, based on the respect for multiethnicity, which is strongly rooted in the best Montenegrin traditions and cultivated over centuries of Montenegrin statehood. We keep repeating—and I think that this is worth repeating—the electoral support given by ethnic Muslims and Albanians to our democratic project, rather than to their respective ethnic parties, represents the huge political capital of Montenegro's democratic government. We in Montenegro regard multiethnicity as an advantage and a common asset. This accounts for the willingness on the part of a majority in Montenegro—Montenegrins, Serbs, Muslims, Albanians, and Croats—to build Montenegro as their own state. This is why, during various wars, Serbs from Croatia, Muslims and Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, and the Roma from Kosovo were all equally able to find refuge here. At times, refugees and displaced persons accounted for over 20 percent of our population. Even today, this means roughly 70,000 people. This entails, of course, heavy costs for Montenegro, already burdened with economic, social, and other problems. And all this brought political risks, too. But we believed, and we still believe, that multiethnicity has no price. Our multiethnic, coalition government will continue to pursue a program of economic and democratic reforms aimed at ensuring a better life—equally for all the citizens of Montenegro. I think that already today we are all reaping the fruits of such a sensible policy. A confirmation of this is the holding of this meeting in Budva.

As for the reform process in Montenegro, it is proceeding successfully and on a stable basis; despite the social and economic problems, internal political divisions and the volatile post-conflict situation in Kosovo; and despite the unresolved relationship between Montenegro and Serbia, pressures and disruptive actions by the Belgrade regime, and the abuses at the level of the federation, which is totally subservient to the disastrous policy of the regime. The policy of Montenegro is unwavering in its strategic commitment of seeking a political resolution to all problems. This is what we have advocated from the beginning with regard to Kosovo, too. We have been vindicated in our positions that this difficult, long-neglected problem can only be resolved through a political process, involving a wide autonomy within Serbia and Yugoslavia, with

mediation by, and guarantees of, the international community—unfortunately, only after a massive loss of human life and heavy material devastation. The genocide against Albanians and the criminal, Albanian revenge against the Serbs and other non-Albanian population in Kosovo are a tragic expression of one and the same political madness. Therefore, a multiethnic Kosovo is the primary task, not only of the international community, but also of all the forces of reason in Kosovo, in Yugoslavia, and in the whole region. It is, in a way, a privilege to be able to learn from the mistakes of others. Those who might today, in the Balkans or anywhere else, even for a moment, be inclined to consider a national hegemonic project can unfortunately see for themselves what a price was and is still being paid by the Serb people, precisely because of a chauvinist ideology and a demented craving for power by their rulers.

The Kosovo problem, at one point, represented the greatest danger to the Montenegrin democratic project, threatening to spill over onto the hot political soil of Montenegro. I would not be surprised if the incursion into Kosovo wasn't also timed with Montenegro in mind, since the aim was to burn down, in one fire, everything that was democratic in Yugoslavia, and democracy is what the Belgrade regime fears most. Also, I wish to stress this issue in particular, because finding a formula for a multiethnic Kosovo is crucial for the stability and security of the region as a whole, as well as for the realization of a long-term strategy of the European Union and the democratic international community, as embodied in the Southeast Europe Stability Pact. Unless the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo is urgently stopped, there is a real danger not only of the further destabilization of Yugoslavia, but of the whole region, as well as the danger that we may see the Dayton Accords unraveling.

During the decade of the Yugoslav crisis, with conflicts raging across our borders and the former Yugoslavia disintegrating into blood, the relationship between Montenegro and Serbia has remained unresolved, with the burden of the past on top of the current problems. In practical terms, we saw Belgrade try to exploit the disastrous policy of using false slogans, patriotism, and Yugoslav sentiment, as well as an alleged world plot against the Serb and Montenegrin peoples and the Orthodox population in general. What we have here, in effect, is a confrontation between two strategic concepts of development within the joint state—Montenegrin: democratic, reformist, oriented toward normalization of relations with neighbors and toward integration into Europe and the

international community; and ... Milosevic's concept: autarchic, dictatorial, isolationist, quarrelsome, which for the sake of maintaining an uncontrolled power, feeds on nationalism and false myths. Therefore, this is the conflict between one concept—looking to the future and the European civilization—and the other—rooted in the past and all those things that have given the Balkans the pejorative connotations it has in world political theory and practice; in other words, a credo that equates power with life.

It is in regard to such a political reality that the government of Montenegro has proposed to the government of Serbia the Platform on Redefining the Relationship in the Federation, for the sake of both Montenegro and Serbia and the whole region. We have not as yet seen anything like a serious willingness on the part of Belgrade to demonstrate political maturity and put all the problems on the table. There is no willingness to consider the tragic outcome of a wrong policy nor to try to catch up with those looking to the new millennium. The democratic wave is inevitably—though somewhat more slowly—reaching Serbia, too. But the roots of the dictatorial regime are still strong. Montenegro is not in a hurry, since it does not want to rush into any mistakes with tragic consequences. But our patience is not infinite. Our citizens, particularly the young ones, are not prepared to pay with their lives for the failures of the Milosevic's policy, and to lose yet another decade of their lives and the development of the country.

We in Montenegro are not only not losing time, but we are trying, as much as possible, to make up for the time lost. After all the perils and ordeals during the NATO bombardment, the project of economic and democratic reform is now consolidating, gaining more and more supporters. The authorities of Montenegro, in order to protect the economic and overall interests of the country and the interests of its citizens, are taking over the responsibilities of the federation, which is, openly or covertly, pursuing the agenda of Milosevic's antidemocratic rule. The most recent example is the implementation of government measures in the monetary sphere. We received well-intended warnings from persons in highly authoritative places in the international community not to rush into a dual currency system. We were cautioned against the risks. However, it was the 11th hour. Issuing an enormous quantity of dinars without backing by the National Bank in Yugoslavia, [in which Montenegro is not represented,] threatened, therefore, to bring about a

new hyperinflation. The threat of total collapse was looming over all our democratic results. It is very important that the international community understands that we are permanently in a risk zone, and that the risk would have been far greater had we remained passive while the inflationary processes were gaining momentum. We are aware of the responsibility we have undertaken and the importance of this move for the overall reform process. We are faced with a lot of problems, with ineffectiveness on one hand, and disruptive actions on the other. However, with the understanding of our citizens and with the concrete assistance of the international community, the democratic forces in Montenegro will bring off this project.

I believe that it is the 11th hour for the political support of the international community regarding the Montenegro's democratic policy to be translated into an efficient economic and financial assistance. Since it is not just the democratic government in Montenegro that is being challenged, nor is it just our democratic project that is being put to the test, but the overall international strategy for the region of Southeast Europe. And the Yugoslav crisis has already shown that preemptive support is far more effective and less costly than dealing with the consequences in the post-conflict period. A more efficient assistance to Montenegro means enhancing the stability of all of Yugoslavia, without which there is no stability of the region. In this regard, we are not looking for a blank support, but are also offering profitable projects for joint ventures.

Finally, I wish to reiterate how pleased we are to see high representatives of a number of former Yugoslav republics, which are today independent states, as well as other neighboring countries. I would like to take this opportunity to repeat, once again, our readiness for a constructive cooperation with all partners, in mutual interest. Through cooperation and mutual understanding, we will find it easier to resolve not only common, but also our own problems. In Montenegro, new generations have come of age, generations that are free from burdens of either the more distant or the more recent past, generations that want to live a life here, in tune with the standards of developed civilizations. I believe that democratic forces are gaining strength in the whole region. There is on our part, a willingness and a sincere wish to resolve the Prevlaka issue to the mutual benefit of all, just as we want Skadar Lake to link us with Albania, or the Adriatic Sea with Italy, and our border with Republika Srpska to join us with Bosnia and Herzegovina. We want to continue good coopera-

tion with Macedonia, and we have good cooperation with Slovenia. We are ready to have such cooperation with all the countries in the region. I believe that democratic forces in Serbia will gain strength. In such a climate of good-neighborliness, our hand of cooperation is sincerely offered to all. In such a climate, more effective assistance from the international community to all the countries in the region will be more likely to take place.

I wish to assure you that Montenegro will not desist from its path aimed at democratic development and will not abandon its reformist, pro-European course, regardless of whether or not Serbia, too, embarks upon this road. The democratic Montenegro is, and will be, a reliable and a constructive partner with all in the Balkans and beyond its boundaries. We, who are living this time, in this region, bear a historic responsibility for its democratic future. Montenegro is prepared to play its part in such processes.

Thank you once again for your presence and your attention.



From left to right: Slobodan Vuksanovic and Tahir Hasanovic



Dragisa Burzan

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