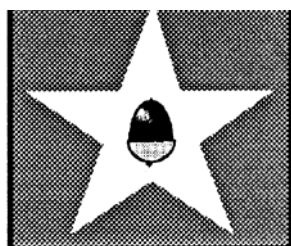


**Conflict Studies Research Centre**

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**Political Developments in the FRY  
22 June-31 July 1999  
and Prospects**

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**POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA  
22 JUNE–31 JULY 1999  
AND PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING MONTHS**

**C J Dick**

**SERBIA**

**THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR**

Unwelcome evolution of the Kosovo crisis. The Serbian and FRY governments are trying to portray the war as a military defensive success and a political victory.<sup>1</sup> This effort is not succeeding too well as it is being belied by political developments and events on the ground.

- Kfor is generally seen by the public not as a UN contingent but as a NATO occupying force. The Russian element, welcome as it is, is small; presumably, Milosevic had hoped for the 10,000 that had been mooted before Moscow realised that the UN was not going to foot the bill. Moreover, the Russians do not have their own sector and cannot therefore be used to create a *de facto* partition of the province.
- Neither UNMIK nor Kfor show much regard for the wishes of Belgrade. They prefer to deal directly with Albanian separatists (in practice, so far, with the KLA as the only authoritative force on the ground) and with local Serbs that are not only not appointed by Belgrade but who repudiate Milosevic's leadership. In organizing the administration of the *de facto* protectorate, neither the Albanians nor international bodies seem overly concerned that Kosovar autonomy be exercised, as demanded by UNSCR 1244, with regard to "the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the FRY.
- The borders between Kosovo and Albania and Macedonia are effectively open. FRY border guards, customs and immigration having been denied any control over the process, the ethnic Albanian refugees have flooded back in surprisingly large numbers and short time (550,000 by early July with another 170,000 expected soon). The Serbs believe that thousands of Albanian criminals have accompanied them for the purpose of pillage.
- The demilitarization of the KLA seems very leisurely and incomplete to Belgrade and Kfor is not seen as effective in ensuring the security of Serbs (almost 400 are said to have been killed or kidnapped) and their property and jobs. As a result of this and the mass return of ethnic Albanian refugees, the efflux of Serbs from Kosovo continues" (100,000-130,000 by early July).
- Despite its protestations, Serbia is to be excluded from plans for the reconstruction of the region as long as Milosevic remains in power according to the decision of the late July Sarajevo summit on the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe (to which Serbia was not invited).

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<sup>1</sup> See CJ Dick: "Reactions in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the Kosovo crisis, 1–21 June 1999", pages 1-2 for details. The following two paragraphs will develop the themes in these pages.

Yugoslavia's position on Kosovo. The FRY government is upset that UNMIK and Kfor are not abiding by its interpretations of UNSCR1244 and the Kumanovo military-technical agreement. (Those who habitually break agreements are always most indignant when others repay them in the same coin.) Belgrade insists that the international authorities' primary responsibility is to protect the indigenous non-Albanians and to help those who fled to return. They should also be helping to maintain Serbian sovereignty, law and administration in "Serbia's southern province"<sup>2</sup> rather than cooperating with the separatist-terrorist KLA's self-styled government. Accusing them of failing in these tasks despite the passage of six weeks, the Yugoslavs are demanding that, in line with UNSCR 1244 and the Kumanovo agreement, their police and army be readmitted to help keep order and that their border guards and other competent bodies be deployed to control the still all too porous borders.

Desperately afraid of losing its claim to Kosovo, the Serbian government is trying to stem the outflow of the Serbian population with rhetoric and pressure (eg, the confinement of refugees to reception centres and the refusal to admit either children or teachers who have fled the province to Serbian schools). Efforts are also being made to encourage the return of non-Albanian refugees. (Rather implausibly, the official press periodically maintains that organized returns are taking place – 8,000 as of 5 July according to the Beta news agency - and that returnees are remaining in Kosovo.)

## Comment

Kosovo is turning out to be a worse disaster for Milosevic than he probably expected it to be. His political position, already somewhat precarious before the war, has been considerably undermined.

- His claim to have won a political victory through securing substantial modifications of the Rambouillet *diktat* has not impressed the general public as much as he had hoped. The impression of defeat is being accentuated by the rapid decline in the fortunes of the Kosovar Serbs and by the refusal of the international community to allow him to play face-saving games and slow down/obstruct the Albanianization of Kosovo. The claim that he has secured sovereignty over "Serbia's southern province" looks increasingly hollow as time passes. Many opinion formers see the loss of Kosovo as probably inevitable, certainly so if he remains in power.
- It may not be only Kosovo that is lost. The secession of Montenegro from the FRY looks increasingly likely.
- Milosevic's policy of ethnically cleansing Kosovo to keep it Serbian has not only failed but has resulted in the dishonouring of the Serb people, his indictment as a war criminal, the freezing of his family's and major supporters' assets abroad and the intensification of Serbia's pariah status with consequent international isolation and ineligibility for reconstruction aid.
- Appeals for national unity behind Milosevic's leadership in the face of adversity and the international conspiracy to destroy first the FRY and then Serbia itself are making little impact on the general public. Increasingly many within both

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<sup>2</sup> FRY Prime Minister Bulatovic maintains that Kosovar autonomy implies only the granting of linguistic, cultural, educational and informational rights and local self-rule. Serbs must not be treated as a minority in their own state and the UN has no right to appoint Serb representatives to government (Tanjug, 20 July).

political elites and the general public are coming to regard Milosevic as part of Serbia's problem and not the solution. He is also admirably fitted for the role of scapegoat for Serbia's ills and crimes.

- Milosevic has lost the backing of the Kosovo Serbs, whose support, combined with Albanian boycotting of elections and massive electoral fraud, has been so important to his political position. He has also lost the support of: the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), whose leader, Vuk Draskovic, was expelled from the government during the war; the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), whose leader, Vojislav Seselj, took his party out of the governing coalition in protest against the decision to accept the peace terms agreed with the international community instead of fighting on; the small New Democracy party (ND), expelled from the government in July.

## **GROWING POLITICAL TENSIONS IN SERBIA**

The political balance in Serbia. The parliamentary and presidential elections of 1997 are plainly a very imperfect guide to political opinions in today's Serbia. The government indulged in massive electoral fraud (especially in Kosovo, which was made to appear solid for the regime, a deceit made easier by the Kosovar-Albanian boycott) and the liberal-democratic parties which made up the Zajedno coalition boycotted the parliamentary election (less the defecting SPO). Moreover the momentous events of the intervening nine months will obviously have wrought great changes in attitudes. Nevertheless, they are of interest in illustrating the electoral weakness of the regime and the larger parties set store by them in political argument and decision-making.

- In the elections for the National Assembly's 250 seats, the ruling left coalition gained 110 (86 for Milosevic's SPS, 19 for his wife's JUL and 5 for ND), the SRS gained 82, the SPO captured 22 and the remaining 16 went to the Sandzak List and various Vojvodina parties.
- In the second round of the presidential election, Seselj actually won with 50% to Milosevic's candidate, Lilic's, 47%, but the run-off was declared invalid as there was allegedly less than a 50% turn out. In a re-run, Milosevic's new candidate, Milutinovic, apparently gained 43.7% of the vote, with Seselj getting 32.2% and Draskovic 15.4%.

The SPS/JUL government's political line is that national unity secured a great "moral, political and essentially military victory" against the overwhelming power of NATO (FRY PM Bulatovic, Tanjug, 24 June) and that wartime unity must continue in peace. The heroes of defence will also be the heroes of reconstruction and it is "only through self-abnegating work with our own resources that we can rebuild the country." (Tanjug, 30 July) Of course, peace only exists in the Leninist sense of an absence of fighting. Hate inspired western antagonists, especially the USA, are still striving to destroy the FRY and Serbia. Their willing, in some cases, paid, tools in this endeavour are the opposition parties, which are fomenting civil war. Despite this destructive opposition, the government will proceed to achieve its priority objectives, which are: settling army arrears of pay; reconstruction; reforms; the renewal of the economy along market lines; the strengthening of ties with progressive, democratic countries [eg, Russia and Belarus].

Milosevic is not so confident of selling this message that he has relaxed wartime controls. On the contrary, the lifting of the state of war on 26 June was

accompanied by the enactment of those restrictions (on public meetings, the media, universities, etc) into law. Within Serbia, the government has to contend with three main strands of opposition to SPS/JUL rule.

The democratic parties. Those political parties that adhered to the Zajedno coalition line, boycotting elections in protest against electoral fraud and manipulation during the 1996-97 period, have formed two new, complementary alliances – the Alliance for Change (SZP) and the Alliance of Democratic Parties. These are pressing for Milosevic's and Milutinovic's immediate resignations as a matter of urgency and the formation of a Serbian transitional, non-party government of experts (perhaps under Dragoslav Avramovic) and a FRY government under the leadership of Djukanovic or his nominee until free and fair elections can be held under OSCE rules and supervision. They maintain that:

- Only a democratic, progressive Serbia with reliable institutions, an independent judiciary, a free media and integrated into Europe has any chance of retaining Kosovo or even Montenegro within the FRY.
- Only such a Serbia will be able to reconnect with such organizations as the IMF, the World Bank and the EU and thus rebuild the shattered economy with outside help.
- Milosevic should stand trial at the Hague for war crimes.
- The only way of getting rid of Milosevic and corrupt government is through extra-parliamentary action. The ruling elite manipulates the constitution and the electoral process and uses the state-controlled media and the police to maintain itself in power. Only popular and supporting international pressure can bring about change. This pressure should take the form of mass and continuous demonstrations, petitions and a general strike. Once it is obvious that the vast majority of the people are against Milosevic, he will lose his power base; there will be defections from the ranks of his political supporters by those who fear the loss of privilege and power and the police and the army will not risk the wrath of the people and possible civil war to keep him in power.
- To achieve unity amongst anti-Milosevic forces, there should be a non-aggression pact between opposition parties. These should promise: not to attack each other; not to insist on mutual differences; not to agree to "fictitious elections" but only free and fair ones under equal conditions. This SZP proposal has been accepted by the Alliance of Democratic parties and ND but has been dismissed by the SPO as fine for the smaller parties it disdains but not for it. The SRS is highly unlikely to join; nor would it be welcome.

The SPO professes (not altogether convincingly) to seek true democratization and economic reform, but is prepared to approach these goals in a different fashion.

- The illegally appointed federal PM, Momir Bulatovic, should give way to someone from Djukanovic's DPS as the only way of saving the unity of the FRY. Then the SPO would be prepared to join a reforming FRY government that would institute reforms and end the federation's international isolation.
- Milosevic should be allowed to retain his presidency until the scheduled elections as his appointment was legal according to the constitution. He cannot legally stand for re-election in 2001. To attempt to force his early dismissal would be to incite civil war.
- Autumn 2,000 should see Serbian elections conducted under OSCE rules and supervision, in which the SPO will fight on a reformist ticket.

The SRS, like the SPO, is ambivalent about Milosevic and it is vague in its demands for reform and social justice. It still concentrates its energy on the Serbian national question.

- “The freedom and salvation of the homeland will be achieved only if the people recognize and mark the traitors within their ranks who are trying to make a career based on their own servility and loyalty to the evil UN administration and on Serbian misfortunes.” (Tanjug, 27 June).
- The country’s future lies in union with Russia and Belarus, for US aggression is not finished; attempts will be made to detach Montenegro, Vojvodina and the Sandzak from the FRY and to dismember Serbia. (Montenegrin and other demands for a redefinition of relationships between republics on confederal lines are unacceptable and any separatist move will be resisted.) Furthermore, only Russia, with its seat on the Security Council, can save Kosovo for Serbia by vetoing any extension of Kfor’s mandate when it comes up for renewal in a year’s time.
- President Milosevic should not be forced into resignation; that would bring chaos in its wake. Elections should be held in due course, but in the meantime the only viable solution is a SRS-socialist coalition (with the former gaining more power, of course), or a national unity government in which all parties should participate in numbers proportionate to their strength in the federal assembly (a formula which would exclude the SZP which boycotted elections in the Zajedno days).

Growing grassroots opposition. Disunited the opposition may be, but there is a deep well of popular dissatisfaction with Milosevic (not least because the economy is in ruins and there are now 3.4m Yugoslavs, almost one third of the total population, in need of assistance to survive, according to Tanjug, 9 July). SZP and SPO demonstrations are attracting widespread support. At least 15 major towns have seen thousands come onto the streets to demand his resignation and reform; in Leskovac, Kragujevac, Zrenjanin and Valjevo, demonstrations have been taking place on a daily or almost daily basis. By 26 July, around 550,000 people had signed petitions demanding Milosevic’s resignation. These manifestations of popular discontent are, of course, taking place in the face of police harassment, but significantly, there have been only spasmodic and localized attempts to suppress them totally.

The position of the army. Serbia now exists in an atmosphere of growing political tension in which all parties talk frequently of the danger of civil war (and accuse each other of trying to foment it). With the relatively pampered police generally believed to be reliable as far as the regime is concerned, there is naturally much speculation about the loyalty of the army. This has been given added force by the persistence throughout July of demonstrations, including roadblocks, by reservists demanding allowances and bonuses due to them for their service during the war. Promises of payment in six monthly instalments have failed to defuse the situation completely. Nor can the military have much confidence in the promises of improvements in the conditions and status of officers and of money to modernize the largely obsolescent armed forces. The state of the economy and competing pressures on diminished resources suggest that little more will be done for soldiers than the further disbursement of medals.

Milosevic has the senior generals on side, having, as former general Vuk Obradovic points out, over-rapidly promoted officers he regards as loyal to the regime. Confirming this, former CGS Perisic (sacked in November 1998) says, “the military

leadership has been transformed into a party cell” of the SPS/JUL (Beta news agency 28 July). As if to prove them right, current CGS Ojdanic and 3<sup>rd</sup> Army commander Pavkovic have both condemned the opposition for threatening civil war and have committed themselves to defend Milosevic. That does not mean that the president can rely on the military with certainty. For his entire period in power, Milosevic has neglected the army in favour of the politicized police and paramilitaries. Presumably, many officers resent this. Even officers who do not agree with the liberal opposition on other matters may well find common ground with it (and even more with the Radicals) in believing that Milosevic’s policies have been disastrous. Some will no doubt be concerned about the besmirching of the army’s honour as a result of the excesses in Kosovo. General Perisic, respected as morally uncorrupted, intends to form a Movement for a Democratic Serbia (not another party but an umbrella organization to campaign for a leadership change). He is supported by another dismissed officer, Jovica Stanisic, the former head of state security. Milosevic must worry that such men could act as rallying figures for the lower echelons of the army and, for that matter, for malcontents in his SPS (to whom overtures are being made).

Growing regional discontent. Unrest is general throughout Serbia, though at its most acute in the south, where the impact of events in Kosovo is most felt, and in the north. Especially worrying to the authorities must be the growing ethno-nationalist tone that it is assuming in Vojvodina and in the Sandzak (which straddles the Serbian-Montenegrin border).

- The Hungarians of Vojvodina are concerned that the Magyar identity in the province is under threat, a danger that will grow if Belgrade continues to follow the old policy of resettling Serb refugees amongst them. (The once Hungarian-dominated province now has only about 300,000 Hungarians left, down by over 40,000 since 1991, and now comprises only about 12-15% of the population; Hungarians are in a majority in only 7 out of 47 districts.) They are becoming increasingly vocal in their demand for personal autonomy, ie in the spheres of culture, education and the provision of information. The Hungarians recognize that they must seek a solution in concert with the majority Serbs (now approximately 60%), but the indigenous Serbs too are discontented. There are ever louder calls for the restoration of regional autonomy (revoked, like Kosovo’s, in 1988). Dragan Veselinov, the president of the Vojvodina coalition, says that, regrettably, secessionism is gathering strength as a natural consequence of Milosevic’s policies. In his opinion, the only way to check it is to transform Serbia into a federation rooted in the principle of regionalism; there could, perhaps, be six such regions – Vojvodina, Belgrade, the Sumadija, the Sandzak, the area around Nis, Kosovo.
- There has been tension in the predominantly Muslim Sandzak since the 1991 unofficial referendum, organized by the Muslim (now Bosniak) National Council, registered 89.9% in favour of autonomy. Heavy-handed policing kept the province quiet during the earlier wars of secession, but demands for change are now on the rise. The Muslims want territorial autonomy within a revised constitutional set-up. Furthermore, they seek a special relationship with the Croat-Muslim federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as Bosniaks are one nation with their own cultural, religious, educational and economic ties. The influx by mid July of 60,000 Bosniaks from Kosovo, with more expected, will doubtless sharpen such demands.

These regional demands are worrying to Belgrade, especially those emanating from Vojvodina as they are strongly supported by Hungary, now a NATO member. They

also seem to add weight to the case argued by ultra-nationalists that there is a conspiracy fomented by NATO to dismember Yugoslavia.

## **Comment**

Unlikelihood of Milosevic's unforced resignation. Milosevic will not respond to demands that he step down for the good of his country. Not only would such a move be wholly out of character but it would leave him vulnerable to enemies, both domestic and external, who would like to call him to account for the damage that he has done to Serbia and the FRY. His indictment for war crimes and the freezing of his and his family's assets abroad have drastically narrowed his options. He is perpetuating wartime curbs on the media and on personal freedoms and is reported to be strengthening his police and re-mobilizing elements of the military, ostensibly to aid with the problems of reconstruction, in order to defend his position. He knows well that he cannot be dislodged by normal democratic processes; the defining moments of Serbian politics are always on the streets and this will continue to be so. Given that Milosevic is not going to go without a struggle, there are perhaps three likely scenarios for the development of Serbian politics over the next few months.

Popular overthrow of Milosevic. There is widespread popular disillusionment with the current government. The liberal opposition has achieved a degree of unity in the SZP and Alliance of Democratic Parties (though it has no clear leader). Moreover, the leadership of the Orthodox Church, the Association of Free and Independent Trade Unions and the Independent Farmers' Union are all joining in the demand for Milosevic's removal. Particularly if the SPO were to sink its differences with other opposition parties, at least temporarily and purely for the purpose of getting rid of Milosevic, there would perhaps be enough momentum generated to achieve what could be described as a Suharto solution. Perceiving a population united in its detestation of Milosevic and fearing the loss of position and privilege if they stay with him for too long, or even the possibility of a revolution which would sweep them away along with the would-be autocrat, important backers in the economy, the bureaucracy, the SPS and JUL, the army and the police might withdraw their support and combine to force Milosevic to resign. This could happen in the autumn or as a result of winter hardship, in which case the proposed transitional "government of experts" could take over (though its putative leader, Dragoslav Avramovic, is 80 years old and in poor health). Alternatively, the situation could come to crisis point at the time of the elections in the autumn of next year, assuming the opposition can keep up the pressure for so long. In such a scenario, there are various possibilities for a post-Milosevic era government in Serbia.

- There could be a government of national unity comprising all the liberal parties (including the SPO) which is dedicated to economic, social and political reform and integration into the Euro-Atlantic community. This is unlikely to happen. Even if unity could be maintained until Milosevic was toppled, a big "if", centrifugal differences over policies, strategy and personalities (not to mention Draskovic's dubious credentials as a democrat) are all but certain to doom such a coalition as surely as they did the DEPOS and Zajedno movements in the periods 1992-93 and 1996-97.
- Equally unlikely would be either a still cohesive SZP or SPO able, following elections, to form a strong reforming government on its own. The result could be a series of weak, ineffective governments following each other in rapid

succession, chaos or the emergence of a new strong man who would force democracy once again into retreat

- Vojislav Seselj, already, before the Kosovo war, the second most popular politician in Serbia, could emerge as the new strong man in Serbian politics. His SRS is a populist, authoritarian-leaning party which has now outgrown its origins as a creature of Milosevic, useful to prevent the development of a straight contest between democrats and anti-democrats and to remind the outside world that there are alternatives that are worse than Milosevic himself. The SRS has succeeded in winning support amongst the alienated urban poor and those who still regard the creation of a Greater Serbia as the central question of our times. Seselj could well be the politician best placed to capitalize on Milosevic's growing weakness, promising to succeed where the latter failed and to give the country the strong government which the democratic parties manifestly cannot deliver. With much of its middle class, the bedrock of democracy, destroyed, Serbia is, as Zoran Djindjic points out in "Le Figaro", 6 July, an unusual country where the political centre is smaller than the extremes. Thus the victory of even such a monster as the war criminal Seselj is entirely plausible.

Milosevic remains in power. This is perhaps the most likely scenario. He still controls the critically important electronic media and the formidable apparatus of repression. He still retains significant popular support amongst the rural and proletarian population (though the loss of the Kosovo vote will hurt him electorally). Key figures and groups that currently back him will be loath to change sides if there is a realistic prospect of his remaining on top and revenging himself on defectors, especially if they are too closely identified with his regime to be able to thrive under a new dispensation. He may well be able to exacerbate the divisions, never far beneath the surface, within the opposition. He will certainly stress their alleged anti-patriotism, made evident by the enthusiasm for them so evident amongst the NATO aggressors; these are the fifth columnists which supported NATO bombing and are trying to destroy Serbia and the FRY at the USA's behest. Another federal crisis, real or manufactured could well rally flagging support. Moreover he may be able to buy the renewed support of the SRS and/or the SPO; neither is exactly wholehearted in their current opposition and both seem to hint at a preparedness to rejoin government. Both have been bought before and can probably be bought again by a judicious mixture of promises of reform and the actual reward of a share in power and its fruits. Milosevic would then boast that Serbia has a government of national unity, that normality is restored and that reforms will follow. Given a straight choice, Milosevic is likely to plump for Seselj as an ally. His ultra-nationalist stance chimes better with Milosevic's interests than Draskovic's apparent democratic and reforming, outward-looking views. He is also far more popular and is thus a more useful ally and a more dangerous enemy.

Civil war. Talk about the danger of civil war is now common currency in Serbian political discourse. This probably contributes to an atmosphere which makes it possible. For Milosevic, it may well appear that the use of force against selected enemies will become his least bad option. The democratic opposition says that it is prepared to run the risk by continuing its extra-parliamentary activities to bring about his downfall. It is possible that a declaration of martial law under some pretext or other would be followed by an unsuccessful attempt to crush the opposition, precipitating such an eventuality. An attempt to force Montenegro into line, or to exploit the forces of nationalism through repressing more national

minorities, could also lead to spreading civil conflict.<sup>3</sup> Uncertainty about the true loyalties of the middle and junior ranks of the police and the army and about the cohesiveness of paramilitaries could easily lead players into making disastrous miscalculations about their own political strength and their enemies' weakness. All this having been said, civil war is the least likely scenario, if only because Milosevic is wily and strong and his enemies weak and divided.

## **MONTENEGRO**

### **MONTENEGRO'S INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT LINE**

Increasingly since President Djukanovic came to power and succeeded in frustrating Milosevic's attempt to undo the verdict of the ballot box, Montenegro has been ploughing its own furrow. With good cause, the state refuses to recognize the legality of Momir Bulatovic's federal government and therefore to implement its decrees and laws. Montenegro condemned the FRY's actions over Kosovo and refused to support them. It provided a haven and a platform for Serb dissidents. It has been pursuing reformist domestic, nationalities and economic policies. As a logical corollary, it has been conducting its own, independent foreign policy, seeking closer ties with Serbia's foreign enemies in its efforts to become part of the Euro-Atlantic community.

There have been swelling calls for a redefinition of relations between the two republics of the FRY to end Montenegro's previous status as, in effect, a mere satellite province of Serbia. These have now been made concrete in the form of demands.

- There must be constitutional and legal safeguards to prevent the unequal treatment of republics within the common state; ie, each republic must have a veto over common decisions. The revamped FRY must be based on democracy and the rule of law, eliminating the possibility of the continuation of authoritarian rule. Moreover, it must be open and westward looking, embracing economic reform. This, of course, means that Milosevic must go - preferably to stand trial at the Hague.
- Whether the FRY should remain a federation or become a much looser confederation is officially being left as an open question. If the former option is chosen, however, the overlapping of functions between the federal and republican governments should be ended. There is no need for 25 or 26 federal ministries unproductively employing thousands of people. All that is needed is a federal government capable of performing five or six genuinely joint functions, leaving the states to manage their own internal (and even some aspects of foreign) policies.
- The army must be reduced and become professionalized and apolitical. Command arrangements must be changed to prevent it being abused again, as it is now, for the political ends of an authoritarian leader. Perhaps there should be republican armies which are only placed under joint, federal command on the decision of the states.
- To help it escape from the "prison economy" of Serbia and pursue economic reform, Montenegro needs either a convertible FRY dinar over which it has some

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, action against Montenegro in the right circumstances could instead act as a uniting move. See the section on Montenegro.

control or (preferably) its own currency. The country must be able to protect itself against monetary instability, devaluation and the misuse of foreign currency reserves "in the interests of certain lobbies." (Between April and June 1999, the money supply was increased by over 1bn dinars and a new devaluation - the 19<sup>th</sup> in eight years - is thought likely.)

Serbia has been given "until early September" to accept the Montenegrin proposals. (Beta news agency, 20 and 30 July) If it does not do so, then the government says it will hold a referendum on the country's future course. The likely (and loaded) question will be: "Do you want to live with a Serbia that does not recognize Montenegro as an equal partner?" (Ministry of Information, 24 July)

#### **THREAT OF A MILOSEVIC-INSTIGATED COUP<sup>4</sup>**

Zoran Djindjic, the most prominent of the Serbian SZP leaders, believes that the moment has passed for Milosevic to attempt to bring the FRY's junior partner to heel. This is not an opinion that is shared in Podgorica. There is a lively fear that Milosevic and Bulatovic will seek compensation for their defeat over Kosovo and a diversion of public preoccupation in Serbia with the manifold deficiencies of their regime by cracking down on the dissident republic. President Djukanovic and the Montenegrin government can cite plenty of evidence to support their thesis that the danger is still real.

- Belgrade continues to apply economic pressure against Montenegro. At least until early July, this included the use of the military (under the guise of training exercise and anti-smuggling operations) to harass humanitarian aid efforts and trade.
- The federal MoD is said to be strengthening the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army with troops from Serbia under the cover of the normal replacement of time-expired conscripts by fresh ones. More significantly, given the greater international acceptability of using police rather than troops to resolve internal problems, Milosevic appears to be forming federal police units from the army.<sup>5</sup>
- The Serbian media campaign against the "unconstitutional" actions of the Montenegrin authorities and against "separatists" shows no sign of abatement. It continues to be echoed by Bulatovic's federalist SNP party within Montenegro. (The SNP is also demanding the reduction of the Montenegrin police to 2500 "at most" as the current force, three times as strong, is excessive for the country's needs.)

#### **Comment**

Growing momentum towards independence? It appears that separatist sentiment in Montenegro is growing. The pro-independence "greens" are becoming more vociferous and seem to be making converts. It is not possible to quantify the shift in their favour, but the previous rough balance between them and the unionist "whites" is tilting. Public acceptance of the *status quo* is waning; an early June poll

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<sup>4</sup> The logic behind such a move is examined in CJ Dick: "President Milosevic's Next Move?" (CSRC, 28 June).

<sup>5</sup> When Milosevic became President of Serbia, he consolidated his position by building up the Serbian police at the expense of the federal Interior Ministry's force. He is now rebuilding the latter (Montena-fax, 1 July).

of 1,000 Montenegrin voters showed only 17% against changes in the federation (with another 6% inclining to that view) but 65% demanding reform and 12% undecided. Even if the government wanted to backslide, and there are no such indications, it would find it difficult to do so. Actually, the impression one gains from both public pronouncements and private discussions is that Djukanovic and the Vujanovic government doubt that far-reaching reform of the federal system will be possible. Milosevic could not and will not accept the Montenegrin demands and the authorities in Podgorica doubt the opposition's ability to topple him any time soon. Even if near-future events were to disprove this pessimistic assessment, the situation would be only somewhat improved as neither the SRS nor the SPO, nor indeed elements of the SZP, are in favour of Montenegro's radical platform. It is thus more likely than not that the government will, in fact, hold a referendum on secession, with a question weighted to gain a "yes" vote.

Montenegro's attempt at defection from the FRY would be ill-received in Serbia. Quite apart from the fact that most Serbs regard all Montenegrins as merely fellow-Serbs, the break up of the federation would have considerable geopolitical repercussions for Belgrade. Serbia would lose its access to the sea, a potential economic disaster. Kosovo would be lost for good; UNSCR 1244 does not recognize the area as "Serbia's southern province" but only as part of the FRY, and the disintegration of the federation would therefore pave the way for full independence. Moreover, the weakening of Belgrade's power and prestige might well lead to growing unrest in Vojvodina and the Sandzak. There are therefore good reasons to believe that Milosevic will indeed try to use force to prevent a referendum from taking place or to reverse a decision for independence as unconstitutional. Such an attempt could well rally most of the Serbian population behind him, prolonging his hold on power.

Given that Djukanovic does not expect much of the Serbian opposition, he must be setting considerable store by international, and especially US, promises, real or implied, to protect his country from Milosevic's wrath in the likely event that Belgrade does not accept Montenegro's virtual ultimatum demanding reform.

## **KOSOVO**

### **THE SERBS**

Serbian exodus. The flight of Serbs (and other non-Albanians) is set to continue as Albanians exact revenge for not merely the oppression and excesses of the last decade but for a century of harsh subjugation. This process will continue despite the (probably hypocritical) assertion of the Thaci leadership that it wishes for a multi-ethnic Kosovo. The fears of the minorities and the inability of Kfor to protect isolated communities will see to that. Momcilo Trajkovic, the leader of the Serbian Resistance Movement of Kosovo (SPOK), is urging Serbs to concentrate in Pristina, Gnjilane, Kosovska-Mitrovice, Leposavic and other areas to form more readily protected enclaves. Most will prefer to leave, accelerating a process which was already underway even in the days of Serbian mastery. Probably, at the end of the day, there will remain only about 20,000, a small enough group not to worry the Albanians but enough to give some semblance of credibility to Albanian claims that they are prepared, unlike their former masters, to tolerate minorities.

The exodus will probably not solve the problem of ethnic violence any time soon. Wherever Kfor is weak or absent, vengeful Albanians (amongst whom the tradition of the vendetta is still strong) and common criminals will continue their depredations for pleasure, honour and profit. Serbian paramilitaries, even now causing some concern, will fight back. Albanians are concerned that Russian peacekeepers will protect or even help them. There have been protests and demonstrations against the deployment of Russian troops in several towns, though it has to be said that their discipline and professionalism has made a surprising and favourable initial impression.

Those Serbs that remain will not prove a willing tool for Belgrade. They feel that they have been cynically betrayed, like the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs before them, and are in consequence disillusioned with the Milosevic regime. By the same token, efforts by the Yugoslav authorities to encourage a reverse migration are doomed to failure.

## THE KLA AND ITS RIVALS

Who rules in Kosovo? The general impression in the west is that UNMIK and Kfor have established a *de facto* protectorate. This is only superficially true. The KLA was quick to fill the vacuum left by the Serbian military withdrawal and the tardy establishment of UNMIK. It has established its own authority in Pristina and throughout much of Kosovo. Its demilitarization and disarmament is largely a cosmetic exercise. However much UNMIK may maintain that it is only "a group of people who have power on the ground and who must be consulted," (Koha Ditore, 23 July) it is now an established fact that international organizations can only function with the cooperation, or at least tolerance, of the KLA. Momcilo Trajkovic is probably not far wrong when he declares that "Kosovo is no longer a province, nor is it Serbian.... It is currently an unestablished and undefined Albanian state." (Beta news agency, 23 June)

Alternatives to the KLA? It would appear that Washington is prepared to accept Thaci as the Albanian to do business with. He has a dubious past, but it is said that he is a reformed character who has renounced violence and, above all, can be controlled. Some other western governments, rightly worried about the unsavoury antecedents and methods of much of the KLA leadership<sup>6</sup>, look to Ibrahim Rugova or Bujar Bukoshi as alternatives; both of them claim legitimacy as Kosovo's true leader on the basis of distant underground elections. Their moderation, as exemplified in Rugova's case by leadership of a decade of non-violent resistance to Serbian rule, is respected.<sup>7</sup> How nice it would be if the terrorist, criminally inclined KLA could somehow be sidelined so that moderate politicians could take over! However, both Rugova and Bukoshi are weak reeds on which to lean. They both have a certain following within the urban middle class, which dislikes the rough ways and disparages the lack of sophistication of the largely rural KLA. However, the chattering class forms only a small proportion of Kosovar Albanian society and

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, the Federal German Office of Criminal Investigation says that KLA organized crime, including narcotics and arms smuggling, is "a phenomenon that must be taken seriously"; as recently as January 1999, the German foreign ministry classed the KLA as a terrorist organization (ddp AND news agency, 28 June).

<sup>7</sup> A cynic would say that they were grateful to them for not forcing the Kosovo issue onto the world stage when the international community was struggling with the problems of Croatia and Bosnia.

cannot boast of a glorious role in the liberation struggle. The KLA is strong in the countryside, whence sprang its support. It is determined to enjoy the power that is its just reward for sacrifice and eventual triumph; and it has on its side the bulk of the population, the prestige of victory and considerable armed might that it has shown itself prepared to use ruthlessly against enemies of any stamp.

The KLA is unlikely to be willing to share power with either Rugova or Bukoshi.

- Rugova has discredited himself in the eyes of most Albanians by clinging to the policy of non-violent resistance. It was in direct response to the failure of this approach that the KLA was born, fought, and, as it sees it, won. Why should Rugova, who was opposed to the gamble, get any share in the winnings? Moreover, he has lost credibility through his open hostility to the KLA and by apparently being prepared to cooperate with Milosevic. This was followed by his flight to Italy, and his return to Kosovo was very belated; nor has he been much in evidence since. Most Kosovars seem to agree with the KLA in regarding him as a figure of the past and a contemporary irrelevance
- If the KLA leadership despises Rugova, it hates Bukoshi. He is like a man who encourages others to bet and then reckons that he is entitled to a share of the winnings. His armed faction, FARK, contributed little or nothing to the war and he continues to sit on at least DM 300m, not to mention other assets, that the KLA reckons should belong to it as money raised for the independence struggle. Moreover, Bukoshi is at least as vulnerable as the KLA to charges about the way in which he raised money for the cause.

Nor does a Rugova-Bukoshi alliance against Thaci appear likely. They differed fundamentally in their attitude to the war and other issues such as fund raising and the use to which money should be put. There also seems to be a mutual dislike (due at least in part to the former's arrogance).

## **Comment**

Kfor is attacked by the Serbian, Russian and even other media for not adequately protecting the minorities in Kosovo and stopping ethnic cleansing. Given the history of the region, the size of the force and the scale of the problem, it could hardly have done better. Moreover, at least half of those who have fled would have done so anyway - ie, those who were involved in Serbian efforts at ethnic cleansing and those who were employed by the state.

The more seriously Kfor fulfils its mission of protecting Serbs and their property (not to mention other tasks such as sealing borders and cracking down on crime), the more likely it is that Albanian enthusiasm for the force will wane. Low level confrontations (like those with the French in Kosovska Mitrovica) and armed clashes will increase, with consequent potential for political, and eventually military conflict. Run-ins with the Russian peacekeepers are particularly likely, and they could serve the KLA well.

The Kosovar Serbs are well on the way to becoming a political irrelevance, save as a factor in Serbian domestic politics.

The KLA, indeed like all Kosovar Albanians, is not prepared to accept even nominal Serbian or Yugoslav sovereignty over Kosovo. Thaci appears to be prepared to play a long game, however. He perceives that time and history are on his side and does

not wish to rush into a confrontation with UNMIK and Kfor over political issues, at least as long as they do not try to diminish the KLA's grip on real power through promoting its rivals. It is not inconceivable, though, that there are others within the KLA who are more impatient than he. If *de jure* independence, with them in charge, is not achieved within a year or two, they may be prepared to renew the struggle. Real interference with their criminal activities would add another motive for confrontation. This time, if it came to blows, the conflict would be against Kfor, an organization much more constrained by rules than the Serbs and with less stomach for a fight.<sup>8</sup> The possibility of the emergence of a sort of Provisional KLA cannot be discounted.

Conflict between Kosovar Albanian factions and between some of them and UNMIK/Kfor may well start to grow this winter. The honeymoon period will be over by then and issues such as the confrontation between ethnic Albanians and French Kfor troops in Kosovska-Mitrovica will begin to fester. Spring elections will be looming and ethnic Albanian politicians will be competing with each other in an atmosphere of heightened nationalism and possibly a deteriorating security situation if the strength and quality of Kfor is reduced for financial and other reasons.

## **PROBLEMS FOR NATO POLICY MAKERS**

The recent war has not solved the Kosovo problem, nor those which afflict much of the former SFRY. It has merely changed their nature, in some cases exacerbating them. Within the next six months or so, crises are likely to come to a head within Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro and between the latter two. Nor is any chaos which may result from these crises going to be confined to the area of origin. Albania, Macedonia and Republika Srpska at least are likely to be affected in one way or another. As NATO is now deeply involved in the region, it must make some difficult policy decisions about its approach to such crises.

Serbia. There is little that can be done constructively to influence political developments in Serbia. Overtly to support any political faction would be to doom it to defeat. Many opposition politicians are struggling to shake free of the image that they supported NATO aggression against the FRY. The last thing they need is confirmation that that impression was correct and that they are in the pay of an enemy seen by many as bent on the destruction of their state. It would, however, be useful if Serbian voters could be convinced that any future government which showed genuine commitment to economic and political reform and a positive attitude to its neighbours and the Euro-Atlantic community would qualify for economic assistance. To be convincing, there would have to be commitments to specific sums of money and/or projects. Vague promises will cut little ice.

Montenegro. NATO, and individual alliance countries, have made or implied promises that Montenegro will be protected from attack by the Milosevic regime. It is probably the expectation that such promises will be met that has persuaded Podgorica to proceed down the risky road towards independence. The alliance has a moral obligation either to live up to such assurances or clearly to disabuse Djukanovic of any false expectations. If NATO is prepared to countenance yet more

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<sup>8</sup> Many KLA officers, their tails high after victory over the Serbs, are dismissive of a Kfor so sensitive to the prospect of any casualties at all that it was not committed to the ground war.

boundary changes in the FRY, the best thing it could do to demonstrate political will would be to offer Montenegro its own version of UNPREDEP as well as economic assistance. There is much to be said for supporting a new, fledgling, westward-looking democracy in the region, not least for the example it would give to Serbia. If and when Serbia followed the same path, it is possible that the two could reunite in a confederacy.

Kosovo. The province presents an all but intractable and expensive set of problems in maintaining an unsustainable *status quo* on sovereignty and attempting to impose and maintain indefinitely law and order in an essentially lawless region. There is a strong temptation to find a rapid but honourable exit through allowing the now unstoppable momentum towards independence to take its course without significant delay. In this context, the alliance should bear in mind that the break up of the FRY through the secession of Montenegro would help to get it off the Kosovo hook. Kosovo has been recognized as a province of the federation, and with that entity dissolved there is no bar to a referendum and independence. Of course, there is a substantial down side. An independent Kosovo would probably be, like Albania, a nest of organized crime. It would, sooner or later, destabilize Macedonia, the Albanian community of which will likely want to unite with its cousins (in many cases, literally). A Greater Albania could eventually emerge, which would be anathema to many countries of the region.

There are no good solutions which will automatically solve the problems of the region without creating new ones. It is a matter of finding the least bad ones. That is the nature of the Balkans and the dilemma of outside powers which choose to get involved.

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