

BACK TO THE FUTURE:
Milosevic Prepares for
Life After Kosovo

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Executive Summary

On 28 June 1989, Slobodan Milosevic stood on the site of the ancient Serb battleground of Kosovo Polje and delivered the speech that was to propel him to prominence and the leadership of Yugoslavia. Ten years on, Milosevic remains firmly entrenched in power. He has survived three Balkan wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, economic sanctions, 78 days of NATO air strikes, and an indictment on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Milosevic managed to survive the recent NATO onslaught in part by parlaying resentment against NATO into a wave of public support for his dictatorship. Adept at manipulating popular culture, the regime used such fortuitous events as the timing of the NATO action, coming only weeks before the anniversary of the Nazi bombing of Belgrade in the Second World War, to link the Western alliance with fascism in the public mind. Television programming gave prominence to heroic tales of WW2 partisan fighters, suggesting to the public how they might interpret NATO action. Any Western popular culture, from film to music to television, that degraded Western values or painted the West in a negative light also received wide play, and was clearly aimed at showing the decadence of the Alliance.

Now with the war over, Milosevic continues to use the media to his advantage. While the rest of the world learns about the appalling atrocities committed in Kosovo against ethnic Albanians and recoils at images of torture dungeons and mass graves, the Serbian media continue to play up stories claiming that the Serbs were the real victims, brutalised as they were by both NATO aggression and Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) terrorism.

The Yugoslav leader uses the media not simply to promote his spin on the Kosovo war, but also to splinter public support for potential right-wing rivals. To keep the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party and its leader, Vojislav Seselj from sweeping the right, that segment of the electorate is now being urged to consider the alternative – Vojislav Kostunica and his Democratic Party of Serbia. Western observers ought not to be surprised if upcoming elections give the DSS a marked boost.

Milosevic's "divide and conquer" technique and his skillful manipulation of the media are directed toward entrenching himself in a permanent position of power in Belgrade. While he may formally leave office when his current presidential term is up as the FRY constitution prescribes, he clearly intends to remain a player, perhaps as an elder statesman and power behind the throne.

Milosevic's clear intention to retain his grip on the FRY, in or out of office, guarantees the continuation of a highly destabilizing, siege atmosphere in Belgrade, with or without the officially declared "state of war." He has already signaled that he may turn against the democratically elected Montenegrin government of President Milo Djukanovic. Further crises, confrontations, and possible conflict lie ahead. Given all of the aforementioned, ICG recommends the following:

- 1) That the international community continue to offer unmitigated support for the democratic opposition now led by Milo Djukanovic and Democratic Party leader Zoran Djindjic;
- 2) That the international community grasp the opportunity to make use of the windfall of NATO's presence in Kosovo. With the Kosovo Force (KFOR) firmly on the ground and in principle committed to providing security for the inhabitants of Kosovo, directed efforts must be made to bring in or support the recreation of surrogate media there which could also be aimed at the Serbian market. Broadcasting should not simply take the form of news and informational programming, which would be seized upon by Milosevic's state-run media and discredited as transparent Western propaganda. Instead, Milosevic's control of the collective public consciousness through his manipulation of popular culture must be fought on equal terms, with an entertaining media campaign aimed at the tastes of the population which could evolve into a forum where objective news and information might be introduced;
- 3) Milosevic's moves must be carefully tracked. As long as he remains in office or in power, he may undertake a variety of means for upsetting regional security. He may use his own paramilitaries and interior ministry forces not only, as argued in this paper, to spearhead a campaign in Montenegro, but also to undermine the precarious peace in Kosovo. He may also rely on allies and confidantes in Moscow or Beijing to offer up diplomatic and political stumbling blocks as the international community goes about creating the conditions for a lasting peace.

Belgrade-Podgorica, 28 June 1999



BACK TO THE FUTURE:

Milosevic Prepares for Life After Kosovo

I. INTRODUCTION: 610 YEARS OF KOSOVO POLJE

The present report has been prepared by the International Crisis Group's Yugoslavia analyst, based on extensive field research carried out in and around Belgrade throughout the period of NATO's recent bombing campaign. The aims of the report are several. First, it seeks to explain, largely through the use of anecdotal evidence, the Serbian response to the war and to the NATO alliance, if not to the West as a whole. At this critical juncture, an appreciation of the current public mood and attitudes in Serbia proper may prove useful in calculating how the international community might go about rebuilding its now seriously damaged relations with the Serbian people. Second, the report examines the position in which the regime now finds itself, both in relation to the public and in its ability to cling to power following this major conflict. Finally, the report provides a more general survey of the political landscape in Serbia in the wake of the war. While the situation in Kosovo, now under NATO stewardship, seems to be improving, it is, sadly, difficult to say that conditions in Serbia will get better, at least in the short-to-medium term.

The 10th anniversary of Milosevic's infamous speech at Kosovo Polje is 28 June 1999, a date that coincides with the 610th anniversary of the historic battle there. Milosevic may use this occasion to pander to Serbian xenophobia. He already seems to be rehearsing. His peacetime rhetoric has recently centred around the rebuilding of Serbia's infrastructure, notably, in a campaign-style speech about bridge reconstruction and national renovation that was replete with references to growth into the new millennium.¹ Far from appearing flat-footed, the Yugoslavia leader's recent appearances in the media recall the thrusting, confident Milosevic of ten years ago,² when he first led Serbia into nationalist isolation.

II. BACKGROUND

Two months after NATO began its air campaign against Yugoslavia, Milosevic and four colleagues were charged formally with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Chief Prosecutor for the UN-mandated International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Louise Arbour, said at her 27 May 1999 press conference that the

¹ *Politika*, 12 June 1999 and Tanjug, 11 June 1999.

² *Politika* (front page coverage), 15 June 1999

five had been indicted “specifically [for] murder, deportation and persecutions, and the violations of the laws and customs of war.”³

At first, there was a flood of speculation in the international community that the indictments would derail political initiatives aimed at bringing peace. One source suggested “the decision to indict Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for war crimes appears to have driven a dagger into the heart of diplomatic negotiations.”⁴ But for his part, Milosevic did not seem fazed by the news of his own indictment. Instead, he continued to signal his preparedness to negotiate. If anyone in the West had qualms about dealing with people indicted for war crimes, it was made clear that the indictees themselves had no apprehensions. The Yugoslav United Left (JUL), headed by Milosevic’s wife Mirjana Markovic, kept up the line that a resolution to the Kosovo crisis could “only be achieved” through “political agreement.”⁵ For his part, Vojislav Seselj, leader of the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) and Serbia’s deputy premier, signalled in the most unambiguous terms that the regime had reached the point of being willing to compromise with, but not necessarily capitulate to, NATO’s conditions. “We are aware fully of certain risks because our stand is no foreign troops on our sovereign territory. But if that is the price to be paid for ending the war, we can make concessions.”⁶

On 3 June 1999 an accord with the Belgrade authorities had at last been reached. Finnish President and European Union envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, received extensive coverage in the international media as news of a breakthrough began to be publicised widely. On 4 June 1999 headlines in Belgrade papers heralded the news that peace was imminent.⁷ All that remained to emerge over the next days, perhaps weeks, were the details.

III. IN THE HANDS OF AN INDICTED WAR CRIMINAL

On 31 May 1999 the staid Belgrade daily, *Politika*, carried a story about a man who “was a legend among magicians”. He’d apparently made daring escapes from the closest of quarters, even finding a way out of a sealed coffin. Otherwise, when he wasn’t working, you couldn’t really tell him apart from the average Joe on the street. He was “a shy person...he dressed in an ordinary fashion, and he stuttered when he spoke.”⁸ Did the writers and editors at *Politika* just wake up one morning with a sense of humour? Were they quietly sending up the Yugoslav president? Well, the name they gave in the article was that of Eric Weiss, a man who died some 75 years ago and is better known as Harry Houdini. As Milosevic managed to obtain a diplomatic reprieve from the Kosovo crisis despite The Hague’s issuance of an international warrant for his arrest, the parallels between him and the legendary magician do seem striking.

³ Statement by Justice Louis Arbour, press release, The Hague, 27 May 1999. The five indicted are Slobodan Milosevic, federal president; Nikola Sainovic, federal deputy premier; Dragoljub Ojdanic, chief of the general staff; Milan Milutinovic, president of Serbia, and Vlado Stojiljkovic, Serbia’s interior minister.

⁴ Reuters, 26 May 1999. Cited in ICG’s briefing paper, *Wanted for War Crimes: The Implications of the Indictment of Slobodan Milosevic and four other Yugoslav and Serbian Officials*, 31 May 1999.

⁵ Tanjug, 31 May 1999.

⁶ Palma Plus TV, 30 May 1999.

⁷ *Vecernje novosti*, 4 June 1999.

⁸ *Politika*, 31 May 1999.

At a 5 June 1999 press briefing, NATO spokesman Jamie Shea remarked that it would be “very interesting” to see how Belgrade would justify to its population having endured just over two months of NATO bombing to secure a peace deal “that you could have had in Rambouillet for nothing.”⁹ In fact, Belgrade’s political Houdini had launched the process of spinning the deal well before Shea posed the question. On 4 June 1999 headlines proclaimed that the deal recognises FRY’s “territorial integrity.”¹⁰ A day later, Belgrade dailies quoted political analysts seconded to the task of defending the peace accord. Ognjen Pribicevic, from the Institute of Social Sciences, suggested that the deal was a victory for the FRY, as “Rambouillet talked about the arrival of NATO troops to Kosovo, and three months later NATO is coming as a part of international forces under the UN [umbrella]”. He also noted that the current accord “does not talk about a referendum which in the Rambouillet [agreement] meant the peeling off of Kosovo” and also calls for “the disarming of the KLA.”¹¹

What the Belgrade regime may yet do is claim victory by suggesting that its version of the peace document at the Paris talks in March had been tacitly approved. At that time, rather than sign the Rambouillet accord, the Belgrade delegation opted for another path, unilaterally adopting and endorsing a self-styled proposal called “Agreement for Self-Government in Kosovo-Metohija.”¹² That piece of paper, while not mentioning international forces, did state that Belgrade was prepared to acknowledge a presence for the international community under a United Nations banner. According to Article II of that draft’s Framework: “The Signatories shall cooperate fully with all efforts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international and non-governmental organisations acting under the auspices of the UNHCR concerning the repatriation and return of persons, including those organisations’ monitoring of the treatment Access for International Assistance...All staff, whether national or international, working with international or non-governmental organisations including with the Yugoslav Red Cross, shall be allowed unrestricted access to the Kosmet population for purposes of international assistance. All the persons in Kosmet shall similarly have safe, unhindered, and direct access to the staff of such organisations”. The document also contained the phrase, in Chapter 1, Article 1: “Respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and of the republic of Serbia, substantial self-government in Kosmet shall be based on broadest powers and rights of Kosmet organs and national communities in Kosmet.”¹³

But is Slobodan Milosevic, now an internationally wanted war criminal and stage manager of the ongoing media blitz, in fact telling his population that FRY’s victory over NATO was resounding? Contrary to some expectations, dailies are providing a forum to those willing to go on record saying the latest peace agreement is, if not a surrender or total capitulation, far short of anything that might be dubbed a victory. Dusan Nikolis, of Belgrade’s Institute for International Politics and Economics [*Proizvod*], has already remarked that the peace amounts to “a loss of sovereignty...because US-NATO aggressors are militarily and administratively coming to Kosovo, while the FRY is withdrawing...” Nikolis added that Kosovo is being “divided into administrative zones” and that “this is a new Berlin Wall in Europe, because of the similarity [of the situation] to

⁹ Live broadcast, Sky News and CNN, 5 June 1999.

¹⁰ *Borba*, 4 June 1999.

¹¹ *Blic*, 5 June 1999.

¹² *Borba*, 20-21 March 1999.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Germany and Berlin after the capitulation of Germany in the Second World War, and the borders of the FRY are called into question.”¹⁴

Milosevic may be permitting such voices to be heard so as to exploit to the fullest the popular anti-Western, anti-NATO sentiment in the wake of 10 weeks of bombing and the effective occupation of Kosovo. Certainly, the rhetoric of victory would not lend itself as readily to an attempt by the regime to prepare the public for an eventual partition of Kosovo. In addition, Nikolis's statement may have presaged a deal Milosevic had quietly struck with the Russians with regard to their controlling a Serb-inhabited portion of Kosovo, which shall be further explored below.

IV. THE POLITICAL ELEMENTS

With news of peace came news, albeit slowly, of the backstage processes leading up to the momentous 3 June acceptance of the deal crafted by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari and Russian envoy Victor Chernomyrdin. Milosevic attempted to explain the accord, and the Serbian Parliament's acquiescence to it, at least in part as a result of NATO's overwhelming force having prompted decision-makers in the FRY to accept any terms offered. It was, according to some spin accounts, a case of "Cave in, or face the apocalyptic inevitability." One story appearing in a pro-government newspaper noted that Ahtisaari and Chernomyrdin arrived on the fateful Wednesday evening to hand Milosevic a draft of the peace deal. "We didn't come here to discuss or negotiate [said the Finn]. After that he read out the plan. Milosevic listened. Already, he comprehended everything: the Russians and the Europeans placed him squarely in the hands of the English and the Americans. He took the pieces of paper, read, and then asked: 'And what will happen if I don't sign?' Ahtisaari made a gesture across the table with his hand...and then Chernomyrdin made the same motion with his hand, as if to be cleaning the tabletop. Ahtisaari then said, in a hushed tone: 'Belgrade will be just like this tabletop. We'll start the bombing of Belgrade immediately.' Then both of them made the gesture, indicating the flatness. Milosevic just said nothing. And they repeated...half a million dead in Belgrade.”¹⁵

Such an account was likely floated to give the regime some justification for coming to terms with NATO. The thought of the Finnish dignitary, a representative of a nation not known for its warlike approach to international problem-solving, delivering such an ultimatum will strike most as ludicrous. But the account was not without value as a piece of propaganda to be used for domestic consumption.

In fact, a Swedish investment banker named Peter Castenfelt met with Milosevic on 29 May 1999, ostensibly to soften up the dictator and prepare him psychologically to accept the deal. It is unclear whether Castenfelt convinced Milosevic that Russian support was not forthcoming for the Yugoslav cause, but he did allegedly make the case that the agreement was good for Belgrade, allowing it to assert jurisdiction over Kosovo.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Blic*, 5 June 1999. Nikolis remarks, ironically, are carried under the headline "Ujedinjene nacije stite suverenitet Jugoslavije."

¹⁵ *Nedeljni telegraf*, 9 June 1999.

¹⁶ AP, 16 June 1999.

On 4 June, as dailies and electronic media trumpeted the acceptance of the deal,¹⁷ editors were careful to avoid mention of surrender or capitulation. Instead, reports were couched in references to Belgrade adopting a peaceful course of action. Under headlines such as "'YES' to Peace in Yugoslavia," citizens were told, "With this document the territorial sovereignty of our land is confirmed."¹⁸ While few reports have gone so far as to stress an interpretation of a NATO defeat, recent accounts have alleged that "NATO is the biggest loser." This story, from an interview with FRY Premier Momir Bulatovic, quoted the former Montenegrin president as observing that, "in the interests of peace, our country had to make many painful compromises, but even the aggressor had to make compromises.... The territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia has been secured, which undermines every [form] of separatism and terrorism."¹⁹

At last Milosevic himself emerged to deliver the message personally in a 10 June address:

"Dear citizens, the aggression is over. Peace has overcome violence. ...At this moment, our first thoughts should go to the heroes who gave their lives in the defense of the fatherland, in the struggle for the freedom and dignity of their people. All their names will be made known, but now I want to inform you that 462 members of the Yugoslav Army and 114 members of the police force of the Republic of Serbia were killed in the war that lasted exactly 11 weeks, from March 24 until today. We will never be able to pay our debt to them. We must do what we can, that which it is our duty to do - and that is to look after their families and always be prepared to defend the freedom, dignity and independence of this country, for which they laid down their lives. Our entire nation has taken part in this war - from babies in maternity wards to patients in intensive care to soldiers in air-defense trenches and patrolmen on the borders. No one can forget the heroism of the defenders of the bridges, of the citizens who defended factories, squares, their cities, their jobs, their country, their people....Early this year there were many rallies throughout our country. One slogan could have been heard there: we won't give up Kosovo. **We have not given up Kosovo. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country is guaranteed by the Group of Eight major industrial powers [sic] and the UN. That guarantee is also contained in the Draft Resolution. The outstanding issue of Kosovo's possible independence raised during the period preceding the aggression was settled and closed by the Belgrade Accords.** The territorial integrity of our country cannot be questioned. We have held out. We have defended our country, presenting our entire problem at the pinnacle of world authority, the UN, to be resolved under UN auspices and in accordance with the UN Charter. The international forces to deploy in Kosovo will act under UN auspices, with the task of helping all citizens. A political process based on principles arising from previous debates and on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country will also be taking place under UN auspices. That means that this political process can only have to do with autonomy and with nothing other than autonomy. Not only did we defend our country by taking our case before the UN but we also placed the UN - which had not functioned for eighty days, since before the aggression began - back onto the world stage. That is our contribution to the efforts of the entire freedom-loving world; that is our contribution to the efforts to create a multipolar world and not to accept the creation of a world run by dictate of force from a single center. I believe that this will be a huge contribution to history and that the

¹⁷ RTS, *Vecernje novosti* and *Borba*, 4 June 1999.

¹⁸ *Blic*, 4 June 1999.

¹⁹ *Blic* [citing reports in *BETA* and *Dan*], 15 June 1999.

heroism of our people in their resistance to a far more powerful enemy will mark the end of the 20th century. I am convinced of that."²⁰

V. THE RUSSIANS BUILD A NEW BERLIN WALL?

The announcement that peace had been agreed did not mark an immediate end to the NATO action. As soon as the news broke, it was also announced that the technical details of the Serbian withdrawal had to be worked out. This necessitated meetings between FRY generals and NATO military authorities, which commenced on 5 June 1999. In the meantime, NATO bombing continued. The focus of international media attention during this phase of the plodding peace process became the Macedonian town of Kumanovo, site of the bilateral meetings between the FRY commanders and their Western counterparts.²¹ At times marked by frustration and intense, prolonged negotiations,²² the talks produced consensus, with the FRY authorities signing a technical agreement on withdrawal on 9 June 1999, a move also paving the way for the return of ethnic Albanian refugees.²³ This prompted NATO, on 10 June, to announce a halt to the bombing campaign. News of this development was reported matter-of-factly in most Belgrade dailies. A standard account, relying heavily on Reuters coverage, observed that "NATO General Secretary Javier Solana announced yesterday afternoon that the Alliance suspended its air campaign against FRY...KFOR (Kosovo Force) troops will begin to enter Kosovo when the Security Council passes a resolution on Kosovo, which will formally end the conflict."²⁴

Just as everything began to seem as though it were falling into a routine, with NATO countries focussing on an interpretation of events in such a way as to stress Belgrade's capitulation, the Russians entered the scene. On 11 June a Russian contingent of 200 Bosnia-based troops raced into Pristina, the Kosovan capital, and occupied the local airport, refusing to allow NATO access until political negotiations between Washington and Moscow had produced an outcome acceptable to the Russians regarding their role in the peace-keeping mission.

Evidence that continues to dribble out suggests the Russian venture had been planned well in advance, possibly with roots as far back as late May. According to Western accounts now beginning to emerge, Peter Castenfelt, the investment banker, reportedly explained to Milosevic during his seven-day visit to Belgrade beginning 29 May 1999 "that the international force sent to Kosovo was under a United Nations mandate, something Milosevic had demanded".²⁵ At about the same time, according to Michael Steiner, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's foreign policy adviser, Moscow "signalled very clearly that (Milosevic) could *not* count on military or political support." But the real question remains just how firm those signals from Moscow were.

²⁰ RTS, 10 June 1999. Bold and emphasis added.

²¹ See, for example, *Blic* and *Politika*, 5-9 June 1999.

²² RTS, BETA, and AFP, 8 June 1999.

²³ AP Kosovo Chronology, 10 June 1999.

²⁴ *Blic*, 11 June 1999.

²⁵ AP, 16 June 1999. Emphasis added.

Milosevic, whose brother is the FRY's ambassador to Moscow, was undoubtedly thoroughly briefed on the court intrigue currently plaguing the Russian government. On 5 June 1999, dovetailing with the end of Castenfelt's Belgrade mission, FRY dailies began to report on wide rifts between Russian diplomats and their military counterparts. In addition, those profound differences were well known within diplomatic and military circles. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov reportedly said the gulf was wide, with the military establishment interpreting the peace deal in a negative light.²⁶ For his part, Russian Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov, head of the Defense Ministry's department of international relations, held the view that the peace deal ran contra to Moscow's and Belgrade's interests, and as a result he and his backers were "categorically opposed to the accord arrived at in Bonn."²⁷

Western leaders' belated awareness of the Russian troops' stealth approach to Kosovo prompted frantic concern that thousands more Russian soldiers would follow, thereby establishing facts on the ground - in this case, a Russian-controlled area that could ultimately evolve into a de facto partition - before NATO had even deployed. Despite high-level Russian assurances that the troops would stop at the Kosovo border,²⁸ Belgrade headlines on 12 June announced, "Russian soldiers enter Kosovo."²⁹ Already on 11 June Ivashov spelled out Moscow's intent: if Russia could not reach accord with NATO on a peacekeeping role, "Russia had the same right as NATO. We will, in such a case, declare [our own] sector [of occupation], and that with the consent of the Yugoslav side."³⁰ For nearly a week, Belgrade news focussed on the demand of Russian public diplomacy, namely, that "Yeltsin is Categorical: Russia Must Get Its Own Sector."³¹

Ivanov initially expressed his dismay, claiming he had no knowledge of the plan to seize the Pristina airport. Yeltsin at first reacted similarly, but since has been shown to have played a key role in the planning of the operation, and has promoted the Russian officer-in-charge of the 200-strong force for his efforts. In fact, the FRY media reports from at least 5 June 1999 make clear that most if not all Russian officials knew of the deep rifts dividing the foreign and defence ministries. While perhaps some ministers took no active part in the planning of the operation, it is inconceivable that they knew nothing about it. As for the men on the ground, they appear to be fond of airports, and their corps has a history of basing itself in such facilities. Soldiers from the 103rd Russian Army division in 1968 took over Prague airport during the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, and in 1979 this "elite of the [Russian military] elite" took over Kabul airport during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.³²

For the time being, the tensions between Russia and the West over Kosovo appear to have subsided.³³ Following talks between Russian and US officials, Moscow agreed on

²⁶ *Blic*, 5 June 1999.

²⁷ *Blic*, 5 June 1999 (citing Russia's NTV). See also BETA and Itar-Tass, 4 June 1999.

²⁸ CNN, Sky News and BBC World, 11 June 1999.

²⁹ *Politika*, 12 June 1999.

³⁰ *Politika*, 12 June 1999. See also Tanjug, 11 June 1999.

³¹ *Politika*, 18 June 1999.

³² *Nedeljni telegraf*, 16 June 1999.

³³ *Nedeljni telegraf*, 23 June 1999.

a troop deployment within existing NATO zones.³⁴ Reports in the FRY media stressed that about 3,000 Russian soldiers would be based in three zones, with about 1,500 men "stationed in the zone of American control," the remainder to be divided between the French and German areas, with "a smaller" troop contingent to be "based at Pristina airport."³⁵ In a related development, Yugoslav troops required to withdraw from Kosovo beat their 20 June 1999 deadline by roughly eleven hours,³⁶ triggering the NATO announcement that the air campaign against the FRY had come officially to an end. What remains an open question is whether or not the Russian race to Pristina will represent the norm or exception to Moscow's dealings with the NATO allies during the tenure of the KFOR mission.

VI. "IN THE HANDS OF ALL YUGOSLAV CITIZENS"

With peace now on the horizon, how has the Serbian political scene been affected by the accord? If one were to believe the dailies, anti-Western, anti-NATO feelings and bravado run high in the Serbian populace. Politicians striking defiant tones continue to receive prominent coverage. Seselj, who first floated Milosevic's trial balloon of a compromise with the NATO countries, was also the first to balk at the prospect of peace as it began to materialise. Some two-thirds of the Serbian legislature voted to adopt peace, with Seselj's SRS voicing disaffection.³⁷ The SRS even discussed breaking with the government,³⁸ undoubtedly a ploy designed to enable the ultra-nationalists to tell the public that they weren't responsible for any humiliating peace deal.³⁹ Seselj, speaking directly to the ultra-nationalist constituency, went on record immediately with stinging criticism of the peace deal. "Seselj...has said that while capitulation is 'too strong a word' for the acceptance of the plan, he did say 'this plan is extremely dangerous.'"⁴⁰ He added that any international administration of Kosovo "must not be allowed to take the place of [Belgrade's] administration," and that, "acceptance of the accord does not provide any guarantee of a pause in the bombing". True to form, he implied that the mechanics of implementing the peace would be no easy task and, perhaps sinisterly, as patron of some of Serbia's most vicious paramilitary forces, promised nothing but ordeals and hurdles for the international peacekeepers. "Not for one moment will they have a feeling of security," he vowed.⁴¹ All of this had the jingoistic ring of pre-election rhetoric.

As interesting as what Seselj said was what he omitted. He made no personal attacks on Milosevic, nor did he pledge to use the political process to overturn the legislature's acceptance of an accord. In fact, he pledged to uphold the authority of all those duly elected to office and promised not to help organise anti-government rallies. "With respect to the question of whether or not Slobodan Milosevic should stay on as the FRY president, Seselj answered that the question of the government was in the hands of all

³⁴ The principals at the Helsinki discussions appear to have been US Secretary of Defence William Cohen for Washington and his Moscow counterpart, Igor Sergeev. See *Blic*, 19 June 1999; and, BETA and Reuters, 18 June 1999.

³⁵ *Politika*, 18 June 1999.

³⁶ DW TV (Top Story), 22 June 1999.

³⁷ DW TV, 4 June 1999.

³⁸ *Blic*, 4 and 5 June 1999.

³⁹ *V.I.P.*, 24 June 1999.

⁴⁰ *Blic*, 4 June 1999.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Yugoslav citizens and that no outsider should be permitted to interfere with our electoral process."⁴² Shortly after the SRS leader made his comments, other party officials, seemingly underscoring his commitment, repeated the message, observing that under no circumstances would the Radicals "undermine peace, invite unrest, or raise political tensions in the republic." A deal that represented "the will of the majority of the representatives in the legislature" would be "honoured."⁴³ On 14 June Seselj and all the ministers of his party voted unanimously to leave government ranks,⁴⁴ but on 17 June the SRS leader made an about-face. Citing Serbian President Milan Milutinovic's refusal to accept the offered resignations, Seselj said 15 party members would remain in the Serbian government "until the election of new ministers who will conscientiously perform their duties." Seselj also stressed that, "We will have technical cooperation with the coalition partners, but there will be no more intentional co-operation."⁴⁵ Since, he has said that Milosevic and Mira Markovic very much want the SRS to remain in government.⁴⁶

Seselj's fellow paramilitary leader Zeljko Raznatovic, alias Arkan, himself an indicted war criminal, found it impossible to keep tight-lipped. As soon as news of a peace deal leaked out, he began repeating his familiar rhetoric of defiance. If it came to it, said Arkan, even "my wife [will] shoot at British soldiers."⁴⁷ As to how the peace-keeping would go, Arkan remarked there was a tremendous upside and business opportunity: "I'll sell plastic [body] bags, because you'll need a lot of body bags for your soldiers. That's good business."⁴⁸

Even less flamboyant politicians, such as Vojislav Kostunica, leader of the nationalist Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), held steadfast to his ultra-nationalist, defiant posturing.⁴⁹ For many years, Kostunica cultivated the image of a moderate standing in contrast to the extremist policies cluttering the political landscape. In truth, Kostunica's long-held views about the possibility of co-operating with ultra-nationalists and including them in governing coalitions betrayed his underlying extremism, although his dirth of charisma actually masks the excesses of his ideology, lulling some observers into the belief that he may be a genuine democratic alternative.⁵⁰ While his phrases were far less antagonistic than Arkan's and even a shade more subdued than Seselj's, Kostunica made it clear on the eve of the peace breakthrough that his sympathies lay with the regime. According to the DSS, it was Washington that was aiming to destabilise the peace process, and it was "America that was against peace."⁵¹ He claimed that the indictment of members of the FRY and Serbia's top leadership was an effort to derail a negotiated settlement to the Kosovo crisis and that "The Hague tribunal is a political, and not legal instrument..."⁵²

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ BETA, 4 June 1999. See also Tanjug 4 June 1999 and *Blic* 5 June 1999.

⁴⁴ *Blic*, 15 June 1999.

⁴⁵ *V.I.P.*, 18 June 1999.

⁴⁶ *Glas javnosti*, 24 June 1999.

⁴⁷ *Nedeljni Telegraf*, 2 June 1999. *Telegraf* reports on and reprints portions of an Arkan interview for London's *Daily Telegraph*. Arkan's wife, Ceca, is a Serbian pop music icon.

⁴⁸ *Nedeljni Telegraf*, 2 June 1999.

⁴⁹ *Blic*, 1 June 1999.

⁵⁰ *NIN*, 2 August 1996.

⁵¹ See story under headline "Amerika protiv mira," *Blic*, 1 June 1999.

⁵² Ibid.

With the newfound media attention gracing the DSS and Kostunica, it is tempting to speculate that Milosevic may have plans for the nationalist leader. In the past, Democratic party (DS) head Zoran Djindjic, regarded an advocate of the nationalist cause, received favour in the state-run press. This, hindsight now suggests, was the tactic for splitting the nationalist vote, allowing the SPS to emerge the strongest single party and being able to play the others off against each other. Since casting his lot with reformist Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic and becoming himself an advocate of Western-style reforms, Djindjic can no longer serve the purpose of braking Seselj's moves to unite the extremist electorate. For now, Djindjic remains vilified in the state-run media. He has been dubbed a traitor for backing reform, and on 17 June 1999, following meetings with U.S. Balkans envoy Robert Gelbard, the media tarred the DS leader a threat to national security. It was alleged that Djindjic and Vladan Batic, head of the Christian Democrat Party of Serbia (DHSS) and another key figure in the Alliance for Change coalition, met with the US envoy in the Montenegrin town of Herceg Novi to plot the violent overthrow of the Milosevic regime and to collect the millions of dollars needed to accomplish the task.⁵³ Djindjic, who dismissed the allegations as nonsense, expressed fears that the average man-in-the-street might succumb to government propaganda.⁵⁴ "If...elections were to take place in an environment where a government news agency publishes that we got \$9 million from the Americans to topple Milosevic - which is probably the main news in Belgrade today - you could imagine who would win."⁵⁵

As for Kostunica, he does appear to be preparing for the campaign trail, and with the regime's blessing. While denying that the timing is off for elections in the near future, he is pressing home his message that Belgrade's ability to assert jurisdiction over Kosovo will be lost "if we allow ourselves to be led by those who maintain that the politics of our government must be pro-American."⁵⁶

VII. THE RULING COUPLE

A Kostunica-backed government is quite possibly the formula that the ruling couple, Slobodan Milosevic and Mirjana Markovic, will rely on to maintain their grip on political power even after he formally leaves the presidency, an event due to take place in 2001.⁵⁷ In the past, Milosevic has managed to secure a dominant position for his Socialist Party of Serbia by using other nationalist parties as stalking horses to split the extremist vote. The SPS, in short, may once again come up in the middle, as other extremist parties neutralise each other's support. Kostunica's DSS now appears to be positioning itself to challenge Seselj's SRS, while on the left, Mira Markovic's Yugoslav United Left (JUL) will continue to appeal to disillusioned leftists, technocrats, and other pro-totalitarian elements who may be uncomfortable voting for an extreme nationalist like Seselj.

⁵³ See coverage in *V.I.P.*, 18 June 1999.

⁵⁴ FoNet 17 June 1999 and *V.I.P.*, 18 June 1999.

⁵⁵ Cited in *V.I.P.*, 18 June 1999.

⁵⁶ *Blic*, 19 June 1999.

⁵⁷ ICG Balkans Report N° 57, *Sideling Slobodan: Getting Rid of Europe's Last Dictator*, 15 March 1999.

Nevertheless, Milosevic does not appear bent on retaining political power only by rigging ballot box returns. His behaviour during the past year suggests at least one other approach he may be contemplating, which entails consolidating a regime based on military rule. This process actually began towards the end of 1998, with the ouster of Head of the Army Gen. Momcilo Perisic.⁵⁸ Now the FRY dictator is making noise about reorganising the army (VJ). Citing budgetary constraints, Belgrade is now on record saying that recruits are too expensive and that "the Yugoslav state leadership could reorganise the VJ and try to transform it into a professional army. Since the budget does not have enough money, part of the Serbian police, who are professionals and are paid out of the Serbian budget, could be transferred to the VJ."⁵⁹ In addition to making financial sense, the move would certainly discourage any possible coup attempts, as "the professionalisation of the VJ...would neutralise possible discontent and frustration among VJ officers."⁶⁰

Contrary to many Western expectations, Milosevic's Kosovo debacle appears not to have cost him much public support, at least so far. According to a 9-14 June 1999 poll commissioned by Medium research agency, a relatively independent polling and research firm,⁶¹ Milosevic is regarded by a plurality of the 800 respondents as the most trustworthy man in Yugoslavia with 15.6% of respondents avowing their faith in him.⁶² While the statistics do indicate a decrease in his popular standing,⁶³ a remarkable 21% of respondents do not hold him accountable or responsible for the national crises affecting the FRY over the past year. If an election were held today, 21.9% of respondents said they would vote for the SPS, while Vuk Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) came in second, with 14.7% support.⁶⁴ Finally, Milo Djukanovic came in fourth on the list of most trusted of political leaders, receiving the nod from five percent of respondents.

VIII. CONTRASTING VIEWS

In the West, coverage of the atrocities committed against the civilian Albanian population of Kosovo has been extensive and graphic. The fact that nearly 1.5 million ethnic Albanian Kosovars have been homeless, displaced, or expelled from Kosovo is now common knowledge. How complete the destruction is has also been covered in grim detail. Horrifying and sickening discoveries such as the Ministry of Interior torture chamber in Pristina⁶⁵ are now coming to light, with certainly other and even more horrifying discoveries to follow. How long it may take before the refugees return, many of whom are beginning to flood back, is also being discussed along with related problems

⁵⁸ For full details see ICG Balkans Report N° 53, *Milosevic: Déjà Vu All Over Again?*, 23 December 1998.

⁵⁹ *V.I.P.*, 22 June 1999.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ During the "state of war," all published information was vetted by officials from either the Ministry of Information or the Ministry of the Interior. Therefore the actual independence of the polling or reporting is, at best, difficult to assess.

⁶² *Blic*, 22 June 1999.

⁶³ An earlier poll accorded him 30%.

⁶⁴ The SPO figure represents its highest popular rating since 1990. The SRS would get about 10.5% of the vote, while Kostunica's DSS was a favourite with 5.3% of respondents. Djindjic's DS trailed well behind with the backing of 3.3% of those polled. See *Blic*, 22 June 1999.

⁶⁵ *Sky News*, 17 and 18 June 1999.

such as the landmine issue.⁶⁶ But very few Serbs inside the FRY understand how dire the situation in Kosovo has really been, very few know about the mass graves and war atrocities⁶⁷ or realise, for example, the threat posed even by the landmines riddling the province (a threat that prompted one journalist to comment, "It will be decades before it's safe to go for a walk in Kosovo").⁶⁸

Inside Serbia, censorship remains tight.⁶⁹ On 24 June 1999 the federal parliament, following a debate not broadcast to the Serbian public, passed a resolution lifting the state of war. Debate will likely continue over the coming weeks as to how much of the war-time legislation will be repealed,⁷⁰ including harsh measures⁷¹ that have effectively muzzled all media.

For the foreseeable future, the average television viewer, particularly outside Belgrade, is unlikely to encounter unbiased news coverage. Instead, headlines such as "Thanks to Serbian Soldiers"⁷² and images of stalwart and heroic Serb fighters have received and continue to get all the media attention. An illustrative case is the account of one Mehmet Haljimi, a 58-year-old Albanian who was "forcibly mobilised by the KLA" because "there were no other males in his household." Haljimi was detained by Serb forces, but released on the condition that he could return and hand over at least "five members of the KLA willing to surrender." Eventually, Haljimi allegedly returned to the rendezvous point, but in tow were "terrorists" who "opened fire" on Serb forces. The "terrorists" were neutralised, and Haljimi's family, his wife and daughters, were also detained. According to the account, Haljimi's wife gave "thanks to the Serbian soldiers. Two nights and one day they kept us in a room. They brought us food and water. They didn't touch us in any way, and they didn't ask any intimate questions. I was terrified for my three daughters, but nobody laid a hand on them."⁷³

When covering the broader issue of the peace plan, the media continue to focus on the alleged victimisation of the Serbian people, either at the hands of KLA terrorists returning to Kosovo or at the hands of hostile NATO forces. A recent story, "A Peace Full of Unrest [*Mir pun nemira*]" highlights alleged KLA atrocities.⁷⁴ Thus, while the state press addresses the issue of peace, its presentation is invariably in the context of the reasonable and reasoned desire of the governing authorities to secure an end to hostilities. Headlines such as "Yugoslavia Accepts Peace" and "Confirmed the Territorial Integrity and Sovereignty of the Land" extol the righteousness of the FRY and Serbian governments,⁷⁵ while commentaries buttressed by such headlines as, "The Yugoslav Government Always Wanted a Peaceful Resolution" claim to reveal the immutable

⁶⁶ Sky News, 5 June 1999.

⁶⁷ *Washington Post*, 24 June 1999. The *Post* cites a recent survey published in *NIN* which says an astonishing 64% of ethnic Serb respondents did not feel there were atrocities committed in Kosovo, while only 14% believed they had been committed. About 15% said they could believe parts of the atrocity reports.

⁶⁸ CNN report, 1 June 1999.

⁶⁹ See coverage of atrocities against Serbs in *Blic*, 24 June 1999.

⁷⁰ BBC World and CNN, 24 June 1999.

⁷¹ Studio B TV, 24 June 1999.

⁷² *Nedeljni Telegraf*, 2 June 1999.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Vecernje novosti*, 17 June 1999.

⁷⁵ *Borba*, 4 June 1999.

intentions of the Belgrade authorities.⁷⁶ Mention of NATO invariably leads to discussion of the Western source of all aggression and hostilities, as indicated by such banners as, "...NATO Kills Children: Milica Rakic Was Killed by Madeleine Albright" and "NATO Aggression Against Yugoslavia...the Moral Decline of the West." Western self-criticism continues to be a prized commodity for the Belgrade propaganda mill. Prominent coverage of reports such as, "British Committee for Peace in the Balkans: NATO Terror in Yugoslavia" enables the regime to demonstrate to its captive population that it is not alone in condemning the Western alliance as "brutally terrorising the civilian population of Yugoslavia with its strategy," as the British Committee's president is quoted as saying.⁷⁷

The anti-NATO rhetoric did not disappear with the peace accord. In recent days, wide coverage was given to purportedly disillusioned NATO military officers such as Captain Adolfo Luis Martin de la Oz, a Spanish NATO pilot, who disapprovingly alleged that the U.S. had planned every stage and strike of the bombing campaign, including the decision to order cluster bomb attacks on civilian targets in Pristina and Nis.⁷⁸

IX. BACK TO THE FUTURE

At least at the outset of the NATO action, the regime managed to strike a favourable chord with much of the population. Most people seemed pre-disposed to support the government line, perhaps partly as a result of their own hysteria, which the regime was able to manipulate into a kind of euphoric defiance. Even after some weeks, support did not appear to wane, with many young people continuing to carry Milosevic placards to the daily public music concerts taking place in the main downtown square. The regime managed to weave carefully vetted information about the war together with historical memories and cultural myths in a way that resonated with much of the public. Unlike less modern dictatorships, Milosevic's regime has not condemned Western pop culture outright, even though it has periodically railed against it in the state press. Rather, Western cultural artifacts have been usurped and twisted to serve propaganda purposes, as several of the journal entries in the appendix to this report illustrate.

The propaganda campaign accompanying the war in Kosovo, like the ethnic cleansing campaign itself, was premeditated and carried out according to plan. During the March meetings in Paris, where the Serbian and Kosovar delegations convened ostensibly to conclude a peace deal, it quickly became evident that the Belgrade authorities were in no way sincere about reaching an agreement. Instead, they adopted a "third path," a phrase familiar to everyone who lived through WW2. This was the strategy of *Ni rat ni pakt* [neither war nor peace], first coined in 1941, when acting Yugoslav Prime Minister Gen. Dusan Simovic, head of the briefly reigning military junta, responded to Axis ultimatums by saying that while Yugoslavia would not agree to terms, nor would it wage war. At Rambouillet, by rejecting the peace plan and opting to endorse a Belgrade-prepared document that was not on the table, contemporary FRY and Serbian leaders invoked their own version of this historic ploy.

⁷⁶ *Politika*, 5 June 1999.

⁷⁷ *Borba*, 4 June 1999.

⁷⁸ *Nedeljni telegraf*, 16 June 1999.

Not completely incidentally, the date of Belgrade's recent opting for a "third path" nearly overlapped with the earlier instance: in 1941, Gen. Simovic's declaration of neutrality took place on 27 March, and on 6 April the Nazis attacked. In 1999, the Rambouillet talks collapsed on March 19, and NATO's first air strikes began on 24 March, after Milosevic again rejected a solution imposed by the allies. This confluence of dates and the invocation of a familiar strategy were exploited by the Belgrade regime to paint the NATO allies as Nazis. Television newscasts and newspapers were soon filled with references to Hitler-Clinton,⁷⁹ and Studio B TV was notorious for featuring graphics linking the NATO action to Nazi atrocities. One infamous ad showed NATO aircraft flying in a swastika formation, with the caption, *Mi ne zaboravljamo* [We Don't Forget]. In the first few days and weeks of the war, partisan films, both fictional and documentary, featured the heroic Yugoslav resistance to invading Fascist forces, thereby feeding the contemporary Belgrade audience hard-to-miss parallels to the current situation.⁸⁰

Sacred holidays such as Orthodox Easter also were not exempted from the NATO campaign, providing Belgrade with yet another propaganda windfall. Following the Easter weekend, on Monday, 12 April 1999, one Belgrade daily reported that "The Aggressor Didn't Spare our Country Even on the Greatest Orthodox Holiday: Targeted on Easter."⁸¹ Some political parties even used the occasion to send a very pointed message. The New Democracy (ND) party placed ads during the Easter weekend that featured just a painted Easter egg captioned with the phrase, "They believe in BOMBS, We believe in GOD."⁸² The message, "Nothing is sacred to them" was repeated extensively during the period.⁸³

Given the propaganda push during the early part of the NATO action, it is tempting to speculate that the intent was to instill in Serbs an attitude towards NATO countries usually reserved for the mythos of the Ottoman invaders (responsible for the Serbs' glorious defeat in the legendary 1389 Battle of Kosovo Polje) and for Hitler's Nazis.⁸⁴ Only decades will tell whether the date 24 March 1999 enters the Serbian popular lexicon as a term equal to, if not synonymous with, 1389.

While Second World War imagery was pirated to tap into a more senior demographic, it was clear that rock and folk music were marshalled to appeal to Serbian youth. The catchy recruiting jingle beginning with *Sa nama si sigurna*...became ubiquitous within hours of the first NATO bombs falling. But the links the regime had established with popular culture had deep and intimate roots. Milosevic is in a unique position to understand how popular culture impacts on Serbian youth because his daughter is proprietor of Kosava TV, which specialises in trendy pop videos and Pero Ojdanic, a close relative of the Head of the Army, regularly appears in pop music ads aired on Pink TV.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ *Danas*, 29 March 1999.

⁸⁰ *Danas*, 14 April 1999.

⁸¹ *Vecernje novosti*, 12 April 1999.

⁸² See, for example, *Vecernje novosti* (page 12), 10 April 1999.

⁸³ *Vecernje novosti*, 12 April 1999.

⁸⁴ *Danas*, 27 and 31 March 1999.

⁸⁵ Pero's exact family relationship with the general is still somewhat uncertain. According to some sources, he is the general's brother. Other sources have told this author their relationship is one of first cousins. In any event, all agree the relationship is "close."

Daily concerts, taking place first in the Belgrade main square and then moving to include vigils on municipal bridges, served to mobilise youth opinion against NATO.⁸⁶ Vuk Draskovic's Studio B TV promulgated symbols appealing to the young. The image of the target displayed at rock concerts, suspicious in its resemblance to the Studio B logo, adorned T-shirts worn by young people and became ubiquitous.⁸⁷ Mira Markovic's daily, *Borba*, even began to display the target insignia on the front page.⁸⁸ TV stations used it as a graphic, while news anchors sported the image of the target over their hearts. The term *otpor*,⁸⁹ initially used by the pro-democracy student movement, was also appropriated by the regime dailies to evince support for youth anti-NATO rallies and concerts.⁹⁰ One notable broadcaster opting to buck the target craze was TV Palma, where a station representative insisted, "We [Serbian people] are not to be used as a target." Instead, TV Palma adopted an ancient cross symbol, claiming it to be among "the oldest in Christendom" and because "it is a symbol of *otpor*, a symbol of resistance."⁹¹

X. MORE QUESTIONS

The main purpose of this paper has been to demonstrate that the picture of Serbian society after the war much resembles pre-conflict Serbian society. Prior to the war, Milosevic had begun to entrench himself in power, which he continues to this day. The bolstering of Kostunica's DSS suggests a familiar pattern that will likely play itself out in upcoming elections, and public opinion will continue to be manipulated through the continued control of the media.

A forthcoming ICG report will focus on themes broached in this work. That analysis, tentatively titled, *Milosevic: How I Did It*, will explain how the FRY dictator has managed to consolidate his grip on power since the NATO action and how he has weathered the storm of remaining a head of state following indictment on charges of crimes against humanity. While the international community may become complacent following its recent military victory against the FRY, from the vantage point of Belgrade, the issue of Kosovo's status remains wide open. The recent push to enforce the return of fleeing Serbs to the province may provide the regime with the rationalization for asserting future control of the province,⁹² or at the very least to argue for partition, should relations between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs flounder and give way to renewed tensions. In any event, the constitutional status of the province will be called into question in the coming months.⁹³ The matter of how Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) may be reintegrated into the political scene, likely in the service of Milosevic's government, will be taken up.

⁸⁶ See, for example, *Vreme* (p. 16), 31 March 1999.

⁸⁷ *Danas*, 3-4 April 1999.

⁸⁸ The first usage of the Target was in the issue *Borba*, 30 March 1999.

⁸⁹ The term *otpor* means opposition or resistance.

⁹⁰ See, for example, *Borba*, 30 March 1999.

⁹¹ TV Palma, commentary broadcast 5 and 6 April 1999.

⁹² *Politika*, 18 June 1999.

⁹³ It may be important to note that the SRS has long advocated a unitary state, which effectively pushes out Serbia's borders by eliminating Montenegro's and Kosovo's. The question is will the Kosovo peace deal's recognition of the FRY's territorial integrity, but not Serbia's, actually play into SRS hands.

Perhaps most importantly, the issue of Montenegro's role in the FRY will also be addressed.⁹⁴ Last time Milosevic purged his military, it was in order to carry out Operation Horseshoe and the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. The announcement that Interior Ministry forces may be shifted to military service in the guise of the VJ may spell trouble for Montenegro and may suggest that Milosevic is already planning for a showdown with Djukanovic.⁹⁵ The Montenegrin president was vilified at the war's outset; when he failed to follow Milosevic's lead in severing relations with Germany, France, the UK and the USA, the Belgrade media's hate-mongering only intensified, and accusations of treason continue.⁹⁶ Seselj recently said that, "The Western forces have a serious ally in the Montenegrin government when it comes to...secession. The majority [of Montenegrins] is against it, but, on the other hand, we know from personal experience how a referendum is organised, the opposition has no control over the referendum. In case the referendum is organised, the result will be the one determined by the regime in Montenegro."⁹⁷

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Support democratic alternatives in the Milosevic regime

Milosevic's governing Socialists and his wife's leftist party will exploit lingering anti-Western resentments to extend their parties' hold on power. The fact that the ultranationalists are already *de facto* campaigning may mean that the election agenda later this year or next will focus on the status of Kosovo and on relations with Montenegro. Serbia's economy and infrastructure are in a shambles, but as long as Milosevic can continue to cling to power and promote a political climate (even after he formally steps down) benefiting the ultra-nationalists, Kosovo will claim centre-stage as a campaign issue, and few if any political parties will get a chance to even present economic issues in their election platforms. In this political climate, it is imperative that the West support democratic alternatives, such as Djindjic's DS, as they seek to unseat the dictator. Just as important, the international community should foster and encourage open debate on matters of critical importance to all Serbian citizens, such as their ravaged economy and infrastructure and the virtue of being governed by an indicted war criminal. Although the recent resignation of Democratic Alternative leader Nebojsa Covic from the coalition Alliance for Change illustrates the fractured, fractious nature of the democratic opposition,⁹⁸ it ought not undermine Western resolve to nurture the democratic process in Serbia.

2) Promote alternative media

A concrete step that the West can now take to advancing the democratic and reform interests in Serbia is by actively seeking to correct the poisonous disinformation continuing from the state-run media. With Kosovo firmly under NATO control, that province should serve as a base for broadcasts into Serbia proper. But aggressive

⁹⁴ *V.I.P.*, 24 June 1999.

⁹⁵ ICG Balkans Report N° 53, *Milosevic: Déjà Vu All Over Again?*, 23 December 1998.

⁹⁶ *V.I.P.*, 24 June 1999.

⁹⁷ *V.I.P.*, 18 June 1999.

⁹⁸ *Blic*, 23 June 1999.

newscasts and informational programming may backfire⁹⁹ and be dismissed in the state media as Western propaganda.¹⁰⁰ The time is ripe instead to borrow a page from the dictator's handbook, and begin programming that is entertainment- and pop culture-based, using such venues to impart balanced and objective information.

3) Resist Russian pressure to carve out a *de facto* zone of occupation

Milosevic may be emboldened from the diplomatic and political support he has received from Moscow. At the very least, Russia's recent dash to Pristina airport suggests NATO's stay in Kosovo may be far from problem-free insofar as great power politics go. Despite coming to a recent accord with the West, there are no guarantees that Moscow will forgo its goal of carving out a *de facto* zone of occupation. Any such development will undermine the NATO mission and may ultimately lead to the partition of Kosovo. It also may embolden Milosevic to attempt to undermine stability in Kosovo by filtering paramilitaries and security forces back into the province.

4) Support & defend Djukanovic government in Montenegro

Should Milosevic's current mandate stretch until 2001, conflict with Montenegro might well be inevitable. It is incumbent for the international community to issue formal security guarantees to the Montenegrin government and to support Djukanovic by all means necessary, should such conflicts arise.

⁹⁹ On 23 June SRS leader Seselj already went on record blasting Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Voice of America (VOA) and even Studio B TV, calling them "psychological propaganda services" for the Western powers. RTS, 23 and 24 June 1999. See also *Blic*, *Borba*, *Glas javnosti* and *Vecernje novosti*, 24 June 1999.

¹⁰⁰ *V.I.P.*, 24 June 1999.

ANNEX 1

Excerpts from the Diaries

Being There

Living in Belgrade during the war proved conducive to reflecting on the Serbian psyche. Days prior to the NATO action, we all seemed assured that there would be no war. US envoy Richard Holbrooke's visit seemed to signal that a peace deal was at hand. After that initial wave of enthusiasm dispersed, bracing for the bombing took up most our time. What struck me was how a decade of Milosevic's nationalist politics had taken its toll. Perhaps even against their better judgement, many people became regime defenders once the bombing campaign started.

23 March 1999. We drove to get gas today. Car's in bad shape. Little gasoline, and oil almost gone. What struck me was how many petrol stations we had to visit before we got what we needed. Most had line-ups around the block while a good percentage had sold-out their stock by the time we got there. Even policemen are lining up for it (thought they had their own private supplies). Couldn't resist asking one officer what was causing the queues. "War's coming". We arrived home just before dinner, giving me enough time for some shopping. I noticed a few things are starting to disappear. Milk and bread running low. Tough to say whether most people think the war's coming, but a lot seem to think so.

Too much work today. No sleep last night and too much running around. Sitting now watching television. Everybody gone to dinner and I'll join them in about half an hour. The debate about what to do if the bombs start to fall now being televised and is well under way. The legislature is defiant. Seselj is now speaking. An interesting character. Even ---who says he can't stand Seselj says he enjoys his speeches. Not hard to do, even if you're even only a mild nationalist. Seselj's style is part theatre, part rhetoric, part almost comedy, but mostly politics. Frankly, it would be entertaining if it weren't so dangerous and poisonous. It's classic populist charisma, and it does go a long way. I've noticed the difference between Vojislav's [Seselj's] charisma and that of his arch-rival and relative, Vuk Draskovic. Seselj is almost a hick, pandering to the lowest common denominator and making it feel good about itself. Draskovic on the other hand, is an ideologue and a demagogue. His speeches are more like sermons, and when he's not ranting, the text is delivered in language that is much more formal. Draskovic can also drip charisma like beads of sweat, but he never struck me as the kind of politician who might spend all night drinking at the local. He'd be more comfortable with a sermon on the mount. Seselj is very down to earth, someone I suspect lives in the cafes and enjoys the company of a select few drinking buddies.

24 March 1999. It does look like we're at the point of no return. Some media are reporting what to do in case of air raid sirens. I should be able to tell the difference between the air raid and the all clear signal. No problem. What's this thing about chemicals, though? Are the authorities trying to tell us they have toxic chemicals or chemical weapons in or around Belgrade? I hope it's only a caution in case something like pollution resulting from an oil storage facility being hit. Anyway, looks like the regime is preparing for a showdown. Nothing like a general mobilisation, but preparations to resist something underway.

Heard that planes left Britain this morning. Seems they're headed for Italy. Definitely something likely to happen. Regime went overboard (nothing new there!). - called to let me know chief editor of independent Radio B92 arrested, but I already knew that. That was the first thing I heard when I got up this morning. I knew Veran Matic had been caught, but knew nothing about the circumstances under which it had happened. The details of the arrest apparently remain unknown. All sorts of rumours seem to be flying. One account says he was roughed up pretty seriously. Another said they were about to throw him behind bars with some of the worst criminal types—assassins, murders. Nothing like the Belgrade rumour mill (unfortunately, a lot of times turns out to be not so far from the truth). Evidently some lawyers have tried to contact Matic, but so far, even they don't know where he's being held. Some government ministers are jumping out of their shorts over the ecstasy the Matic arrest seems to be causing. At least one, says, remarked "at last, we've succeeded in silencing B 92".

Took a long walk around the city this afternoon, and didn't see anything that could make me suspect anti-aircraft artillery in or near the city centre. I hope that's the case. If it is, it's a good sign. Should mean we won't get too many bombs falling in Belgrade.

25 March 1999. Took a long walk around town. Noticed that shops were crowded. That was something you really can't help but notice, since most of the time most people can't afford to do much shopping. I think we can expect shortages of basic foodstuffs. I was out early, just after 0900 but almost every bakery I passed was closed. At first I thought they hadn't opened, but asked one lady waiting outside one shop when they'd opened, and she said they'd already closed. She was told by one of the clerks that more bread might come and so she was waiting for the next fifteen minutes, just in case. This was the same story everywhere. No bread, and I notice the shops are out of milk and cheese. Supermarkets are still open and quite well stocked, but the basics are lacking. Think it's best to buy up on flour and sugar now, while that's still available. A lot of canned goods are still around, likely because they're too expensive.

Air raid sirens last night caused some panic. There I was in ---- park, and noticed some people running for the trees for cover. I don't think that was such a great idea, but who knows. If I happen to be outside during the air raids, I'll make a point of noting public reaction. I bring this up now because I remember the woman in a grocery store this morning when a car backed up. She dropped a jar of

something and started yelling about where the bomb shelter was. Situation appears to be taking a toll on the elderly. The young don't really seem to mind. A few teenagers in the building across the street raced up to the roof last night during the air raid warnings to see if they could see a NATO plane and maybe get a few souvenir photos. I'm thinking it'll be a few days before anybody drops anything on Belgrade.

1900hrs. (or there about). I think this is scary. I just got back from trying to meet with any party official who would care to say anything. Looks like they're saving themselves for press conferences. No problems. On the way back came across two young men at the bus stop. Don't know how old they were, but looked like they were in their late teens, maybe 20-21. Cropped hair, a sign that they were with Zeljko Raznatovic's [alias Arkan's] paramilitary Tigers. One was complaining to the other that he couldn't get to Kosovo yet along with somebody he knew, who was evidently part of the shock troops and paramilitaries heading south to kill Albanians or burn down their villages. Should be noted that since the 24th there's been a lot of talk about a ground war and needing to defend Kosovo. So far nobody seems to have done the math. How do you defend Kosovo against the NATO enemy? The planes are up there, at least some thousands of meters out of range. So if you were thinking and reflecting I suppose you could come to the conclusion that all that talk on the state media about "defending Kosovo" was just code for "ethnic cleansing".

26 March 1999. We just don't get much news from the outside. Under a blanket of censorship, so the local media are faithful to the government line. The regime has declared the country to be in a state of war. I haven't heard anything from the opposition. Where is the anti-regime feeling? Lots of people who say they can't stand Milosevic now seem to be quiet. Is everybody supporting the war? Where are the students? Where's *otpor*? Not a word. Talked to ---- about this before I met with----. She says it's all normal. The quiet is because this NATO bombing won't last but a few more days, she says. ----- agrees. He says he can "feel it". Years ago when war broke out "against the Ustasa [Croatia]" he said you just knew there was going to be a draft and that it was likely a lot of people would die. He says he's trusting his instincts, and that because he doesn't have "that feeling" it's safe to assume that things will calm down within a few days, a week maybe, and that "the war will just go away".

----ran into me downtown. He was acting like he'd seen the second coming, but that wasn't it. He said Seselj was out on the streets, looking like he was making the rounds and trying to bolster public support for the war. Some of Seselj's youth supporters said NATO was "going to smash its teeth on Yugoslavia". Looks like some people are serious about thinking they can win. Well, by win they mean that FRY won't surrender. ----said his entire family was prepared to stand and fight NATO troops if they entered the country. Also said his cousins in Montenegro had gone into the cellar and collected up their guns, planning to resist. Even a rumour that some of his Montenegrin relatives had already fled to the hills, where they allegedly plan to stay until the NATO troops show up.

I don't know what information people are getting outside of the FRY, but the news here is that NATO is committing all sorts of atrocities. [deputy premier and leader of Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) Vuk] Draskovic has gone public with a statement that NATO has committed a "Hiroshima of atrocities" against the Serbian people. Seems like he's the golden boy on the international media stage. He's getting a lot of play on what looks to be CNN and BBC. Every time a local politician makes an appearance on those stations it gets wide coverage, but at the same time the authorities here keep telling us government officials and the official FRY stand on the war isn't getting any coverage in the international press. If Larry King doesn't play outside FRY and depends only on Belgrade for ratings, he must be in deep trouble. Draskovic says that NATO is responsible for war crimes and when asked about atrocities against the Albanian people he just contorts the issue and tells the interviewer that if he wants to be balanced and objective, he needs to refocus on Albanian atrocities committed against ethnic Serbs. I wish we had information about what was happening in the south, but I'm guessing that right now it must be a terrible time to be an Albanian in Kosovo.

Youth continue to surprise me. Saw whole groups heading towards the recruiters office. There's no shortage of warm bodies who seem to actually want be shipped off to Kosovo. Approached one of the recruiting officers who thought I wanted to go. Before I said anything, he just told me there were too many volunteers to process, and that I shouldn't even bother to come back for at least a few days. Maybe this enthusiasm for the war is just somehow natural at this early stage.

1 April 1999. The most remarkable thing about today was the civics lesson I had. I didn't plan it, I didn't expect it, it just happened. Spent most of the day in meetings with pompous political types. Had and still have the feeling I got absolutely nowhere. Either nobody knows how bad things are for the Kosovars, or they're not saying. I frankly think most people just don't know. If all they have is state television, there's no way they'll ever know and I'll never get an answer. RTS has taken over all the news. Well, there's still the separate broadcasts on BK TV, Politika, and Studio B, but they are all either shaping the government line or faithfully broadcasting. Even Kosava TV doesn't run those stupid pop and rock videos. Partly I know because those videos come from the hated NATO countries, and Western culture is no longer in favour. I would frankly enjoy those for a half hour of the mindless pop junk when I got up in the morning, if the only choice is state news or the latest teenager labouring to have his voice crack in mid-recital. Kosava's reserved now for RTS news or cultural music videos and performances. Back to the civics lesson. ---- had been complaining for over six months that Albanians in FRY have no rights. About three days before the NATO action started we went for a walk to meet ---- and started talking about how bad the situation was for Albanians. His complaint then was that most Serbs didn't understand that if you double the standard of living for the average Kosovar Albanian, the same thing would automatically happen for every Serb all across the country. Now things have changed, since the bombing. He still says he has nothing against Albanians, it's just

that they can't be trusted to control Kosovo. The problem is the Serb holy places, ----says. If the Serbs and Serb authorities are removed from Kosovo for all times, the first thing that the Albanians would do is burn down all the monasteries and throw the stones, ashes, and every shred of every other construction material into the Adriatic. It's apparently not that Albanians as individuals are bad. In fact, ----- says the average Albanian individual is "better than we average Serbs". The problem is that you can't trust them as a group. He insisted that while Serbian culture may be backward and primitive, it does represent at the very least one giant step forward, from the Albanian culture. He claims it's hard for him to say, but it's necessary that Serbia retain control of the province, and at all costs if need be. Albanians may live there, but they can't govern. They may be allowed to share some power, but it would always have to be a minority share. I didn't ask anything about region's history or the KLA, but that was volunteered. -----Said that the KLA is now made up in large part by the Albanian descendants of those "fascists" who settled the province after the Second World War. He said Tito and communism were to blame. It was, he alleged, Tito's grand strategy to limit the political influence of Serbs in Yugoslavia as a whole. Kosovo was a very strategic part of the grand plan: resettle Albanians in the region, and drive out the Serbs. Limit the Serbs geographically, and you restrict them politically. He stressed this was a dark chapter in Yugoslavia's history and that few people liked to talk about it openly, especially those who either were communists or sympathised with Tito. Those Serbs were driven out of Kosovo and now their children and grandchildren lived in Vojvodina. When I attempted to make a counter argument, saying that in the wake of WWII most Serbs gladly left impoverished Kosovo for the wealth and mineral-rich farmland of Vojvodina, voluntarily giving up their stake in Kosovo, the consolation prize that went to some dispossessed and displaced Albanians, I was told I didn't need to make deliberate provocations. We did turn to current events. -----said KLA terrorists were attacking forces in Kosovo. I didn't even want to entertain a discussion about ethnic cleansing.

3 April 1999. Well, we're still refusing to head into the air raid shelters. There's little space in the basements, and we think it's probably best that it be reserved for the elderly. A lot of people seem to seriously be entertaining the belief that NATO is going to just dump bombs over Belgrade. That's patently absurd, but a lot of people just don't understand that NATO isn't out to target civilians. Unfortunately, this belief is playing right into Milosevic's hands. Should it happen that a bomb does go astray and hits a civilian apartment complex, a hospital or a school, I can only recoil when I think how that would be treated by the propaganda machinery.

We spent almost an hour and a half walking around town trying to find a place to have lunch. We couldn't go just anywhere,----- decided. We had to go the city's very best Chinese restaurant, in honour of what the Chinese were doing to support "justice". That is, the lunch was in honour of what the Chinese were doing to back Belgrade vis-à-vis NATO. The pro-Chinese feeling is amazing. No jokes about the Chinese allowed or tolerated, and nothing bad could be said about their government. When I reminded -----, who is the staunchest anti-Communist in FRY,

that Beijing still has a Marxist government, he pointed out it was the "good kind of communism". He explained that any regime that was capable of seeing the justice in the Serbian cause was surely able to reform communism. I really couldn't believe how many people seem to seriously believe that the Russians are pushing the political and diplomatic envelope so far that we're actually on the verge of a nuclear war. I've been bothering everybody who tells me this to explain just how it could be in Russia's interest to go war for Serbia, and all I get is the predictable explanation that it's a question of pride in defending a fellow Orthodox nation. Maybe I'm stupid, but I'm still labouring under the impression that Russia can tell the difference between pride and national great power interests, and that in this equation at this moment there just doesn't appear to me to be any overlap.

4 April 1999. I have to get this down right now or I may forget it. It seems to be about 0430hrs. in the morning. I just looked over at the clock on the dresser and it has stopped. I think it may have been the blast. This was the most sensational feeling. Got up because it felt like someone was trying to flip my bed over. More like being thrown out of bed. I also heard a deafening blast, and I don't know whether I was thrown from the bed or whether my instincts just told me to jump under the table. The bed has certainly moved some half meter or so. It was a loud blast, followed by the sky turning bright red, blood red. Sound waves against the one closed window make the glass look like a waterfall. If I get the chance and as soon as that stops I'll open that window too. I don't know why I left it open. It seems everybody else in the neighbourhood is up now. Dogs racing around in the street. It's non-stop howling, some barking, mostly howling. I can hear babies crying. Something must have been hit. Did NATO hit a gasoline truck or gas station around the corner? I can't get a good view and I don't think I'll venture outside right now to try and find out. It's very hot outside the window, and am thinking that must be the heat being generated from whatever blew up. I can't smell anything. I can hear some elderly woman calling some people to "get inside". More blasts. I don't know if that was something else that was hit. Sounded a lot like the distant anti-aircraft barrages that have been keeping me up. Have been up most nights, with maybe 3-4 hours sleep. I just managed to get to sleep after midnight, and I think that's all the sleeping for tonight. Another voice coming from the street, telling more people to get inside because "NATO won't stop bombing now". Sounds like an old man's voice coming from the apartment next door, yelling "NATO Nazis are now going after civilians". Same voices over and over again.

Managed to maybe sleep for another hour after that bomb blast. Where did the bomb hit? It is still early in the morning, and there doesn't seem to be anyone on the street to ask. Too tired to concentrate on listening to radio.

It's now noon. Managed to get another hour sleep, and that's what I needed. RTS reported that the refinery in New Belgrade [Novi Beograd] was targeted early this morning. That's only ----kilometres from here. It's close, but the explosion last night made me think something as

close as the apartment next door was the bull's eye. Will take a walk over and see the damage.

Unbelievable! A good, clean hit. Officials still on the scene. Seems it wasn't an easy job putting out the blaze. Was over at ----'s place. He was much closer than we were and forgot to open his windows. This is not the time to be forgetting things like that. Several windows shattered because of the blast. Had anyone been standing in the bathroom early in the morning they would have been sliced to pieces. No glass shards hit the floor. They all flew across the room and either embedded in the wall, or hit the wall and then fell to the floor. It's over two meters from the window to the wall.

13 April 1999. I've always wanted to be a film critic. I like movies and what appeals to me more is maybe someday being able to get to watch them and even earn a fee for it. Back to the point: American movies and popular culture are important to the FRY propaganda machine. Just a few short weeks ago when the war erupted, the dictatorship made some noise about banning American entertainment. Almost as quickly, they seemed to back away from the proclamation. It's interesting because even ---, who should know better, took this to mean that Milosevic was actually succumbing to some notion of freedom or liberalism. He actually said "Public pressure seems to be letting Milosevic know he can't keep the people from being exposed to Western entertainment". I think that would be great if it were true. A person really has to be aware of what kind of American movies are not only being tolerated but actually hyped. Okay, early on the point that the movies were themselves American-made anti-American movies wasn't made with too fine a point. The first to get widespread attention on television, and really it seems TV *Politika* was allowed to be the carrier of the entertainment propaganda, was *Wag the Dog*. Ideal for propaganda purposes. An American establishment plots a war to salvage a president's political career. Easy to see how the Belgrade regime wanted its population to view themselves as the victims of a manufactured American war. Next came the Oliver Stone films, extolled for their portrayal of American atrocities from Latin America to Vietnam. Even RTS got into the act. Charlie Chaplin's anti-fascist classic *The Great Dictator* got several showings. That was easy to slot into the propaganda machine - Yugoslavia was now in the midst of an aggression by the Nazi NATO Alliance. Clear message, thank you Mr. Chaplin. What was harder to comprehend were the non-stop Disney features. Then one day it was explained. A Disney documentary broadcast by *Politika* detailed Mickey Mouse. Back in the 1930s he was used to symbolise the American everyman, whose plight was underscored/exacerbated by the Great Depression. His, that is Mickey's, stalwart determination in the face of overwhelming odds eventually produced successes for the everyman hero. Mickey, seemingly, was meant to symbolise Serbia, now caught up in its own struggle to overcome incredible odds. Really hard to understand were some features like the classic media expose, *Network*. Its protagonist, a media phenomenon who anchors a news program and garners ratings by telling viewers they are the manipulated victims of broadcasters and journalists might be dangerous for *Politika* to show during the height of an intense media campaign directed against the Alliance. *Network's* message seems

universal, and could be applied to many situations/contexts. Couldn't the discriminating viewer apply it to RTS and the rest of the Serbian media right now, and come away with the impression they were perpetuating a big lie vis-à-vis the West? Maybe, but at least - walked away with the intended interpretation. He said: "See, a film like that shows their media are bad, and ours are good". If a lot of people came to that understanding, then the regime's manipulation of propaganda has been subtle and has gone on for some time. I doubt you can attune people to that kind of interpretation overnight and with a sledgehammer approach.

Finally something to watch without having to kick-start any grey matter. James Bond made an appearance. I'd heard *Goldfinger* had been on. Missed it, but managed to catch *Tomorrow Never Dies*. For me great escapist stuff. Everybody else loved it, too. I couldn't resist, so had to ask about the appeal. Couldn't resist baiting at first. I started by telling --- he ought to hate the film, reminding him he'd got all worked up about FRY being at war with the U.K. Bond's a British hero, and as such, wasn't he worth loathing? Girlfriend - had to set me straight. First of all the villain, exceptionally well played, was an American-type media tycoon who uses the news and information services at his disposal to fabricate a war. That part was obvious, and all the implications surely not lost on any Serb viewer. But the film also featured Pierce Brosnan who is evidently "No Sean Connery". Brosnan has "a slight appearance...It's kind of like a metaphor for the decay of Britain. Look, this Bond can't even fight his own battles. And this time around, his ally is a Chinese agent [Michelle Yeoh]. Well, the Chinese are on our side in this real war."

I found that anything viewed through a Serbian prism may become a unique vision. I think it was on *Palma*, anyway, late one night *Dumb and Dumber* came on. Watched [again, in my case] and enjoyed it all over again. Absolutely amazed to hear ----- say that while he understood it was all exaggerated and intended as a broad comedy, he understood that the protagonists represented real social types. "Well sure it's acted for laughs, but those guys Jim Carey and Jeff Daniels do stand for a certain kind of *homo Americanus*. They probably are close to the majority of the American population; uninformed and stupid. It's the same way here in Serbia. A lot of films portray hicks and peasants to get laughs. I wish it weren't so, but you have to say that a lot of our people are really hicks and villagers. That's why that kind of film goes over. It's the same story in America."