

PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS

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

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Roman e p o r Warsaw

DECEMBER 1-2, 2000



ATHENS, GREECE

ALBANIANS AS MAJORITIES AND MINORITIES: A REGIONAL DIALOGUE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
Note on Terminology	4
Summary	5
Introduction	8
Kosovo	8
Presevo	19
Macedonia	20
Montenegro	23
Albania	30
Serbia	38
Discussion of Discussions	40
Conclusion	51
List of Participants and Observers	52
Other PER Publications	58

PREFACE

The discussions summarized in this report took place on December 1 and 2, 2000, in the Vougliameni suburb of Athens, Greece, at a gathering of senior political leaders from Southeast Europe. The Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) convened the meeting, in an informal and neutral setting, to help these leaders in their mutual search for solutions to the bitter aftermath of ethnic strife and warfare that devastated parts of their region during the 1990s, and to encourage them to exchange ideas about how to prevent continuing interethnic rivalries from breaking out in renewed violence.

The Athens meeting was the second in PER's series, "Albanians and Their Neighbors." (The first took place in Budapest in April 2000 and was the setting for the first face-to-face encounters between some of the adversaries in the Kosovo war of 1999. The Budapest meeting was summarized in an earlier PER report and can be found on PER's Web site, at www.per-usa.org.)

Behind the prosaic title of the Athens discussions —"Albanians as Majorities and Minorities: A Regional Dialogue"— lie some of the most explosive issues of the day: the future of the status of Kosovo; relations between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians in Kosovo and between Serbs and Albanians in Serbia proper; the survival of the Yugoslav Federation, the territorial integrity of Serbia and Macedonia; and the ebb and flow of influence between Albania and Albanians living outside its borders. The outcomes of these questions will affect the entire region, including even Greece and Italy and, indeed, the international community itself, for decades to come.



From left to right: Zarko Korac and Momcilo Trajkovic.



From left to right: Hashim Thaci and Ibrahim Rugova.

Because participants could speak without attribution, their exchanges and arguments were remarkably frank and unusually revealing. In this account, the reader will hear the passionate and often contradictory political voices of Southeast Europe today. Leaders' aspirations to a cooperative future compete with their unilateral claims; calls for interethnic reconciliation break down over arguments about guilt and retribution; and the notion of a unified, European-oriented region is challenged by calls to define, preserve, and defend separate ethnic and national identities.

Despite controversy at every hand, the discussions were highly intelligent and articulate. They were marked by deep awareness among the participants of the historic opportunities—and dangers—that confront the region and the heavy burdens of responsibility that its politicians bear. To those who have followed the evolution of leadership in the region since 1990, the quality of the discussions at the Athens meeting is an encouraging sign that a new generation has indeed taken over the reins and that it has learned something from the miserable experience of its predecessors. Therein lies the best hope that the region's lethal ethnic problems can be managed peacefully, even if not resolved. But this will require new habits of self-restraint that are so far only partly in evidence and that can quickly dissolve when disputants perceive threats to their own interests and security.

The new and constructive attitudes that were on display in Athens were authentic and encouraging, but therefore also tentative and conditional. There are fundamental disagreements over constitutional and legal means to accommodate ethnic interests: many ethnic spokespeople fear that, unless special provisions are made, their communities will lose out because they will be submerged and outvoted as minorities in the larger political system, no matter how democratic. At the same time, majorities fear that special recognition of large ethnic minorities, if it goes too far, will separate majorities and minorities, split societies and countries along ethnic lines, and lead to interethnic warfare and secession.

Timing will be of the essence. These debates and struggles are taking place in a region that is awash with weapons and zealots who are using them. Matters are further complicated by indecisiveness within the international community and some disagreements among its European and American members about how best to proceed, despite the already

substantial presence of international forces in much of the region. Policy-makers perhaps can be forgiven their hesitation and doubt: as one of the participants at the meeting rightly noted, it is very difficult to find rational solutions to irrational problems.

Peace, stability, and prosperity in the Balkans are a long way off. We hope that the deliberations that PER is organizing will nevertheless bring the day closer. All of those who are involved must begin their quest with a sound and accurate comprehension of the hopes and fears of their neighbors. The surest way is through open discussion.

We are grateful to the participants for their distinguished contributions to the discussions and for their readiness to hear, if not often to agree with, opposing views. Their discipline and patience in a meeting that was larger than we intended (many important politicians and diplomats who were not on the original invitation list, upon learning of the meeting, asked to be included) were essential to its success.

We express our deep appreciation to the Foreign Ministry of the Hellenic Republic, to Foreign Minister George Papandreou, and to Alex Rondos, Alexandros Mallias, and Michel Spinellis for their indispensable cooperation. The Ministry facilitated our meeting arrangements and assured the security of the participants during their arrivals and departures and at the meeting site. Even more important, the Greek diplomats and officials who participated in the discussions contributed, as they did at the first meeting in Budapest, their exceptional wisdom and perspective, and confirmed the vital and mature role that Greece plays in these complex regional issues.

Alex N. Grigor'ev, PER Program Officer was responsible for organizing the meeting and contributed the summary to this report.

Professor Steven Burg of Brandeis University, who was a conference participant, prepared this report.

PER takes full responsibility for the report, which has not been reviewed by the participants.

Allen H. Kassof, *President*

Livia B. Plaks, *Executive Director*

Princeton, New Jersey

March 2001

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The spelling “Kosovo” is used in this report (rather than “Kosova,” the spelling preferred by Albanians, or “Kosovo and Metohija” or “Kosmet,” preferred by official Serbia), because this is the spelling most commonly used in the English-speaking world. For the same reason, Serbian names of places are used—for example, Pristina and not Prishtina, Kosovska Mitrovica and not Mitrovice. However, the spelling “Kosova” is used in the names of Kosovar Albanian political parties and organizations. The term “Kosovar” is used as an adjective for Kosovo and its inhabitants, whether Albanians, Serbs, Roma, or others.

For the sake of simplicity, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Serbia-Montenegro is generally referred to as “Yugoslavia;” the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as “Macedonia;” and Bosnia-Herzegovina as “Bosnia.” Finally, “Serb” and “Croat” are used as ethnic terms, whereas “Serbian” and “Croatian” are employed when referring to Serbia and Croatia.



From left to right: Alexandros Mallias, Hans-Peter Furrer and Ilir Meta.



From left to right: Allen Kassof, Livia Plaks, Adrian Severin, Ralph Johnson and Bernard Kouchner.

SUMMARY

The Athens roundtable, “Albanians as Majorities and Minorities,” was the second in the Project on Ethnic Relations’ series, “Albanians and Their Neighbors.”

Major changes have taken place in the region since the first meeting in Budapest in April 2000, including local elections in Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro. But the major event was the fall of Milosevic’s regime in Yugoslavia as a result of the federal presidential and parliamentary elections. A new, democratically oriented federal government has been formed in Belgrade and was slated to win the December 2000 Serbian parliamentary elections.

Several major regional issues were the subjects of the Athens debate.

The key questions were the situation in and future status of Kosovo. The PER meeting was the setting for the first face-to-face confrontation between the leaders of the Kosovar Albanians and members of the new government in Belgrade. Belgrade representatives reiterated their offer of talks with the Kosovar Albanian leadership. The Kosovar leaders, supported by some of the international participants, responded that it is too early for such a meeting. They stressed that general elections should take place in Kosovo and new institutions of government should be established within the first half of next year. After that, according to them, the new Kosovar institutions will have a full mandate to conduct any talks with Belgrade or other parties to the conflict.

The Kosovar Albanian leaders were persistent in repeating their well-known position that the only future for Kosovo is one of full independence from Serbia and Yugoslavia. The other Albanian politicians from the region supported them. On the other side, Serbs from both Kosovo and Belgrade were strongly opposed to independence for Kosovo and called for complete implementation of the United Nations Resolution 1244, which they insist leaves Kosovo within the borders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They emphasized that security should be immediately guaranteed to the Serb, Roma, and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo. The Kosovar Serbs who participated in the Athens meeting called for the release of the Albanian prisoners who are still being held in Serbian prisons and also called for the Kosovar Albanian leaders to make public the fate of all those Serbs who have disappeared in Kosovo since the end of the NATO bombing campaign.

All Kosovar Albanian leaders who took part in the meeting agreed that full protection of rights of minorities in Kosovo must be provided. Both Kosovar Albanians and Serbs agreed that the status of Kosovo should be solved by democratic means, though each side understands these means differently.

Other themes under discussion in Athens were: interethnic arrangements between the Albanian minorities and the majorities in Macedonia and Montenegro; the future of Montenegro and the Yugoslav Federation, democratic change in Serbia; the situation in the Presevo Valley in southern Serbia; and the prerequisites for a stable Albania.

Tirana used the occasion of the PER meeting to announce that Albania wishes as soon as possible to reestablish diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which were interrupted during the Kosovo war. Belgrade replied that it was ready to reestablish these relations within weeks. (Relations were in fact reestablished after the Athens meeting.)

Discussing the tense situation in Presevo, all participants called for respect for international borders and for human rights in that part of Serbia. Participants acknowledged that the problem of Presevo is a complex one that cannot be solved by the democratic government in Belgrade alone. It will require cooperation with Albanian leaders in Presevo and in Kosovo, with the international community, and especially with KFOR and UNMIK.

A serious discussion took place on the issue of the relations between Montenegro and Serbia and their implications for the future of Kosovo. Albanians in Montenegro called for a redefinition of their position in the state of Montenegro, to include formal recognition of a special status for the Albanian minority, and stated that they support Montenegro's drive for independence.

Representatives of the Macedonian government and Albanian political leaders from Macedonia reaffirmed their strong commitment to interethnic cooperation in Macedonia. The Albanian participants, however, insisted on their demands for constitutional changes that they believe would improve the position of Macedonia's second largest ethnic group.

The background issue of a "Greater Albania" also permeated the discussions, with the Albanian spokesmen consistently denying that they sub-

scribe to such a concept. Albanians, especially from Kosovo, stressed that the Albanians are polycentric and consider Tirana, Pristina, and Tetovo to be their regional centers. This, they said, makes them different from the Croats or the Serbs who consider Zagreb and Belgrade to be their centers. The Tirana leadership stressed that it considers all borders between European states to be final and immutable. As for the future status of Kosovo, officials from Albania said at the Athens meeting that this issue is up to the Kosovars themselves to decide and no one else.



From left to right: Joseph Limprecht, Paskal Milo and Riza Halimi.



From left to right: Roberto Toscano, Alex Grigor'ev, Bishop Artemije and Rada Trajkovic.

INTRODUCTION

The meeting entitled “Albanians as Majorities and Minorities: A Regional Dialogue,” held in Athens, Greece on December 1 and 2, 2000 addressed current conditions and explored future options for the Albanian populations of the South Balkans and the governments under which they live. Discussions focused on Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania itself, and Serbia. The discussion of Serbia focused on the implications for Kosovo, Montenegro, and the situation in the Presevo Valley of the September 2000 electoral victory of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS).

Two major changes since the Athens meeting have key implications for resolution of the issues discussed there. Elections in Serbia on December 23 produced the overwhelming victory of democratic forces that had been anticipated in Athens, and a new democratic government has been installed in Serbia. The new government has continued to pursue the peaceful approaches suggested by Serbian participants in Athens. However, the restraint shown by Belgrade on such issues as the situation in the Presevo Valley, already evident in the Athens discussions, places great urgency on the need to move rapidly toward their resolution.

The second major development since Athens is, of course, the arrival of a new administration in Washington. Each new administration inevitably undertakes its own assessment of the foreign policy challenges facing the United States. The Athens discussions reported here suggest that this administration has new opportunities for moving the Kosovo question onto the track of a peaceful solution. At the urging of the Project on Ethnic Relations, participants went beyond their well-known, publicly stated positions to engage in serious and open conversation, asking questions and seeking clarifications to gain better understanding of one another. In doing so, they appear to have moved closer to identifying common ground on which to carry out efforts to resolve their differences.

KOSOVO

The discussion began with a senior Albanian political leader from Kosovo noting that local elections in the province had gone well and calling for presidential and parliamentary elections there. The future of Kosovo, he insisted, was full independence. An independent Kosovo

would, he insisted, pacify the rest of the region, including both Macedonia and Serbia.

This view was seconded by another Kosovar Albanian leader, who characterized independence for Kosovo as the “guarantee for stability” in the region. This view would become the object of much debate over the course of the meeting. NATO, he suggested, would remain in Kosovo for a long while, perhaps forever. An integral part of his vision of an independent Kosovo was its integration into Europe. But he was not alone in linking future success to integration into Europe and the European Union (EU). A senior official from Albania, for example, offered the optimistic assessment that, while transition generates socio-economic difficulties that produce interethnic conflict, integration into Europe will ease these problems and contribute to ending conflict. Integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, therefore, was a strategic objective of Albania.

Many of the participants from the region saw integration into the EU as necessary for the solution of local problems. But participants from EU states cautioned against assuming that integration could be achieved easily, or soon. Speaking in response to calls by several participants from Albania and other countries for rapid accession to the EU, a senior diplomat from an EU member state reminded participants that “certain criteria must be applied with respect to accession to the EU and that countries must, as other countries have had to do, meet these criteria.” Delays could last for years, he suggested, while noting that this is a normal part of such a process.

The situation in Kosovo was described in less positive terms by a Serb participant from Kosovo. He suggested that peace and freedom in Kosovo has been established only for Albanians, and argued that since the end of the NATO bombing a campaign of “ethnic cleansing” has been directed against the Serbs of Kosovo. He complained of expulsions, killings and kidnappings, as well as the destruction of Orthodox churches and other cultural institutions. He called for full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, suggesting that this must remain the framework for resolving the fate of Kosovo.

The situation of the Roma in Kosovo was also described by another participant as desperate. He argued that, despite all the efforts of UNMIK and KFOR to establish the rule of law and civil society, minorities, especially the Roma and Ashkali, continue to face insecurity and violence,

restricted freedom of movement and limited access to basic services.

Dialogue and reconciliation between the Romani communities and the Albanian majority has begun. That process, forged by UNHCR and supported by OSCE and other organizations, led to the Declaration of April 12, 2000, signed by the leaders of the Kosovar Albanians and the Romani communities. The “Platform for Joint Action” to promote and pursue the ideals of tolerance, non-discrimination, and interethnic harmony within and among all communities in Kosovo has also been adopted. The two workshops jointly in Skopje organized by UNHCR, the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe in September 2000, in which PER was also represented, worked out a “Draft Plan of Action” addressing problems of the Kosovar Roma in the region.

The issues of the Kosovo Romani refugees and displaced persons were also discussed at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw on October 23, 2000. The results of the first democratic local elections in Kosovo province offered the promise of the rule of law, interethnic reconciliation, and re-creation of a multiethnic society. However, there is still disturbing evidence of incidents of harassment, intimidation, arson, assault, kidnapping, and murder directed toward the members of minority communities, including the Roma. Serbs and Roma in practically every location in Kosovo require a security escort to venture beyond the limits of their immediate surroundings. Having no freedom of movement, they are prevented from access to any kind of public services and are effectively excluded from society. The murder of four Ashkali at the village of Dasevac a day after their return to their homes under the UNHCR return project has called into question this project. It carries a disturbing message to Romani IDPs (internally displaced persons) or refugees who would contemplate returning: “Do not come back! There is no place for you among us!” It also casts doubt on the idea of restoring multiethnic Kosovo. And it poses a challenge to the Albanian majority, its leaders, and international organizations—how to forge reconciliation and peaceful co-existence with minorities, including the Roma—and prevent further outrageous killings. The international forces should provide effective aid and protection to Romani IDPs within Kosovo and to refugees in Serbia, to where the overwhelming majority of Roma have escaped. (At least 60,000 Kosovar Roma may be in Serbia.) With the new situation in Serbia there is an urgent need to address the issue of Romani community there, including both Serbian Roma and the displaced Kosovar Roma.

An ethnic Albanian political leader from Kosovo disputed the contention that a campaign of terror and revenge was being conducted against the minorities there. The departure of Serbs from Kosovo was not, he insisted, the result of repression, but of the policies of the regime in Belgrade, the war, fear, and the action of Serbian paramilitary units. He acknowledged, however, that some incidents since the war “might have been committed by Albanians, too.” But he insisted that there have been just as many incidents directed against Albanians as against Serbs.

Another Kosovar Albanian political leader attributed the difficulty of solving the Kosovo problem to the fact there had been no significant change in the position of Belgrade on the Kosovo issue. But a Kosovar Serb suggested that the fundamental source of the problem lies in the mentalities on each side of the conflict. Instead of insisting on an immediate, complete solution, he suggested, it would be better to focus on identifying discrete problems and resolving them. He identified the absence of basic security, lack of freedom of movement, inadequate democratic development, and lack of economic development as some of the problems that should be addressed immediately. He observed that “economic development” is the “magic phrase,” for development would promote ties between countries and eventual reconciliation. Repatriation of Serbs, he argued, was being obstructed by the Albanians. It would have to be gradual, and would require a long time to complete, but it must begin and must be unconditional. He called for implementation of UN Resolution 1244.

A senior Serbian official asserted that every citizen in Kosovo wishes to live well and in peace. The traditional relationship between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, he suggested, was not conflict but tolerance. The recent conflict is in his view an exception, and he believes that a return to tolerance is possible. In this regard, he called himself an optimist and suggested that this would happen more quickly if the wishes of the people of all nationalities were heeded, instead of those of their leaders. But, he acknowledged, the people are divided over whether Kosovo should be independent or remain part of Serbia. He pointed out that both his Albanian colleagues and the Serbs could speak for hours about the victims of Milosevic or the KLA, and each would be right. As he argued, “We should not spend our time proving whose victims are more numerous. Each victim is enormously important and the counting of victims is up to each people. There is a new reality in Kosovo. The more intelligent people in Serbia have understood this new reality for a long time,

and everyone else came to understand this new reality last year even before the NATO bombing, but especially afterwards.” He did not think it necessary to prove that the new government in Yugoslavia, “which is recognized by the whole world except for the Kosovar Albanians and Montenegrins,” has shown that it is conscious of the new reality. He suggested that the government has shown that it will behave in accord with this new reality, citing the example of the situation in the

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Presevo Valley, in which the reaction of the Serbian government to aggression by “the guerilla group, terrorists, liberation army, or whatever we wish to call them” has been quite different from the reactions of the earlier regime.

The Serbian official continued by calling upon “our colleagues from Kosovo, Kosovar Albanians, and most of all, the political leaders,”

to be conscious of the new reality that Milosevic is no longer in power in Belgrade. “That is the condition,” he argued, “for the situation in Kosovo to be resolved in a manner that will not lead to a new war. It is not a condition that I am establishing, but a natural condition. To the extent that colleagues from Kosovo and the political leaders there do not comprehend that new reality, this will prove those people correct who claim that the greatest fear of the Kosovar Albanians leaders is not Milosevic, Seselj, or Arkan, but the victory of democratic forces in Serbia. I will not go into whether that is exactly correct or not, because this will be revealed over the coming days, weeks, and months. Insistence on a final solution to the problem of Kosovo and Metohija, by whichever side, insistence on only one solution, will not lead to a solution.”

This Yugoslav official underscored the importance of the security situation in Kosovo for any effort to find a solution. He suggested that as long as 40,000 international personnel are necessary to maintain peace and security, it cannot be said that the question of the KLA has been resolved. In his view, the recent assassination of a Kosovar Albanian political figure showed that there are still arms outside of international control, on the streets. This, he argued, was not an atmosphere in which it is possible to make final decisions and final solutions. Both

sides must insist on establishing one essential precondition for a final solution, and that is an end to the killings. Without this, he concluded, there is no solution.

He acknowledged that the Serbian government must show that it is democratic, drastically different from the Milosevic regime, and that it will create a new Serbia, a new Yugoslavia which, in his view, will be a good place for everyone, not just Serbs, to live. By Serbia and Yugoslavia, he meant a country also including Kosovo and Metohija. He pledged that the political party and the government to which he belonged accepted this obligation. As for the Albanian side, he called upon its leaders to accept the new reality in Belgrade and Serbia and to adopt a position in line with that

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new reality, new policy, and new government. He declared that the new government is a government that wants dialogue, as President Kostunica has proposed officially. “But not dialogue for the sake of dialogue,” cautioned this Yugoslav official. “Rather, dialogue for the sake of finding a solution. I propose that the leader of the Kosovar Albanians—since the elections in Kosovo there exists a leader who received a majority of votes—accept these new realities and enter into negotiations with the new authorities in Belgrade. If everyone now immediately enters into this process I guarantee that we will arrive at a final solution to the Kosovo problem quickly, and that it will guarantee peace. I will not define now what that final solution is. Only by undertaking these obligations and entering into continuous discussions can we arrive at that final solution.”

A Kosovar Albanian leader began his reply to these proposals by pointing out that local elections in Kosovo had taken place in a really free, democratic, and fair fashion. And, he suggested, the security situation in the province had also improved, although much more needs to be done on this front. The establishment of a democratic government for Kosovo, in his view, is the most fundamental, critical issue. A key stage in the process is the holding of national elections for a parliament and president of Kosovo. The great powers, those in decision-making centers, he averred, should not be hesitant at all as to whether this should be done. He pointed out that this would also hasten economic devel-

opment, which depended on institutional development and the establishment of proper legal frameworks. He, too, suggested that integration of Southeast Europe into the EU was a necessary element in the solution of regional problems, but acknowledged that this would be difficult to achieve without first achieving a political settlement of the status questions for Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia. It is hard to imagine, he argued, that a functioning entity could be established in Kosovo without that entity also being sovereign.

A Yugoslav government official reflected on the demands put forward by the Kosovar Albanian participants and suggested that their focus on

The international community cannot protect people one by one. The communities themselves must be committed to protecting one another.

independence overlooked the very real issue of the nature of societies in the Balkans. By always raising the question of independence, Kosovar Albanian leaders were neglecting the need to establish rights based on citizenship, rather than ethnicity. He noted the increasing popularity in the Western media of the notion that democracy was succeeding only in

the ethnically homogeneous states in post-communist Europe, and that the multiethnic states were falling behind. The call by some journalists for the partitioning of peoples as solutions to the problems of Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other states raised the prospect of a region of many micro-states, each economically if not politically dependent on the developed West for survival. How many “supported” states could the EU be expected to support? he asked. He suggested that there should be greater emphasis on socioeconomic development in order to create the preconditions for political stability.

When an Albanian political leader from Macedonia made the argument that an independent Kosovo would “protect the integrity of Macedonia,” a senior official from another Balkan state asked: What kind of Kosovo was implied by this? A multiethnic and democratic state? A Macedonian government official argued that he “does not see the rationale of the view that an independent Kosovo guarantees the security of Macedonia... One can easily argue that an independent Kosovo would be a threat to Macedonian stability, as a precedent for certain Macedonian Albanian political elements to seek some sort of ter-

ritorial autonomy as a first step toward separation.” Instead, he argued, Helsinki principles of the inviolability of national borders should be taken into account when shaping the final status of Kosovo.

A leading official of the international effort in Kosovo reacted angrily to the forgoing discussion of the need for greater security on the ground in Kosovo, and demands for quick entry into the EU. “The international community cannot protect people one by one,” he argued. The communities themselves must be committed to protecting one another, and the active participation of the international community must be understood as a necessary, but exceptional resource, not the norm. He pointed out that progress in other cases of ethnic conflict such as Northern Ireland, Lebanon, and the Middle East has been very, very slow. Changing human behavior will take a long time. Even establishing “law and order,” he pointed out, requires neutral police and judicial officials. In order to enter into the “Euro

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zone,” he cautioned, a country must inspire confidence not in its ability to be stable in some imaginary free market, but in the free market that affects the everyday lives of its people. Improving the reality of daily life in Kosovo requires the close cooperation of those who live there. International players cannot do this alone.

A Kosovar Serb participant summed up the difficulties involved in achieving such cooperation. “The wall between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo is not a normal wall. It is a wall of blood that will, as suggested by others, take time and goodwill on the part of both communities to overcome, even with the help of the international community.” Yet, the international community, in the view of this participant, offered only “fences” as solutions; fences between Kosovo and the rest of Serbia, fences surrounding the Serb enclaves in Kosovo. If there is any prospect for the future, it lies with integration, not isolation and division. This Kosovar Serb called for “openness, open borders and free movement of peoples, sincerity and respect for each other as preconditions for a solution.” He noted that a Kosovar Albanian political leader had earlier referred to a “free Kosovo,” but suggested that for him, as a Serb, Kosovo is not free. He argued that the Kosovar Albanian leaders were being

silent about the difficulties of the situation because they were trying to make a case for independence. This Kosovar Serb argued that ethnic cleansing of non-Albanians was continuing, as well as cleansing within the Albanian community of those whose political views diverged markedly from the norm. The Serbs of Kosovo had, in his view, supported the holding of local elections in Kosovo, but were prevented from participating because of the security situation. He also noted that Milosevic had prevented a population census among Kosovar Serb refugees in Serbia, effectively disenfranchising them in Kosovo. Now, this participant opposed national/provincial elections in Kosovo, demanding that

The Kosovar Serbs do not want to be integrated into an Albanian society. They want to be a factor in the creation of a democratic Kosovar society.

local institutions should first demonstrate their ability to function democratically. This Serb participant from Kosovo characterized the claim that independence would solve all of the problems in Kosovo and contribute to regional stability as “incredible,” and calls for the integration of Kosovo into Europe as “demagoguery.”

Another Kosovar Serb participant began his remarks by telling the story of a Serb peasant in Kosovo who, when asked a year earlier by a reporter whether Milosevic was doing anything in Kosovo, answered: “Yes, he’s doing something. He’s dancing a *kolo*. But he’s dancing backwards.” This participant suggested that the same can be said about the policies of the international community in Kosovo today. In his view, the international community has turned the Kosovo problem into an “Albanian question” and is solving the “Albanian problem,” not necessarily the “Kosovo problem.” The Kosovar Serbs, he argued, “do not want to be integrated into an Albanian society. They want to be a factor in the creation of a democratic Kosovar society. The local elections in Kosovo were Albanian elections. They produced Albanian local government, not Kosovo local government. If Albanian leaders want the support of Kosovar Serbs for an independent Kosovo because they see the solution to the crisis in that, there certainly could be discussions about this if no preconditions are attached.” Notwithstanding this final comment, this participant did not agree that independence represented a solution. However, he said, certain confidence-building measures would be

required. He complained, for example, that neither the Kosovar Albanian political leaders nor international players are prepared to help Serbs establish local government in places where Serbs reside in relatively large numbers. He challenged the Kosovar Albanian leaders at the meeting to provide a security guarantee so that he could return to his apartment in Prishtina, or to return even one kidnapped Kosovar Serb.

A participant from another Balkan country (presently serving as a senior official with a major international organization involved in processes of democratization throughout the region) pointed out that everyone seems to agree on two things: that the solution should be democratic, and that there is only one democratic solution. Each party believes his solution is democratic and the only solution, and that others are obliged to accept it. He agreed that the international community “made the mistake of fueling the hope for an ethnically based solution to the problem in Kosovo.” He continued, “The international community supports the protection of human rights and the rights of members of ethnic minorities. But we are not looking for ethnically based solutions. The second mistake was that the international community did not make it clear that its involvement was not altruistic. The international community has its own vital interest in a solution that is civil, not ethnic democracy.” It is not only the interests of the local peoples that are shaping policy, he argued. “The issues that are the focus of our meeting involve cultural identity crises. These are irrational crises, and it is difficult to find rational solutions to irrational problems. There are many solutions possible, but compromise will be necessary to achieve any one of them.” If independence were to be accepted as a solution, he pointed out, we need to ask “what next?” We need to ask about the economic development of Serbia, about the internal security of Serbia, about the economic development and internal security of Kosovo, about the interests and fears of neighboring states. How might this solution actually function?

A diplomat from an EU member state addressed these concerns by reminding participants that the EU emphasizes “regional cooperation.” Solutions to the problems of Kosovo and the Balkan states had to be approached regionally. Yet most states in the Balkans today have become very conservative and reluctant to participate in regional cooperation plans because they feel it works against their European orientation. This attitude will have to change, he said.

A participant from another European country noted that the beginning

of democratic transition in Serbia means “there is now an authentic democratic Serbian partner for an effort to find a long-term peaceful solution.” Such a solution, he reasoned, would involve several factors: consolidating internal stability in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia, including economic stabilization; guaranteeing minority rights and autonomy for national communities; establishing a framework for dialogue, for interethnic dialogue encompassing the principle that no one national community or people may be punished; achieving psychological reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians, which can only be done by the Serbs and Albanians themselves. In order to make this possible, this participant observed, a final solution on the status of Kosovo must not be speeded up. In his view, the process will take ten to fifteen years. Stability, the guarantee of rights, and dialogue are more important at this stage than reconciliation, because at present Kosovo has, in fact, the most extensive autonomy of any region, far greater than Northern Ireland, the Basque territories, or Southern Tyrol.

A senior government official from a Balkan country chided others at the meeting who remained skeptical of the degree of democratic change in Serbia. He expressed confidence that after the December 23 elections democratization in Serbia would be “irreversible.” And he pointed out that one positive sign of change was the restraint shown by the new Yugoslav leadership in response to events in Presevo and its willingness to cooperate with the international community on this issue. He opposed the reticence of some international players concerning movement toward dialogue between the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs. He called for re-establishing that dialogue, but without making final status a goal of the talks. He pointed out that doubts remained concerning the demilitarization of the KLA and that significant progress in this area would be helpful in restarting talks. He also noted that the response from the Kosovar Albanian leadership to democratic changes in Belgrade had so far been inadequate.

A politician from Albania rejected any solution to the situation in Kosovo other than independence, and denied that there was any tendency among the Albanians of the region toward establishment of a “greater Albania.” He noted that there were strong foundations for economic development in Kosovo in the form of entrepreneurial strength, but that there was a need for a stronger legal system which, in turn, required a functioning state. Development would benefit, he argued, from open borders between Albania and Kosovo,

and credits and other forms of support from the EU.

The remarks of another participant from the region reflected the concerns of several participants about the implications of Kosovo for the situation in their own countries. This participant argued that it was essential to support the principle of territorial integrity and no changes in the external borders of states. Some form of federation or autonomous relations within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should be preferred, he asserted. The problem of Kosovo, this participant warned, must not be linked to any other state in the region, such as Macedonia or Bosnia-Herzegovina, because such linkage might be very dangerous for regional stability and security.

PRESEVO

A local elected official from the Presevo area attributed the crisis in his region to the deployment of Serbian forces to the area, which, he argued, had “begun the polarization process.” He noted that there had been major population movements in the region as a result of the NATO bombing campaign, citing both movement of the local Albanian population out of, and movement of population from Kosovo into, the area. He acknowledged that “military forces from Kosovo” had “extended their operations to this region,” but also charged that two Albanian civilians had been “murdered” by Serb police. He called for the participation of UNMIK in devising a solution to the crisis.

A Serbian politician noted that the situation in Presevo made it difficult to move the Kosovo issue onto the track of peaceful negotiations. He asked why it remained possible for armed forces to cross from Kosovo into Serbia, despite the KFOR presence. He suggested that the uprising in Presevo might be a provocation designed to lead Serbia into military actions that would engender further action by NATO. But he expressed confidence that the new government in Yugoslavia and the emerging democratic leadership in Serbia would always insist on political solutions, not military action. With respect to Presevo, he argued, KFOR has not done its job. “The Serbian government absolutely will not act in a way that creates a greater problem than already exists.” But, at the same time, he pointed out that he had “not seen or heard any reaction by Albanian leaders to this situation—neither positive nor negative.” He found it impossible for those in Prishtina not to know what is happening in the Presevo Valley, and could not accept that the desire for

democratization in Kosovo, for a multiethnic life, does not lead to some declaration about the kind of situation that exists in Presevo. All three sides that influence the situation in Presevo must oblige themselves to help resolve the situation, he insisted.

A representative from an international security organization urged caution about concluding that KFOR and the international community held the solution to the situation in Presevo. He pointed out that action in the ground safety zone was constrained by the military technical agreement concluded in Kumanovo. That agreement would have to be amended to permit approaches such as joint KFOR-Yugoslav patrols. But, at the same time, he acknowledged that there can be no doubt that events in the Presevo Valley have a direct effect on the security situation in Kosovo. He called upon ethnic Albanian leaders in Kosovo to send clear messages that violence is unacceptable.

MACEDONIA

Discussion of the situation in Macedonia began with a report on a change in the governing coalition that occurred on the eve of the meeting. A Macedonian Albanian political leader suggested that the votes of Albanian members of parliament had preserved the pro-Western government in Macedonia and contributed to speeding up positive developments in the country. An ethnic Macedonian official agreed that the Albanian parties had played a positive role, and that the existence of active Albanian political parties in civil society supported the movement of Macedonia toward Western values. But, under questioning from a member of PER as to whether the sharp differences over the nature of the Macedonian constitutional order—those that had been evident at the PER-sponsored meeting in Budapest eight months earlier—had been resolved, it quickly became apparent that they had not. A Macedonian Albanian political leader demanded that the constitution be amended to give the country's Albanian population a status equal to that of Macedonians.

As pointed out by this participant, the Macedonian constitution defines the state, in its preamble, as the “national state of the Macedonian people” based on “the historical, cultural, spiritual heritage of the Macedonian people, their heritage of statehood, and their struggle over the centuries for national and social freedom, as well as for the creation of their own state...” Only then does it concede “full equality as citizens

and permanent coexistence with the Macedonian people” to Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and other nationalities. This distinction between nation and nationality preserves the distinction maintained under the communists between these two categories. As in the former Yugoslavia, it suggests the inferior political status of the latter. Albanian political leaders reject the status of “nationality” or “minority,” and demand constitutional recognition as a “constituent nation” and redefinition of the Macedonian state as the state of both the Macedonian and the Albanian nations. In his remarks to the meeting, an Albanian leader from Macedonia reiterated this view and suggested that if left unchanged, the constitution could bring harm to Macedonian society. Albanian political leaders from Macedonia who were present at the Athens meeting called upon the international community to take a leading role in “correcting” the constitution.

An ethnic Macedonian elected official in Macedonia voiced a different view: the constitution of Macedonia provides a significant level of rights for individuals and ethnic groups.

Sometimes there are problems with respect to practices, he conceded, but constitutional changes that redefine the nature of the state could be dangerous. There are no “second class citizens” in Macedonia, he argued. “We understand what apartheid or segregation is,” he declared, “but we do not have such practices in Macedonia.”

Another Macedonian official suggested that “if we think in terms of a state with two ethnic groups, then all institutions would have to reflect that fact, such as the establishment of two official languages in education and state administration, recognition of community rights as well as individual rights, and so on.” Most ethnic issues in Macedonia today, he argued, are a legacy of the former communist system, which recognized collective rights but suppressed individual civil and political rights. “The current dispute over the present constitution is over whether there should be a civil state based on equality ... with a separate corpus of rights reserved for national minorities such as participation, language rights in education and public administration, and so on, or a state with two national groups, two national languages—some form of federation on the ground.” In his

We cannot rely on ethnic identity and loyalties to stabilize the Balkans. We must rely on states and the strength of civil citizenship.

view, it would be difficult to sustain a state based on two distinct ethnolinguistic groups. Instead, he argued, the ties of each individual to the state, as well as to his ethnic group, had to be strengthened. There are minority rights created to respect ethnic culture and linguistic distinctiveness. “But we have to unite around our state on the basis of our citizenship, we have to unite around our state. The limits on minority rights are the state borders.” The security of Macedonia, he argued, depended on stabilizing domestic interethnic relations, establishing economic prosperity, and movement toward European structures. He argued, “We cannot rely on ethnic identity and loyalties to stabilize the Balkans. We must rely on states and the strength of civil citizenship.”

A participant with long experience in international negotiations concerning the Balkans and Macedonia suggested that Albanian leaders

The basis for optimism in the Macedonian case is that, unlike elsewhere in the Balkans, when things get difficult in Macedonia, reason normally prevails on all sides.

from Macedonia had frequently argued that “this is also our country” and that Macedonians always considered this a sort of threat. But this, he argued, is not necessarily a threat. There is, he conceded, a tendency among Albanians to isolate themselves, and this results in either of two situations: parallelism or territorial autonomy. When Yugoslavia disintegrated in 1991,

he reminded participants, the Albanians of Macedonia held a referendum on territorial autonomy in Macedonia, and the prime goal of the international negotiators was to convince the Albanians that this was a bad idea. In June 1992 the Albanians agreed to give up the idea of territorial autonomy in favor of a civil society in which they would participate with full rights. He reported that international negotiators devised “a whole list of changes to the Macedonian constitution that would put the concept of civil society into practice.” But the Macedonian government delegation agreed to this list only as a proposal. At a later meeting, in Brussels, the government declared it would not change the nation’s constitution. In the view of this participant, “the Macedonian government was unwilling to pay the price for the Albanian concession not to insist on territorial autonomy.” Later, this participant concluded that such changes were not politically feasible,

given the reactions of the nation’s Slavic majority.

The basis for optimism in the Macedonian case, argued this participant, is that, unlike elsewhere in the Balkans, “when things get difficult in Macedonia, reason normally prevails on all sides. Ethnic distance does exist, but it has existed for centuries without resulting in bloodshed in Macedonia.”

MONTENEGRO

A senior Montenegrin political figure began discussion of the situation in his republic by acknowledging that “the new situation created by democratic changes in Serbia has created a new reality in Serbia and in Montenegro.” He suggested that this new reality has influenced domestic political processes in Montenegro, and given rise to a new perspective on Montenegro’s relations with its neighbors. However, he pointed out that this new reality has not changed the nature of the problems themselves, it has only opened them up to discussion. Democratic change in Serbia still has a long way to go, and democracy must be accompanied by improvements in the socioeconomic well-being of the Serbian people. He cautioned that the old regime in Serbia has not yet been dismantled, and warned that the eighteen-party coalition of the DOS would likely break up once it achieves victory in December. Nonetheless, democratic changes in Serbia would, in his view, hasten the process of democratization already underway in Montenegro and allow Serbia and Montenegro to search for appropriate forms through which to resolve the question of their relations. He reiterated the conviction of the current leadership under President Djukanovic that the platform they had already put forward represented the basis for solving Montenegrin-Serbian relations.

A senior diplomat from a Balkan state reacted to this by pointing out that at the beginning of this year while Milosevic still held power, the Montenegrins were willing to enter into dialogue concerning the functioning of, or arrangements within the federation. At that time, the process seemed to focus on personal and technical relations, rather than the nature of the system itself. “Now,” in his view, “when there are real conditions for a normal dialogue with the leadership in Belgrade, it seems the Montenegrin leadership is putting aside the idea of dialogue and concentrating on the idea of independence. I think that everyone

in Europe respects the wish of the Montenegrin people to have their independent state. But I think there still should be dialogue, talks should be balanced, rational.” He reported that the previous week in Vienna, at the OSCE meetings, Yugoslav President Kostunica and Foreign Minister Svilanovic declared that if the process of preparing a new independent Montenegrin state is democratic, if it is in accord with the principles of the OSCE, then it is fine with them. This official cautioned the Montenegrin leadership that they “should just make sure they comprehend all the complexities of a future independent Montenegro. It will bring a lot of problems, and it is better for these problems to be considered before the step is undertaken.”

The senior Montenegrin leader denied that, by offering their proposal for change to Mr. Milosevic, they were proposing to do it within the

I think that everyone in Europe respects the wish of the Montenegrin people to have their independent state. But I think there still should be dialogue. Talks should be balanced, rational.

existing institutional system. They sent it to the Serbian government, he reported, because Milosevic did not recognize Montenegro after he expelled it from Yugoslavia. He pointed out that Montenegro was represented in the federal government by delegates of the political minority in Montenegro, not by delegates of the governing majority. “How could we accept the federal government deciding our fate?” he

asked. He reported that the Montenegrin leadership has sent its proposal to the new Serbian leadership and is waiting for a reply. “With respect to the attitude of the international community toward Montenegro today,” he argued, “everyone forgets that Montenegro did participate in the elections of September 24; it participated by accepting President Djukanovic’s invitation to boycott the elections. Eighty percent of the people boycotted. DOS does not have a single coalition partner in Montenegro. We helped prevent the necessity of a second round of voting by monitoring the election in Montenegro and preventing the manipulation of votes from Kosovo voters in Montenegro.” The reason Montenegro is moving to gain international recognition now, he explained, was “because the future shape of the FRY is so uncertain, and we do not want our rights to be usurped by the political minority still representing Montenegro in the federation.”

An official of the new democratic government in Yugoslavia pointed out that the opposition had begged the Montenegrins to participate in the September elections, but they refused. The opposition leaders understood their reasons. Once the opposition won, however, it had no option if it was to achieve control of the federal parliament other than to enter into coalition with that party from Montenegro that controlled seats in Parliament. This was the party opposed to democratization in Montenegro, which had until then been allied with Milosevic. The Yugoslav official pointed out that the opposition acknowledged openly that that was a coalition born of necessity, and that there was no threat to Montenegro. “No one in the new government in Belgrade,” he declared, “is thinking in terms of violence or even preventing Montenegro from getting independence. We accept their right to self-determination.” But, he cautioned, it is impossible to pretend that events in one part of the Balkans are not related to events in other parts. That linkage was clear in the remarks of the next participant.

A prominent Albanian journalist from Kosovo argued forcefully that the “new Yugoslavia” to which some participants referred “does not exist.” He suggested that support for Kostunica was a “calculated response” by the West intended to support the opposition in the hope of overthrowing Milosevic, and that after the opposition wins the December 23 election the fiction of Yugoslavia would be over. In his view, “for Montenegro to remain in Yugoslavia it would have to give up on reform, on use of the Deutschmark, on its sovereignty.” He asked how a federation was possible between two states one of which is “seventeen times larger” than the other. “Isn’t it time,” he asked, “for Serbian nationalists to demand a Serbian state rather than a Yugoslav state?” How does this affect the Kosovars? He noted that “people say the Kosovars want Montenegrin independence because this opens the door to Kosovar independence. But whatever happens in relations between Serbia and Montenegro, we will be for it. Because we will respect an agreement between two partners. The FRY is dead. We consider our process of self-determination irreversible, and believe that it should be done in dialogue, in talks, not only with our partners in Belgrade but with our partners in the international community. If Serbia and Montenegro reach agreement, this will verify the ability of two partners to reach an agreement by respecting each other’s positions, which would be an advance in our region.”

An ethnic Serbian political leader from Kosovo argued that “whether we want to accept it or not, the FRY still exists. How relationships within

it will be regulated in the future depends on Serbia and Montenegro and the federal government, which still exists.” In his view, “it suits Albanian separatists to see the separation of Montenegro from Serbia because it would mean a shorter route, an easier way to achieve independence for Kosovo. But I must point to the dangers of such a disintegration process, for the Dayton Agreement would be profoundly shaken. It would produce a situation detrimental to Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that is why I think the future relationship between Montenegro and Serbia is crucial for the Balkans.”

Another Serb politician asked what rights do not exist in Montenegro today that would exist if it were to become independent? He also asked whether only the republics and provinces of the former Yugoslavia, such

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as Kosovo and Montenegro, had an inherent right to independence. What would the Montenegrin position be toward demands for independence from other territories?

This rhetorical question turned practical when an Albanian political leader from Montenegro announced that the Democratic Union of Albanians of Montenegro had recently adopted their own platform concerning relations between

Montenegro and its ethnic Albanian minority. That platform, distributed at the Athens meeting, calls for, among other things: full equality of national, religious, and cultural values; linguistic and cultural rights for minorities, including the right to self-determination on these issues; proportional representation in all state organs; the right to express, preserve, and develop their national, religious and other national-collective characteristics; granting of official status to the Albanian language where Albanians constitute at least five percent of the population; the right to use the Albanian language in judicial and administrative procedures, for street, municipality, and geographic names, and in official documents; Albanian-language mass media; the establishment of Albanian educational, scientific, cultural, and religious associations and institutions of instruction and education, with a minimum of seven percent of the state budget devoted to funding them; Albanian-language instruction at all educational levels; prevention of projects that might result in changes in

the ethnic structure of territories in which Albanians presently constitute a majority; establishment of an elected National Council for each ethnic minority to act as its representative and make decisions on matters affecting the minority; and creation of a bicameral parliament for the republic of Montenegro, in which the second chamber would consist of delegations from the national councils of the minorities. The Montenegrin Albanian leader finished his presentation of this platform by asserting, “If Montenegro wants to be a democratic state, and I am convinced it does, it will accept this platform.”

The senior Montenegrin political figure responded by asserting that this was “the first time I have heard of this platform.” A European analyst of ethnic politics responded to the Albanian platform by suggesting that “on quick first inspection, the proposal sounds like a proposal to set up a dual state.” He suggested that, as a practical matter, one should keep in mind the size of the country and its resources. The use of the Albanian language at all levels of society, including education and public life, would, he insisted, signify an unbearable financial burden on the state.

A Serbian analyst of ethnic relations responded to the exchanges over Montenegrin independence by asking that “people not press us to make stupid moves.” He went on to observe, “Today I am listening to a lot of people talking about the option of independence for Montenegro. But if I can claim to know anything at all, it is that in Montenegro the majority of the population and the government support the idea of a commonwealth or some kind of loosely knit confederation. Why can we not tolerate having people in Montenegro and Serbia discuss that? Why are we in such a hurry?” He suggested that it is unclear how Montenegrin independence is linked to Kosovo. Yet he directed attention to what he thought was an equally important question: “With the recognition of Yugoslavia we open a new problem; the problem of Serbia itself. Why don’t we ask the people of Serbia whom they want to live with? How they want to manage their business? It is really dangerous to oversimplify the connections between Kosovo and Montenegro.” He explained that while there are many similarities between the two, Montenegro is a republic and has borders recognized by the Badinter Commission. Moreover, he argued, the timing is completely wrong. In his view, Serbia needs a new constitution. “The first thing that could be done by the Yugoslav federal government would be to stand back and recognize that the constitutional amendments pushed by Milosevic are not valid. We dislike playing an unfair game.” In his view, this

would provide an important role for Kostunica as mediator, and he reported that “Kostunica is very interested in the experience of the Czech-Slovak negotiations.” He insisted that Serbia “will solve the problem in Montenegro in a completely acceptable way. But Kosovo is a completely different and more dangerous story. We need really serious discussion about an interim solution for Kosovo—something that could unfold over five to ten years. Without that, there will be new conflicts among the peoples of Kosovo and in Macedonia.”

An Albanian political leader from Macedonia objected to what he saw as “a vicious cycle.” He elaborated by noting, “We speak of the consequences of an independent Kosovo for Montenegro and Macedonia, and with the same rationale we ponder the impact of an independent Montenegro on Kosovo. I do not think these issues are interrelated. Rather, they both arise out of the more fundamental issue of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Montenegro wins the right of self-determination because Yugoslavia is in the process of disintegration. But the process in Kosovo has nothing to do with Montenegro, or the changes in Belgrade. But it is related to history. The former administrative units of the old Yugoslavia have all gained the right of self-determination. The idea that Montenegro and Kosovo must remain in Yugoslavia is strengthened because Serbia is now democratic. But as the example of Czechoslovakia suggests, the process of separation, of self-determination, is still achievable when democratic leaders are in power. The proposal for changes in Montenegro put forward earlier illustrates that in Montenegro and other places there is no internal dialogue, so things are often presented unexpectedly. The solution is to open dialogue among those parties with mutual interests so that we don’t surprise each other at conferences. I think there are problems, and the Albanians of Montenegro have the right to demand clear definition of their status. But to come to a resolution we have to have a mutual understanding, mutual dialogue.”

A member of PER responded to the difficulties of this discussion with some suggestions intended to facilitate genuine communication. “One of the reasons we find it difficult to communicate with one another on these issues,” he observed, “is first of all because they are difficult and complicated. But another reason is that we may be using the wrong, or at least an insufficient, vocabulary for these argu-

ments. We frequently hear references to high principles such as self-determination, autonomy, minority rights, international norms, the inviolability of borders, and so forth. But our real behaviors do not flow from adherence to any of these principles. Rather, these principles are used as justifications for our real behaviors, just as we sometimes invent our history to justify our behavior and goals. This means there is no chance of persuading our opponents that we are right and they are wrong, because they can cite their own principles, which seem to be equally valid. The use of this vocabulary of high principles, which sets the argument in historical, diplomatic, legal, or constitutional language, obscures the fact that the real arguments and the real problems are first of all about power and the struggle for power along ethnic lines. We are sometimes too polite or too embarrassed to talk about power. Of course, everyone would insist that they are seeking power only for good purposes. Nevertheless, their goal is power and control. But it is awkward and it is politically incorrect to speak frankly about the pursuit of power along ethnic lines in parliaments, in diplomatic meetings, at the UN, in the European Union, and so forth. The real problems that divide us are thus ignored because we are struggling with the wrong vocabulary. It seems that one of the shortcomings in our discussions is that we have retreated to that vocabulary in attempts to justify or elevate or dignify our positions, which really are about power along ethnic lines. Would it not be better to come directly to the issue of the pursuit of power, the struggle for power? If we are honest enough to do that, then we can ask ourselves a different kind of question. We can ask where that pursuit of power will lead. What will it do to our neighborhood? Is it possible to pursue that power in a way that is not destructive? What we have not heard is any expression of the need for self-restraint in the interest of the larger neighborhood. We heard arguments resorting to high principles, which were in fact evasions of the underlying question of the struggle for power. It seems to me that we should not resort to citing principles, because one can always find another contradictory

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principle with which to counter your opponent's argument. We should find some way to legitimately pursue power without creating greater danger for the neighborhood."

ALBANIA

A senior official from Albania described the policies of his state as encouraging neighbors to grant democratic rights for the ethnic Albanians, and denied any nationalistic motivation. Indeed, while in his view the ethnic Albanian populations of Montenegro and Macedonia were dissatisfied with their rights, they had shown "political maturity" and the will to be integrated. Integration of the Albanian populations in the countries in which they live, he insisted, is the only solution consistent with democracy, and with integration into democratic Europe. A senior Albanian politician argued that "Tirana and the six million Albanians living in the Balkans are not united because of nationality. They are united above all because they share the dream of having a peaceful region, democratic developments, integrated markets, and borders open to free movement in the region and with the EU. While others criticize Albania for attempting to create a 'greater Albania' we are simply trying to create a greater Balkan region as part of the European Union. Albanian political forces in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania are promoting tolerance and multiethnic democracy, and the consolidation of the Western model of democracy, regional cooperation, and market economies." He argued that these communities are "completely detached from old-fashioned, dogmatic, populist, and nationalistic para-politics, which become definitely marginal with the recent elections in all these places." In light of the democratic changes in Serbia, he argued, "it is high time to institutionalize the relations between our countries, not to resolve problems by default or in a zero-sum game, but by embracing a win-win philosophy." In his view, "it is irrelevant whether a group is a majority or minority, it is the will of the peoples to replace majority and minority practices with cohabitation and integrative concepts and actions. Differentiating between majorities and minorities will encourage programs demanding special statuses for minorities instead of integration and nationalistically oriented ethnic political parties instead of multiethnic parties and programs." He argued that minorities in Albania enjoy the same legal rights as the Albanian population, starting from the right to education and the right

to have political representation. Yet minorities, he noted, especially the Greeks, have left the country in relatively large numbers as economic emigrants.

Another senior official of the Albanian government argued that "the existence of a large and concentrated Albanian population in Macedonia is a very positive factor with a major influence on current and future relations between our two countries. The Albanians of Macedonia are an essential component of internal stability in the Macedonian state, which is critical to the stability of the whole region. The Albanians of Macedonia have shown a positive, cooperative spirit with the Macedonian people and all the political and state structures of Macedonia in the interest of preserving the vital balance necessary for a common future. This can be seen especially in the participation of the Albanian political parties in the coalitions with the Macedonian parties. Further consolidation of the cooperative spirit and coexistence requires expansion of space for the democratic participation of Albanians in the governments. Further enhancement of mutual trust and leaving behind the traditional phobias and suspicions would also help. The continuation of constructive dialogue would contribute to the stability of this country."

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This Albanian official noted that security in the region had been constantly undermined by the actions of the Milosevic regime. Now, with the changes in Serbia, hope is being revived that Serbia can join in positive regional cooperation and become a factor for stability. He reported that "Albania has assessed the initial processes in Belgrade with hope and caution. Profound reforms will be needed to dismantle the Milosevic regime before we can make a comprehensive assessment of the nature and objectives of the new people who are coming to power in Belgrade. The Albanian government wishes to establish bilateral relations. We are waiting to see what stand Belgrade will take with respect to relations with Albania. We hope the new government will clearly dissociate itself from the mentality and policies of Milosevic with respect to Albania. The Albanian government has the necessary political will and

maturity to assess any sincere step the Belgrade government takes in regard to establishing diplomatic relations with Albania. Belgrade must take the first step, since it broke diplomatic relations last year. We understand that it might not be politically wise to do so in the midst of an election campaign.” At the same time, he asserted that Albania has a legitimate right to take an interest in the fate of Albanians outside Albania. In his view, Kosovo and its future are questions for its people, although it is at the same time a regional, European, and international issue. The administration of Kosovo by UNMIK, he observed, has relegated the determination of its definitive status to a later phase.

A senior Yugoslav official responded to these comments by declaring that “the restoration of democratic relations between Albania and Serbia ... is

There are two ways to resolve minority issues. One way is to respect human rights and minority rights and to raise the standards of protection. The second method is to create new states.

absolutely certain and only a question of time. I really do not know the agenda of the foreign ministry, but I think it will be only a matter of weeks.” In response to the mention of “greater Albania,” he simply pointed out that “everyone who uses ‘greater’ to describe his country should go back to the fate of Serbia in the past ten years and see what happened to Serbia after Milosevic

tried to promote the idea of a greater Serbia. It is a good lesson and warning for everyone. Generally speaking, I think there are two ways to resolve minority issues. One way is to respect human rights and minority rights and to raise the standards of protection. The second method is to create new states. Can you imagine a map of the Balkans if each group tried to set up new states to solve their problems? This would mean war for another one thousand years.”

A Western diplomat serving in the region suggested that Albania as a state must become more integrated with the rest of the region and Europe. He argued that Albania is a country with a significant organized crime problem. Some important steps to deal with it have been taken, but in his view some members of the elite in Albania benefit from a weak state and are opposed to strengthening state institutions. Albania’s participation in the region is dependent on a state that is stronger rather than weaker. It is stronger internally now than 18

months ago, at the end of the Kosovo conflict. He asked what kind of role the international community needs to play in Albania to help continue this process.

The leader of a political party in Albania agreed with this view, suggesting that “there is a group of corrupt elites with a vested interest in keeping the state weak, so that it cannot perform the usual functions of a state; that is, establishing and enforcing law and order.” A senior diplomatic official from an EU member state suggested that “organized crime in Albania is resisting serious investment because they understand that international investment will increase pressure to establish a stable legal system, eliminate corruption, and so on.” He pointed out that the EU and the international community more broadly were not the only potential source of investment in Albania. “Albanian émigré workers abroad earn \$1 billion per year,” he said, “and only a very small proportion, about \$144 million, is sent back to Albania. The reasons for this small return flow of capital to Albania are obvious, and we must work on measures to make it possible for this capital to be returned to Albania and made available for investment there.” Therefore, he argued, international development efforts in Albania should continue to focus on improving Albanian infrastructure, and strengthening anti-crime capacities.

A participant from an EU member state challenged an earlier assertion by the Albanian official that his country had a right to speak in the international arena for Albanians outside of Albania. “If the Albanian minority in Macedonia is so well integrated with and contributing to the government of Macedonia,” he asked, “why would they need Albania to speak on their behalf in an international setting?” He cautioned that this sort of statement can contribute to the restlessness of the Albanians in general across the region. Indeed, a participant from Macedonia suggested that an earlier statement by an Albanian official to the effect that the Albanian state delegation to an international summit would participate on behalf of all ethnic Albanians in the region provoked very negative reactions in the Macedonian press. He observed that “the democratic basis and theory of representation presupposes that a government has a mandate to represent on the basis of democratic, free elections and not on the basis of biological or even cultural ties. I cannot say I represent ethnic Macedonians living in the republic of Albania. Macedonian Albanians were legitimately represented at the Zagreb summit by their participation in the government of the republic of

Macedonia, our institutions.” He pointed out that together with the president and prime minister, the third member of the Macedonian delegation in Zagreb was a senior Albanian politician who is a high-ranking member of the Macedonian government.

A Kosovar Albanian journalist argued that “the Albanians opted for polycentrism in the 1990s, a bit by necessity and a bit by design.... Unlike the Serb and the Croat movements of the 1990s, the Albanians have not opted for an ethnic center that would define the policies for the rest of the Albanians.” He argued that Albanians as majorities are not opting for a change of borders, and are therefore pressing for political solutions that would make borders much less relevant, such as regional cooperation. He suggested that “all of the Albanians of Southeast Europe are in the stage of defining democracy and its institutions and understanding their value.” In his view, “there is an inherently tolerant behavior among the Albanians of Southeast Europe in religious terms.” The challenge is to “go further as Albanians and get this notion of tolerance applied to tolerance of the other ethnicity.” In Kosovo, “this means achieving a constitutional framework to ensure the rule of law and holding speedy elections that will devise new bodies of government.”

A Serb politician from Kosovo asked whether only Albanians in the Balkans have a right to create new states. “What do Albanian political leaders think,” he asked, “about trends in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Republika Srpska and Herceg Bosna, toward the creation of independent states?” A senior Albanian official replied that “the question of the independence of Kosovo is not a key issue in bilateral relations between Serbia and Albania. It is one of the options under discussion and will continue to be discussed. Many people have different ideas about this. Our official position on this is that the future of Kosovo depends on the Kosovars themselves. It will be decided by their institutions, elected by free and fair elections in the future. At present, Kosovo is under international authority. The first task is to create genuine democratic representative institutions for Kosovo. Time is required before the final status issue can be resolved.”

A Kosovar Albanian political leader now objected to what he perceived some participants as having suggested, asserting, “Albanians are not trying to create states wherever they live.” He argued, “In the last decade, Albanians have played a really constructive role, a stabilizing role in the region. The policies of the Albanian parties in Macedonia are strength-

ening and increasing the inclusiveness of the government, and the parties in Montenegro continue to participate in Montenegrin institutions. In Kosovo, we are not building the future of Albanians in Kosovo, but a state composed of Albanians and other communities, including Serbs, and it will belong to all citizens with equal rights, to citizens who consider themselves Kosovars. Kosovo cannot be held hostage to the fears of others about a greater Albania. I have never heard another Albanian advance the idea of a greater Albania, I have seen this idea only in the Belgrade press. Comparison between Kosovo and Republika Srpska is unjust. Kosovo historically has been ethnically and territorially unique. It had [special legal] status under the old Yugoslavia; Republika Srpska did not.” A Kosovar Albanian journalist offered a more forceful response: “The Kosovars did not kill 250,000 people or create millions of refugees in their state-building process. This is a substantial and profound moral difference between the Kosovars and the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Kosovo is building its state through a process of democratization and international cooperation, and not on genocide.”

A participant from another Balkan country noted that the reference to Albanian polycentrism recalls Romanian polycentrism, which lasted only a few months after the Second World War. After a few months, it disappeared. He argued that the concept of “nation” has at least two meanings: cultural and civic. The latter is organized and protected by a state representing all citizens. The cultural nation includes all those living in the same culture or sharing the same traditions, regardless of location. He noted that when a state tries to speak on behalf of the cultural nation rather than the civic nation defined by its borders, this can be problematic. In his view, the international community should undertake responsibility to protect cultural nations across borders. Each state should concentrate on protecting its civic nation only. He then asked how this principle might work in the case of an independent Kosovo. “Obviously, this would be a state with 90 percent Albanian population,” he observed. “I would like to ask Albanians from Albania what the nature of the relationship between these two Albanian states would be. Would the existence of two states create some specific problems? Would they have normal relations, as between Albania and Germany or Albania and Romania?”

A senior Balkan diplomatic official now observed, “It is absolutely normal and understandable that all governments follow with interest the

situation and the development of their nationals who are living abroad and want to help them. This applies equally to the Albanian government.” He noted, “One occasionally hears statements from the Albanian government that it is the responsibility of the Albanian government to care for Albanians abroad.” But he pointed out that there are important political limits to this relationship. The Albanians in the countries of Southeast Europe, he argued, “have their own political representatives, their own political parties, and contacts with the mother country are well developed. This is normal, but it is a very important political responsibility of the Albanian political leaders and the representatives of Albanian populations outside Albania that their cooperation does not go beyond the normal interest and assistance to those national minorities. It is important that they not send out signals that would give rise to doubts. Because even the smallest doubt about that kind of cooperation in a sensitive region, and the Balkans is a very sensitive region, would have a very negative impact.”

In response to this criticism, a senior Albanian government official noted that “there is a legitimate right for Albania and all other countries like Albania which have minorities in other countries to be interested in their rights.” He pointed out that “Greece is very much interested in what is happening with the Greek minority in Albania. Romania has a legitimate right to think about Romanian minorities abroad. And Macedonia has a legitimate right to be interested in what is happening with the Macedonian minority in Albania. I don’t think Albania is doing much more than being interested in the situation of the Albanian minorities, in whether they have their rights or not. If they don’t have those rights, it is a legitimate right of Albania to speak and to seek under international law the fulfillment of those rights. This is not an intervention in the internal affairs of a state. It is a principle reflected in international documents.”

An Albanian politician supported this view, noting that “it is very legitimate for Romania to have an interest in affairs in Moldova. It is generally accepted that Romania is more interested in this than in Northern Ireland or Portugal. The same example illuminates the possibility of state development in the Balkans with two Albanian states, Albania and Kosovo, with Kosovo developing as an Albanian state on the basis of its ethnic Albanian population. Think of the cases of Germany and Austria, or of the two Germanies or the two Koreas. It could be stabi-

lizing for the region. It need not lead to another *Anschluss*, which would be destabilizing. The creation of an independent republic of Kosovo could be stabilizing for the region. There are, however, statements that are not very well phrased, not intended as they turn out to be understood, and which lead to misunderstandings and diplomatic fuss.”

A participant from Romania responded to the example of Romanian-Moldovan relations by noting, “If the existence of two Albanian states is not to cause trouble, specific concepts and actions will be required. In the case of Romania, there was initially great emotional support for the unification of Romania and Moldova. Eventually, all Romanians will be integrated in a single state, but that state will be Europe. National ideals must be adapted to and achieved through twenty-first century means. As for the legitimate right of states to be concerned about their co-nationals across their borders, this is legitimate; indeed, even a moral obligation. But sometimes this is confused with less noble goals.”

Economics cannot reduce ethnic conflict until ethnic conflict has been reduced to a point that gives investors confidence.

Another participant, from an EU-member state, suggested that the example of the situation in northern Italy (South Tyrol/Alto Adige) is useful for understanding this issue. “The Germans in northern Italy are not necessarily so proud of being Italian citizens,” he argued, “it is just that they are well off economically and are thus satisfied with their situation. This raises the question for our colleagues from the Balkans: How much do you ethnicize an issue that is fundamentally economic and social? How much will economic development and rising standards of living help solve your problems?”

An Albanian political leader from Macedonia replied that, in his view, economic development cannot have a great impact on easing interethnic tensions, and pointed to the examples of Canada, Belgium, and Northern Ireland. In his view, economic development not only cannot reduce ethnic problems, but may even increase them. A participant involved in Dayton implementation efforts also disputed the argument that economics can drive reconciliation. He reported that “our experience has been that unless you have a modicum of stability and peace, a legal system perceived by domestic investors, you are not going to get

investment and economic progress. Economics cannot reduce ethnic conflict until the ethnic conflict has been reduced to a point that gives investors confidence. We need to break the links between organized crime and political activity in order to create space for normal political activity. Even after a much longer time in Bosnia, we are still far from being able to guarantee minority groups their rights.” But a senior European diplomat suggested that he was “not convinced that economic development cannot ease tensions, as it has something to do with mentalities.” But another Western participant pointed to a contradiction inherent in the twin goals of economic development in Southeast Europe and the integration of its states into the EU: “World Bank analyses,” this participant noted, “suggest that foreign investment will not be enough to provide an engine of growth. Domestic policies must provide the impetus. The only way to get enough growth in the region to raise standards of living significantly is for the countries of the region to become a part of the EU now.” In the view of this participant, “without full integration into the EU, such growth is not going to happen. Moreover, the World Bank says that policies required to achieve EU membership are the wrong economic policies if membership is not going to be achieved within five years. Economic development policies are the policies that are required. Economic consequences of EU-oriented policies are negative and place greater burdens on domestic political processes and relations.”

SERBIA

Discussion of the situation in Serbia/Yugoslavia in the wake of recent changes consisted largely of a series of statements by Serbian participants. Responding to the agenda item that asked whether there is a new Serbia, a senior Yugoslav official declared, “Yes, there is a new government in Yugoslavia and, informally, a new government in Serbia. This will become formal after the December 23 elections. The opposition parties did not cooperate with Milosevic, did not assist Milosevic in committing crimes against the peoples in Yugoslavia. The democratic opposition includes parties representing all ethnic groups as well as the Serbs, except for parties representing Albanians.” But, he pointed out, the election of a new democratic government has not solved the real social and economic problems facing the country. “Serbia will be a republic with a democratic government, but with over 800,000 refugees

and displaced persons, 50 percent unemployment, average salaries of 85 Deutschemarks per month, government debt to its own people of about 2 billion Deutschemarks, and an economy that has not progressed since the 1980s. We will have to build new institutions or rebuild destroyed institutions. We expect to reform the judiciary, the police, the media, the universities, tax law, and local government. We need a just and speedy privatization process, and increased foreign investment. We will establish institutions that defend human and minority rights, not just on paper but in practice. Corruption is a problem to which we will pay particular attention.” He acknowledged that “Yugoslavia and Serbia are tragically late, ten years late with transition,” but optimistically suggested that “this will allow us to learn from the mistakes of others.”

Another Serbian politician pointed out that in an opinion poll conducted in Belgrade three weeks earlier by the Washington-based National Democratic Institute, of 1,018 citizens asked, “What is the most important problem Serbia is now facing?” 67 percent cited social tensions, the poor situation with respect to salaries, pensions, crime, corruption, and other legacies of Milosevic. Only two percent mentioned Kosovo. “This may have changed with the increase of violence in Presevo,” he conceded. But he argued that “what the governing parties need to do is both simple and very hard. Before winning power, the opposition faced only one problem: Milosevic. In government, we will face 1,000 problems: heating, shortages of electricity, internal relations in the DOS, the need for regionalization along European lines, self-government, the protection of human rights, resolving our relationship with Montenegro on a democratic basis, the problem of Kosovo, our relationship with international financial institutions, and so on. We will be challenged to show that the new government can solve these problems.” He concluded by warning, “The honeymoon will be over by March. By then, social and economic tensions will be on the rise and act as constraints on change.”

A Serbian social scientist provided a similar analysis of the situation in Serbia. “Is there a new Serbia? Yes. It is absolutely clear that local governments are new and democratic, that Milosevic lost the presidential election, that there was a mass popular uprising that has defined the future. There is now a gradual taking over of government institutions by new political forces. There is a new Serbia, but not a fully post-Milosevic Serbia. Milosevic is still alive and leader of a disintegrating

socialist party, and has not been held accountable for robbery, rigging elections, and war crimes. The institutions and monopolies created by Milosevic are still there and the DOS will not be able to get rid of them quickly. The new government must re-create the privatization process, since no one knows exactly what has been sold, what economic concessions were made, etc.” However, in his view, “the DOS and its popular support provide the basis for eliminating the Milosevic legacy and building a post-Milosevic Serbia.” He suggested that building a new democratic Serbia might include the democratic break-up of the DOS coalition into separate parties, the convening of a new constituent assembly and drafting of a new constitution and new political institutions. He cautioned that “the process of building Serbia will have to take place simultaneously with efforts to solve the problematical relations with Montenegro and Kosovo. We cannot expect outsiders to help us if we do not help ourselves. Montenegro has come very close to the status of Taiwan, which might last for a long time, which might not be bad. But the situation in Kosovo is more complicated. The interim period will last for at least ten years.”

DISCUSSION OF DISCUSSIONS

With the amount of time in Athens running out, participants shifted the focus of their discussions from Serbia itself to the search for a way to move the disputes between Serbia and Kosovo and between Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the violence in the Presevo Valley in southern Serbia, onto paths toward peaceful settlement. This shift was prompted by the provocative statements of the most senior Yugoslav official at the meeting, who declared, “Kosovo is a hot potato in our hands. We realize that it is a very big problem affecting all spheres of life. We want to start resolving that problem immediately, without any delay. This is reflected in the invitation of President Kostunica to start negotiations, talks, discussions, with representatives of Albanian parties from Kosovo to resolve the situation. We all know the situation in Kosovo. Thousands of liters of blood were shed, much property and infrastructure has been destroyed. We know who the guilty ones are. On our side it is Milosevic and all the people who actively or passively supported him in everything he did in Slovenia, in Croatia, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and finally in Kosovo. There is no excuse, no justification for his behavior and I am not going to attempt to minimize the suffer-

ings and the [number of] victims in these places. But I do want to underline that many Serbs suffered, too. There were many Serb victims. I blame Milosevic for this, too. But also others from the other side, from outside Serbia. We can all cite figures, as an earlier participant cited 250,000 dead in Bosnia. But this is a very hasty figure from a very serious man. Time will tell. I fear that the greatest number of victims will be Serbs. But of course this does not in any way excuse or justify what Milosevic did. This is something we must remember or keep in mind, but it is not something on which we can build new policies. If we were to base policy on this, we would never develop Yugoslavia, Kosovo, or the Balkans as a zone of peace and understanding. We need to put this sorrow behind us and start working on cooperation so as to avoid anything of the sort in the future.”

“How can we achieve this?” he asked. “By talking, by negotiating, by engaging in public debate and in secret negotiations with mediators and without mediators, without positions cemented in advance, at any level; but it would be best to have negotiations at the highest possible level. As far as the number of people who died, whenever one of my compatriots speaks of our nation and claims some tens or hundreds of thousands of victims, I see that person as bloodthirsty, as using the issue of the number of victims for his own ends. I will not brag about Serbian victims. Some questions about Kosovo: Why did the conflict start and what kind of conflict was it? Was it a patriotic secessionist movement or a terrorist movement? Did [those Kosovar Albanians who backed the conflict] want to regain the rights of the Albanian minority that existed under the constitution of 1974? That is quite acceptable for me, those rights; and as soon as possible. It would be the rights of 1974 “plus;” because it would not be as part of a Titoist communist system but rights that could be practiced and enjoyed in a democratic Yugoslavia. The government in Kosovo-Metohija would be in the hands of the Albanians, since they are a majority in that territory. Democratic Albanian parties will win democratic elections in Kosovo-Metohija. The conditions necessary for democratic elections include an end to violence, the return of all refugees, and population census. We will recognize the results of democratic elections and Albanians will have power on the local level, provincial level, and have representatives in the Serbian republic and Yugoslav federal parliaments. Kosovar Albanian leaders point out that Albanian parties have been constructive in assisting democratic processes in Macedonia and in Montenegro. But what

about Serbia and Yugoslavia? Why didn't Albanian parties take part in the Serbian elections? Didn't boycotting elections assist Milosevic in achieving and sustaining power? Resolution 1244 offers a solution along these lines, since it affirms the inviolability of borders and that borders cannot be changed. I propose that all groups accept this option, immediately and without any dilemma. It is just a matter of agreeing on when we can begin implementing this concept and I think immediately, without any delay. The number one task of political leaders is to provide better living conditions, not a greater Serbia or independent Kosovo."

All of us, especially in Kosovo and Serbia and between Serbia and Kosovo, need time, time, time. It is impossible to achieve agreement in one year.

Turning to the situation with respect to Montenegro, he noted, "The natural ally and coalition partner of the DOS in Montenegro is sitting in this room, but this [coalition] did not come to be. There are many reasons for this, the most important of which is that the Democratic Party of Socialists mis-

calculated what would happen in the elections, assuming that the DOS would not win. Their mistake was shared by many in the international community as well. As a result, only one president has not recognized the new government of Yugoslavia, and that is the president of Montenegro, and only one government—the government of Montenegro. State-controlled television in Montenegro, for example, does not call President Kostunica 'President;' it calls him 'Mr.' Kostunica. At the same time, Yugoslav and Serbian television are broadcasting Montenegrin state-controlled news. I fully accept that it is possible to make an incorrect political assessment, and my party has made many wrong assessments. But I also accept the right to change one's mind. And this is why I expect that the natural coalition partner of the DOS, the Democratic Party of Socialists, will do so. They speak of an independence referendum that will decide. Yes, we accept that. Let the referendum take place and we will respect the will of the citizens of Montenegro, because that is how they joined Yugoslavia. The new democratic government in Serbia will be open to dialogue on all issues, and will not sweep things under the rug... There is already too much under our rugs to allow room for anything more.

"In the Presevo Valley there is not a single reason for the kind of action taken by the liberation army, or guerillas, or terrorist group, or whatever you might want to call them, except for putting pressure on the democratic government in Belgrade in an effort to help Milosevic regain power. The democratic government will continue to search for a peaceful solution to this situation. But Milosevic will never come back. I can guarantee that with my life."

A senior international official responded passionately, and in opposition to these remarks. He remarked, "All of us, especially in Kosovo and Serbia and between Serbia and Kosovo, need time, time, time. It is impossible to achieve agreement in one year. We need the time to start the sort of discussion we have today. We will not find a solution in one part of the Balkans. No, we need a general view—confederation, federation, Balkan union, and so on. We need to open the borders and the minds and hearts of the people. It will take ten to twenty years, but we must start now. Between France and Germany there were centuries of war, including real genocide... and it has taken fifty years to get beyond this and at least thirty to start a real European Union... Do you see what is going on in the Middle East? Please! Please! Give time a chance!.. Even if we are not in complete agreement, there is a common base among Kostunica, the international community and the Albanian leaders, and that is Resolution 1244. It will take a generation to change the behaviors of the people. It can be speeded up, but not too fast! The liberation of the Serb people under Kostunica will not come so fast... It is impossible to have a settlement without both the Serbs and Albanians understanding their own pasts, and this will take many years. How can we implement 1244, which calls for self-rule, without holding general elections? But not immediately. Do not undermine what we are achieving by focusing on final status. Is there any place that suffered a real civil war and has made such progress so quickly? And final status? Not now. It will put people at risk. Final status will come after self-government, after 1244 has been implemented. It is not good to push anyone to talk to Mr. Kostunica. First, it will put them at risk, really. And, they have no mandate for that. We need Kosovo-wide representation. Let's wait for that. Don't do it too quickly—it will be risky."

A Kosovar Albanian participant followed by expressing a series of reservations in response to the positions expressed by the Yugoslav official. He acknowledged recent changes in Serbia as "a step toward democracy

and as cause for new hope for democracy.” But then he went on to declare, “We haven’t been very enthusiastic, and the actions this government has taken over the past month-and-a-half and the discussions today tell us that we might have been right. We do not fear democratic changes in the region. But we are cautious of cosmetic changes. In relation to Kosovo, some issues have not really changed in comparison to Milosevic: First, the political prisoners and hostages have yet to be released. This is a moral responsibility of the new government, not a matter of political compromise. Also disturbing is the tendency for hegemonistic policies toward Kosovo. The difference between this government and that of Milosevic is that the latter told us the date they would send the police and military to Kosovo, whereas this government is more wary; it leaves that date for some point in the future. Another issue is [Belgrade’s] relations with the Serb minority in Kosovo. Everyone knows the Serb minority in Kosovo was instrumentalized for years. I expect today and expected earlier that the new government, which calls itself democratic and is called this, would show the [Kosovar] Serbs that their future is in Kosovo. The sooner they are told this and the sooner they understand this, the better it will be for their situation and for the level of tolerance overall in Kosovo. We know there is no place and shouldn’t be any place for discrimination in Kosovo. All citizens should be equal. But at the same time, privileged treatment is over. I am disturbed by the practice of blaming only Milosevic. I understand that condemning and blaming is something that belongs to modern and contemporary times, but ...it would be good if a moral responsibility were assumed, at least for future Serb generations so that this is not repeated. As for relations between Serbia and a future Kosovo, I would say you cannot change your past, but you can choose a new future. Kosovo cannot change its past of suffering and tragedy under Serbia. But it will choose a different future of peace, prosperity, security, and independence. There have been important steps toward this objective. With the local elections, we accepted that those in the Serb community ... should also participate. However, they did not participate directly. It is the right of the Serb minority and others to ask for fulfillment of responsibilities of our institutions. But it is also their obligation to participate in building these institutions. I would invite them to take part in building democratic institutions for the future of Kosovo, in the general elections. Let it be the will of the majority of people that decides. I hope the new government of what is left of Yugoslavia or Serbia will recognize the rights of its neighbors, the Albanians. It would be meaningless

if Kosovo were under international supervision for a while and then left to its previous ruler because that ruler has promised that it is now democratic. This is unreasonable and is not the will of the people.”

A Western participant then asked for clarification of the principle or position that had just been enunciated with respect to the obligation of the Serb minority in Kosovo to participate in the construction of democratic institutions in Kosovo. The Kosovar Albanian participant then explained that “the Serbs of Kosovo have the right to require responsibility on the part of our institutions. But if you are citizens of a state, a country—in this case, Kosovo—you have obligations toward that country. But the [Kosovar Serbs], through boycotting, have to date unfortunately not been doing this.”

You cannot change your past, but you can choose a new future. Kosovo cannot change its past of suffering and tragedy under Serbia. But it will choose a different future of peace, prosperity, security, and independence.

A senior diplomat from a Balkan country then expressed agreement with the view that more time is necessary. “We need time for reconstruction, economic recovery, refugee return, for establishing normal neighborly relations and regional cooperation, to delimit borders, to resolve property issues and define property rights. These are very difficult issues, and so we certainly need time... Serbia needs time, Yugoslavia needs time, Montenegro needs time, Kosovo needs time. I think we should not rush in defining the final status of Kosovo, for there are so many things that need to be defined beforehand. Meanwhile, all the neighbors should do their best to develop a friendly environment around Kosovo.”

A local elected official from the Presevo region then put forward a number of grievances on behalf of the local ethnic Albanian population. He suggested that “the Albanians in the Presevo Valley have problems of existence, and this is very dangerous. They are about to flee. Medvedja is almost ethnically cleansed. This comes after democratic changes in Belgrade. These forces are not only in the security zone. They are ten kilometers from the zone. We have new expulsions of the Albanian population. In the past nine days, about 6,000 [ethnic Albanians] have been displaced. All told, about 26,000 people have been displaced. Why must we have the Yugoslav military in houses, villages, and schools? At the begin-

ning of this year there were massive expulsions. All of this has repercussions for the whole region. It is necessary to have demilitarization of the valley and the return of the displaced with the help of international mechanisms. When we have normal conditions, with no violence, we can speak of different modalities, of insuring the individual and collective rights of Albanians in this area. Albanians of this area have been prevented by law from participating in elections.”

These comments provoked a sharp rebuke from a senior Yugoslav official. He noted that the previous participant had recently “appeared on state-controlled television in an interview that lasted an hour or more. But he did not speak then about 6,000 displaced Albanians, nor did he say so when we met yesterday to discuss these things. Nor did he say there was a problem about the presence of military and police units in the Presevo Valley.” The Yugoslav official declared, “It is absolutely untrue that at this moment in time anybody on the side of the Yugoslav government, the army, the police, or any other state institution, is exerting any pressure on Albanians to leave that area. I asked you to tell me: Why did the KLA—that terrorist group, liberation force, cultural society, or just plain group, call it what you want—have to show up there? What is it supposed to protect? You did not give me an answer. At this moment in time there is absolutely no form of pressure on Albanians in Presevo and Bujanovac. Our president visited the area, the vice-premier was there. We offered assistance in the formation of local self-government.”

A Kosovar Albanian political leader then remarked, “This is a very fruitless discussion. From some Serbian representatives we have heard only old ideas. If they want to be a democratic leadership they must have new ideas. The independence of Kosovo is the optimal solution for Kosovars. We do not want unification with Albania. A free and open Kosovo, integrated in European structures, would be good not only for us, but for Serbia as well. In the future, I do not exclude other positive changes that might happen tomorrow with the new leaders in Belgrade. Here we have stressed Resolution 1244, but the resolution does not define the future of Kosovo. Sub-regional arrangements cannot be made, especially in the former Yugoslavia, because we have paid for this with our blood. Because of the aggression of the former regime, it is good that all should be independent, democratic, and free, and establish ties to Brussels and the West. As for Presevo, we want the situation there to settle down, we want a peaceful solution.”

A western diplomat serving in the region agreed that time is indeed the key variable. He reasoned that “Yugoslavia’s legal rights will be argued by Belgrade and some in Moscow and elsewhere. The counterargument is that the Yugoslavs have squandered whatever legal or moral high ground they had as a result of the despicable behavior that went on in Kosovo for the past several years. To win this argument,” he suggested, “the Serbs have to begin dealing with the question of war crimes.” At the same time, he argued, “major responsibility for treatment of minorities in Kosovo rests with the Kosovar Albanians, and their record has been less than sterling on this issue. They have a long way to go in demonstrating the kind of tolerance and respect for minorities in Kosovo that will win this argument. The question of regional stability is a question for the Kosovars themselves to answer by the nature of the state and society they establish—for example, whether it is a criminalized state.” But he emphasized that “the question of regional stability is really a question about Macedonia. Whether an independent Kosovo threatens Macedonian integrity depends on whether the Albanian population of Macedonia is contented with their status in Macedonia, whether they are prosperous and happy and want to remain there—although the Kosovar Albanians also have a role to play here.” In his view, “the Presevo issue has had no political resonance among the Kosovar Albanians at large. The average Kosovar Albanian does not seem to regard it as a real cause or grievance. They see in the extremists a real threat to the larger project of Kosovo. We have had a lot of rhetoric about Presevo in the course of this meeting. Belgrade and the Presevo Albanians need to start a real dialogue.” In his estimate, it seemed that “the extremists are trying to replicate in Presevo the events that led to the war in Kosovo.”

An ethnic Albanian politician from Montenegro then directed a pair of provocative questions to the most senior Yugoslav official in attendance. He told the story of a Kosovar family that had 54 members before the war, but today only one young girl remains alive. “How will this young girl feel safe in a future Serbia when she remembers Mr. Kostunica from his pictures with a rifle and paramilitary forces in Kosovo?” he asked. And, he observed, one of the most chauvinistic and inhumane statements during the war in Kosovo was made by a Montenegrin official whose party is currently part of the coalition in Belgrade. “In response to a question from journalists as to whether there were rapes,” he said, “that politician replied, ‘Who would rape Albanian women?’”

The Yugoslav official responded to these issues directly. He observed, “I think that we cannot say that anyone would feel good if they have had fifty-four relatives killed and they are the only surviving member of their family, even if we speak about the most democratic countries in the world. No one could feel good about it. This question is understood only as a report about a very, very sad incident I deeply regret, and I hope that the person who caused it is brought to justice. I think that girl must feel the same as the husband of a pregnant woman who was killed in Nis in the local grocery market by cluster bombs. Probably just like thousands of Albanians and others who were the victims of Milosevic or some others. As for the alleged comments, I have not heard [the cited politician] talk about rapes. But we do know there were rapes in Kosovo. No one can deny or justify that in any way. Albanians, Serbs, and other women were raped. This is not something that can be denied by anyone.”

The Yugoslav official then addressed the question of whether Milosevic will be extradited to the Hague. “As the new government,” he reported, “we will respect all the obligations and agreements signed by the previous government, whether we want it or not. One of them is the Dayton Agreement. The new government has made it explicit that we will observe the Dayton accords. And among other things, that we are obliged to cooperate with the Hague tribunal. So there is no question about whether that cooperation will take place or not. Personally, I think that because of what some of you said here concerning guilt, national or individual, that it would be much better for Milosevic to be tried in Serbia. Then, if there is something left on the indictment, we can extradite him to the Hague. I think that we in Serbia have the right to try Milosevic, and not only Milosevic. I have to say that absolutely no one in the territory of the FRY who has committed war crimes or any other criminal offense will be bypassed. The new government guarantees that such crimes will not be repeated. No one has the right to assign collective blame to any nation or ethnic group in Yugoslavia, nor do we assign collective blame to anyone else; not a single nation, ethnic group, or international organization. There are ways to pinpoint blame for individuals and I kindly appeal to you to continue the discussion along those lines.”

Turning next to the question of time, he pointed out that “with respect to the new government in Yugoslavia, many of you said that there is not much difference between this government and the previous government in the past thirty days. But on the other hand, we have had a year-and-a-half of

international administration in Kosovo and that is said to be too short a time to expect any results. I hope we will not continue our discussion by using one standard of measuring time for the international community and another for the new government in Serbia.”

A member of PER noted that there have been some debates and disagreements over who might negotiate with whom and when and under what circumstances. “These are very important disagreements,” he acknowledged. But, he said, he recalled “hearing that the new government in Belgrade is open to talks to anyone from the Kosovar Albanian community, but that the Kosovar Albanian community is unwilling or uninterested in conducting such talks. “I think I heard that this may not be the time for talks. So we have a situation in which a new Yugoslav government is willing to engage in talks that the old government had resisted all through the 1990s but we have on the other side those who had been but are no longer eager to engage in talks. And we have at least one representative of the international community who thinks talks now would be a bad idea. Let’s try to straighten this out. Somebody has to talk with somebody—that is absolutely clear. The auspices can be debated. I cannot imagine why there should be no discussions between the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs from Serbia; they are neighbors. Maybe the question is what you call these talks or who is sponsoring them, or the auspices under which they are taking place. I would be very disappointed if, after such a gesture from Belgrade, there would be an absolute refusal even to consider a discussion. I am not talking about a negotiation in which one would expect to come to a conclusion or in which a treaty would be signed or the status of Kosovo would be resolved. No, that clearly cannot be taken up just now. But simply not to hold a conversation after a brutal decade of misunderstanding and war and death would, I think, be a mistake. I don’t know what the outcome of such talks would be, but I am certain they would do no harm. It is the only way to start the healing. I would like to ask all of those with the power to make those talks to share with us their opinions as to how a conversation might take place.”

A Western diplomat observed that this statement “misshaped” the issue. “I did not hear anyone say there shouldn’t be a dialogue,” he observed. “What I hear are differences about whether the time is right to discuss the final status issue for Kosovo. Kostunica has said that both Yugoslavia and Kosovo need more time and more democracy, that this is not the time for final status talks. As for what could or should be discussed, the shopworn phrase of

'confidence-building measures' is in order. Perhaps we should start with some smaller measures." In response to this, the senior Yugoslav official declared his "fear that everything will boil down to an understanding that we have not understood each other. I did not say that we could start talks about the final status of Kosovo today. I said only that we need to start talks. I do not think Mr. Kostunica invited Mr. Rugova to negotiations about a definitive solution. No, he invited him to start talks that would gradually lead in that direction. What I heard now is rejection, no will for

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any kind of talks. This is also a legitimate position, a position I can accept, albeit with regret."

In response, a member of the Kosovar Albanian political leadership agreed that "there is some kind of misinterpretation of what was required and also of what the answer was." He

pointed out that "the term dialogue was very clearly mentioned. And we all know what the word dialogue means. It has been a repeated position of the Kosovar side for a decade, a very sincere position that talks are the most sound way of reaching solutions. We continue to stick to that position. Whether it is time to start serious talks on final status or not, most of the participants here pointed out very clearly that we have started a process in Kosovo of building up democratic institutions. Local elections were a good first step in that direction. General elections are a next step, one that is also very good. And for whatever serious talks we need to have representatives legitimized in a democratic process of voting." He pointed out that international players, even those in the region, "were not in a position" to "allow or not allow" or grant "permission to enter into talks or dialogue or whatever. Let's just be clear about it: No one is against discussions, talks, whatever. But everything in good time and with good timing."

A Western diplomat observed that the parties might "have turned Clausewitz on his head," making "peace a continuation of war." He warned, "One cannot force the pace of a peace process. [Resolution] 1244 is a framework for a process that is blessed with great ambiguity about the outcome." He gave the parties the following advice: "Take your time." But such admonitions were losing their influence by the end of the meeting. A diplomatic official from the region tried to find middle ground by noting, "There is a need for time and for dialogue." But, he cautioned, the "dialogue

needs at least two sides, both acting in good faith, and dialogue should not become a means by which to continue the conflict. We need time, but we should not allow time to be used to create a *fait accompli*."

CONCLUSION

A Western participant tried to sum up what happened during the last half hour or hour of discussion in Athens. He noted that he had "heard both a senior Serbian political leader and senior Albanian political leaders from Kosovo both talk about the possibility of talks—talks not intended for the purpose of just having talks, but talks for the purpose of solving their mutual problems. Now I also heard that it is going to take some time. But this did not come across as a call for endless caution without any real markers. I think I heard my colleagues from Kosovo very intelligently underscore the need to legitimate a democratic leadership of Kosovo that would be able to enter into talks that might then become negotiations with the full level of popular support and confidence that those concerned about the need for time have been talking about. I have heard today and in earlier meetings organized by PER about the need of the Serbian leadership to get its house in order. They have an election coming up in December. Both sides seem to be thinking along similar lines—that they need to establish firm, democratic leadership legitimated through electoral processes; that they need to think through their positions and options, and then enter into discussions; and that those discussions will not begin with an attempt to define the final status, but will begin with an effort to find parts of the problem that can be addressed in the interim." He pointed out the fact that even when international participants appeared to be resisting the idea of discussions, the Kosovar Albanian leadership came forward with "a very clear defense and attempt to underscore the interest of Albanian political leaders from Kosovo in such discussions." In the view of this participant, very specific steps must now be taken. Some of these are already underway: an election in Serbia, consolidation there of a democratic government, some resolution of the issue of Yugoslavia giving the Serbs time to deal with their Montenegrin friends on this issue, a further democratic election in Kosovo, and consolidation of a democratic leadership among the Kosovar Albanians. These processes might or might not be accompanied by further discussions like this one.

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