

WAR IN THE BALKANS:

Consequences of the Kosovo Conflict
and Future Options for Kosovo
and the Region

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Executive Summary

NATO's strategy in the war with Yugoslavia over Kosovo isn't working. As the Alliance's bombing campaign enters its fourth week, it is Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic who is still winning the political game.

Western governments have fallen into a humanitarian trap – concentrating on the hundreds of thousands of refugees expelled from Kosovo while failing to address the appalling human tragedy still going on inside the province.

The present paper, prepared by International Crisis Group (ICG) analysts in Belgrade, Skopje, Tirana, Sarajevo, Washington DC, and Brussels, summarises the situation on the ground throughout the Balkans in the wake of recent events and examines the difficult choices facing Western leaders. It concludes with a comprehensive statement of policy recommendations designed to contribute both to a solution to the immediate crisis and to longer-term regional stability.

The crisis in Kosovo escalated dramatically on the night of 24 March 1999 with the launch by NATO of a campaign of intensive air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Yugoslavia). The NATO action, now entering its fourth week, followed Serbian refusal to accept the terms of the internationally-brokered Rambouillet Peace Agreement and an ominous build-up of Serbian forces in and along the borders of Kosovo.

The massive expulsion from Kosovo of more than 619,000 refugees and the internal displacement of an estimated 700,000 people have created an international refugee crisis not seen in Europe since the aftermath of World War II. Refugee accounts and satellite intelligence have revealed evidence of atrocities that many fear surpass those committed – by some of the same perpetrators – during the war in Bosnia. In recent days, Serbian forces have made incursions into northern Albania, killing

civilians and raising the spectre of a wider war. The bombings have stirred fierce anti-NATO and anti-Western sentiments that many fear will set back the efforts toward democratisation in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia in which the West has invested so much.

Because of the unanticipated severity of the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe, the destabilising effects of the Kosovo conflict on governments throughout the region have only begun to be appreciated. The international community has, understandably, focused much effort on providing food and shelter to the massive new population of refugees in Albania and Macedonia. While it is vital to do everything possible to help the refugees that have fled Kosovo, there is a danger of "humanitarianising" a crisis that is essentially political in nature. The rush to provide food and shelter to the refugees has tended to draw attention away from events inside Kosovo and the urgent need for a political and military strategy that addresses the root causes of the conflict. From the perspective of President Milosevic, this is extremely helpful. As the crisis unfolds, it is more important than ever for policymakers to keep a clear understanding of its consequences – for Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries – and the options for resolving it and for steadying the rest of the region.

NATO ground forces, removing Milosevic, stabilising Yugoslavia

It is increasingly clear that NATO cannot meet its objectives in Kosovo with air strikes alone. The alliance should therefore immediately prepare for, and at the earliest opportunity order the deployment of a ground force capable of entering Kosovo, securing safe zones along the Macedonian, Albanian, and Montenegrin borders, and ultimately establishing an international protectorate.

Ground intervention in Kosovo, however, will not in and of itself be sufficient to prevent further shock waves from destabilising Kosovo and the wider region. The primary goal of international policy in the Balkans should be to remove Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic – the single greatest cause of crisis and conflict in the region. While there is no simple way to effect his removal, there are a series of steps that can be taken which will likely hasten his departure. Western governments should refuse all further contact with the Yugoslav leader, effectively isolating his regime from the outside world. Economic sanctions should be maintained and the personal assets of Milosevic and other key regime officials targeted. State-run media transmitters should be destroyed or overridden by impartial news broadcasts. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) should immediately commit the necessary resources to prepare indictments for Milosevic and other top Serbian officials on charges of command responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and NATO should move at the earliest opportunity to apprehend those indicted and to transport them for trial in the Hague. Far greater investment needs to be made toward strengthening a democratic alternative to the Belgrade regime.

In the longer term, once Milosevic has been removed and replaced by a more democratic leadership, the international community should be ready with some form of Marshall Plan for Yugoslavia designed to propel the country into the ranks of emerging east European democracies. In this context, the Balkans Stability Pact recently proposed by the European Union, which held out the prospect of the eventual integration of the countries of former Yugoslavia into NATO and the European Union, is welcome.

Albania and Macedonia: Managing the humanitarian crisis and building a foundation for the future

Reuniting refugees separated in the mass exodus from Kosovo and re-establishing legal ownership of abandoned property will be a complex task – complicated by the fact that many refugees were stripped of their identity papers by Serbian forces at the border. To help piece together essential information, UNHCR must move quickly to establish a computerised registry of names of refugees, together with specific details about the districts and villages of origin. As soon as possible this database should be posted on the Internet to help people re-establish contact with separated family members.

As summer approaches in Albania, the risk of a cholera epidemic among refugees is likely to increase. Plans should be drawn up now to improve standards of sanitation and to ensure adequate access to food, shelter, and medical facilities.

In Macedonia, NATO should continue to assist the government and aid agencies to construct new refugee accommodation and ensure adequate infrastructure in the camps. The UNHCR, supported by the OSCE, should be given the task of running the camps as well as registering and processing incoming refugees. The ICTY should immediately establish a presence at the border to take testimonials from refugees who have been the victim of, or witness to, alleged war crimes.

Significant international financial and technical assistance packages should be readied both for Albania and Macedonia, to allay the strain of the refugee crisis, to safeguard political stability in both countries, and to lay the groundwork for future economic growth and democratic reform.

Protecting Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Kosovo fall-out

Steps also need to be taken to minimise the negative impact of the Kosovo conflict on the Bosnian peace process, specifically in Republika Srpska, the Serb entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, where tension is running at a post-war high. SFOR should take care not to provoke a backlash from the Serb population while at the same time being prepared to use force to put down any armed disturbances. Pressure should continue to be exerted on Serb radio and television broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide a more balanced account of the Kosovo conflict. The process of forming a new government for Republika Srpska should be accelerated. Milorad Dodik is still the best candidate to be prime minister, but he is

not the only acceptable one, and the international community may well have to agree to the selection of Mladen Ivanic as prime minister. The prospect of international assistance, conditional on government co-operation with the Dayton Peace Agreement, should be used as an incentive to build a constructive relationship with the new government.

Looking ahead – the search for long-term regional solutions

Finally, the long-running crisis in the Balkans is unlikely to end with a solution to the Kosovo dispute. The past approach of dealing with each Balkan trouble spot in isolation has proved itself disastrous. Once the present crisis in Kosovo has been resolved and tensions in the region have been reduced, a new Conference on the Balkans should be convened to look at the future of the region as a whole.

The issue throughout the region is essentially the same, namely how to find a political framework which reconciles the legitimate interests of different ethnic groups sharing the same territory. The solution may be democratisation, but this entails more than just elections. To date, processes that have served to promote democracy elsewhere have largely proved destabilising in the region. Mechanisms tailored to local conditions should be explored, including redesigned electoral systems, regional security and disarmament treaties, the creation of a regional broadcasting network and regional and/or reciprocal commitments to “special measures” to protect the employment, property, educational and other rights of minorities.



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I. INTRODUCTION

To Save Kosovo, Remove Milosevic

As of this writing, more than half of the population of Kosovo have been forced from their homes, 620,000 of these expelled into neighbouring countries. Serbian forces have made incursions into northern Albania, briefly seizing the border town of Kamenica, killing civilians, and raising the spectre of a wider war. While western governments must move urgently to alleviate the plight of the deportees and the estimated 700,000 displaced Kosovars still inside the southern Serbian province, they also must focus on reformulating their policy toward Kosovo, Serbia, and the region to address the root of all Balkan crises for the last decade, Slobodan Milosevic.

Through his murderous expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians, his authoritarian crackdown on internal opposition in Serbia, and his moves to overthrow the government of Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic has left no doubt that he is at the heart of the Balkan problem. Indeed, given the magnitude of his crimes, it is impossible for NATO governments to negotiate further with him. It has become increasingly obvious that there can be no long-term solution for Kosovo - or for the Balkans - without the removal of Milosevic and his replacement by a more moderate government.

The stark facts on the ground demand that, at a minimum, the international community make Kosovo an international protectorate, secured by NATO ground troops, within which all of Kosovo's residents will be able to return to their homes, rebuild their communities, set up a system of self-government, and develop democratic institutions. As NATO continues to bomb, it must also now move quickly to deploy ground troops to Kosovo, both to protect

from Serbian attack the hundreds of thousands still living inside the province and to establish a safe zone so that the hundreds of thousands of deportees now flooding Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro can begin to return. The consequences of not deploying immediately are grave: Albania's territorial integrity has already been violated by Serbian forces, Macedonia, already reeling from the increase in ethnic tension between ethnic Albanian and Slav Macedonians, could quite possibly face its own civil war, and Montenegro has come under increasing threat from Belgrade.

But in order to build real stability and democracy in the region, any solution for Kosovo must also address Serbia's internal problems. In order to stabilise Serbia proper, and by extension, all of southeastern Europe, the international community must take concrete steps to help the Serbian people replace the current regime with a government that can lead their nation out of authoritarianism and state-sanctioned crimes against humanity toward democratic reform, ethnic tolerance, and reintegration with Europe. With anti-Western resentments stirred by NATO's sustained campaign of air strikes, it will take time to rebuild the confidence of even the most ardent Serb democrats in the good faith of the international community. Even so, now that NATO has undertaken to destroy the military and paramilitary machinery which until now has enabled Milosevic to abuse his people with impunity, the international community must finish the job.

II. CONSEQUENCES OF THE ETHNIC CLEANSING

1. KOSOVO

(i) The Situation on the Ground

By 19 April, according to the UNHCR, more than 619,000 Kosovars — almost one third of the pre-war population— had already become refugees, with an additional 100,000–200,000 moving to exit Kosovo's borders on threat of death by Serbian forces and paramilitaries. Some 700,000 are believed to be displaced and hiding somewhere inside Kosovo. The whereabouts of roughly 100,000 men who were brutally separated from their families by Serbian forces are still unknown. As time goes on, the dangers of starvation and ill health for these half-million hunted Kosovars is acute. Another 100,000-200,000 more are estimated to have remained hunkered down in their homes, unable to travel, work, or find food.

The logical conclusion of Serbian policy in Kosovo has been accomplished with stunning efficiency. Tens of thousands of Pristina residents were force-marched to a make-shift collective centre before being herded onto trains bound for Macedonia; Pristina, as well as the cities of Pec, Prizren, and Djakovica, and hundreds of towns and villages, including Acareva, Decan, Glogovac, Gnjilane, Kacanik, Kltna, Kosovska Mitrovica, Likovac,

Rezalla, Stimlje, Urosevac, Podujevo, Vucitrn, Zhuri, Zulfaj, and Zym, became "cleansed" ghost towns overnight; whole villages have been wiped off the map. The expulsions have been conducted by black-masked paramilitaries in a carefully constructed climate of terror and violence. Mass detention facilities have been sighted in at least six towns; in Djakovica women are believed to have been herded into collection centres and systematically raped. Refugees report having witnessed random killings and systematic massacres in Bela Cervka, Djakovica, Goden, Kuraz, Malakrusa, Malisevo, Orlate, Pastasel, Pec, Podujevo, Prizren, Rogovo, Srbica, Suva Reka, and Velika Krusa; this last was captured on video.

(ii) Ending the Current Conflict

(a) An immediate ground force deployment

It has become increasingly clear that NATO cannot meet its objectives by air strikes alone. The leadership in Belgrade is well aware of NATO's attempts to limit casualties and has played for time so as to complete its ethnic cleansing of Kosovo.

The humanitarian catastrophe renders imperative the immediate deployment of NATO ground forces to the region, first, to establish safe zones along the Macedonian, Albanian, and Montenegrin borders, and ultimately to make Kosovo into an international protectorate. Military strategists estimate that a well-trained, well-led, adequately equipped force of 80-100,000 could be in place within eight to twelve weeks. Others believe Kosovo can be secured by far fewer troops – 50,000 to 75,000 – as long as another 40,000 to 50,000 are simultaneously deployed to maintain stability in neighbouring Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Once NATO has mustered the political will to order a ground force deployment, getting into Kosovo will be the next challenge. Most analysts are convinced that more than one point of entry will be critical to preventing Belgrade from using the interim to mine and amass troops and weaponry along a single border. The time required to put troops and logistics in place must be used as well to prepare the ground politically for such a massive undertaking. Although NATO troops are already stationed in Macedonia, and KLA spotters near the border are already providing NATO with intelligence critical to a safe deployment, the Macedonian government has yet to be convinced to allow its territory to be used as a launch pad for a ground intervention. Sending troops in through Hungary has clear logistical advantages, but Hungary, a new NATO member, is concerned about the escalation of tensions with Russia and the risk to the substantial Hungarian minority in Serbia's Vojvodina region should NATO be permitted

to deploy from Hungarian territory, has also refused to be used as a NATO staging ground. This route into Serbia would be further complicated by the necessity of obtaining the permission of a reluctant Austrian government to use its rail lines. Bosnia might be a necessary staging ground, as well, although the SFOR troops stationed there are neither trained nor armed for combat, and the international community must take care to prepare the Bosnian governments, particularly the Republika Srpska leadership, so as not to aggravate an already volatile political situation there and further jeopardise the difficult implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord.

Albania is the most likely country from which NATO could stage an attack on Yugoslavia. But the rugged terrain, limited access roads, and primitive infrastructure play into the hands of Milosevic and pose danger to the troops involved. NATO troops would have to operate according to a "build-as-you-go" strategy, which takes time and requires particular expertise. In addition, NATO will have to secure Greek permission to land at Thessaloniki and to use Greek ports and rail lines.

Although the preliminary diplomacy and politics involved in orchestrating a ground force deployment are considerable, they are by no means insurmountable. In August 1990, few military analysts or students of Arab affairs believed that the government of Saudi Arabia would ever agree to accommodate a half-million U.S. troops whose mission was to attack another Arab nation.

(b) The role of the KLA

While the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is in no way a model fighting force, it is the only means through which Kosovar Albanians have been able to defend themselves in some measure against the hardened and far better equipped Yugoslav and Serbian military, police, and paramilitary forces. In the last six months, the KLA leadership has grown more credible and politically sophisticated; the willingness of the KLA representatives to sign onto the Rambouillet agreement despite serious reservations suggests that at least most of the top commanders now seem to have the broadest interests of the Kosovar Albanian population at heart.

NATO is in close consultation with KLA commanders, who are providing NATO with some of the only on-the-ground information on the situation in Kosovo that the alliance receives. KLA sources suggest that, as the weather improves, NATO is likely to target a Serbian military build-up on the Kosovo-Albanian border, formerly the KLA's main supply route which is currently blocked by the Serbs. Once NATO weakens that block, KLA forces plan to move back into Kosovo from Albania and to re-supply KLA units remaining in Kosovo.

The combination of increased NATO air strikes and the possibility of the KLA marking individual Serbian units on the ground - either to help guide NATO's strikes, or to fight against them with anti-tank weapons and ammunition it has procured on its own - may serve to reduce the number of Serb military units still in Kosovo, thereby reducing as well the risk facing ground troops should they be obliged to deploy to a hostile environment.

There is some momentum within NATO member states for equipping the KLA to take on the Serbs alone. Bipartisan legislation to fund a "Train-and-Equip" program for the KLA was introduced in the U.S. Congress in late March. Obviously, such a strategy would pose tremendous strategic and political risks. First of all, as the "Train-and-Equip" program which armed Bosnian and Croatian forces during the Bosnian war made clear, it could take at least two years to create a decent fighting force that would not be handily defeated by hardened, better trained and armed Serbian and Yugoslav forces. Second, fighting could go on for a long time, creating ever greater dangers of spilling over into neighbouring countries and preventing the refugees from returning. Already Serbian incursions into Albania, a sovereign nation, have put the entire international community on alert. Under present circumstances, however, arming the KLA, while not the perfect solution, may be the only option immediately available that could provide some minimal protection to those still inside Kosovo.

Predictably, Milosevic's latest expulsion campaign has only increased ethnic Albanians' desire to fight. Among the recent male refugees from Kosovo, pledges to join the KLA are almost universal, even among Kosovo's professional and middle classes who have previously not been armed or fought in the conflict. In the short term, this suits the interests of NATO countries, which would prefer not to lose their own soldiers' blood so that refugees might return to a safer Kosovo.

(c) The dangers of "humanitarianising" the crisis

The refugee exodus from Kosovo, perversely, has served the short-term interests of NATO, as well. It keeps the plight of the Kosovar Albanians in the news and has helped make Western publics — previously unaware of Kosovo, perhaps — sympathetic to the deportees and in favour of a NATO campaign against the ruthless Serbian military. It has also kept the NATO alliance united behind a more prolonged, severe air campaign, rather than a short, symbolic one, *à la* Bosnia in 1994. A real danger here is that, by "humanitarianising" the crisis and accommodating the refugees outside of Kosovo, NATO countries will feel they have done enough for the Kosovars and will not summon the resolve – or commit the resources – necessary to guarantee the ethnic Albanians' safe return. If NATO stops short of safely repatriating all Kosovar deportees who wish to go home, Milosevic will have won his war.

(d) Sealing the borders, holding firm

To prevent the conflict from simmering on for months longer, NATO should also secure Yugoslavia's borders to keep fuel and other military supplies from entering the country while guaranteeing the free outflow of refugees. This move would have to be closely co-ordinated with Yugoslavia's neighbours and should be implemented more effectively than the UN embargo imposed on Yugoslavia during the Bosnian war.

Regardless of apparent softening or new diplomatic overtures on the part of Belgrade, NATO must under no circumstances stop military action before Milosevic withdraws all of his army, police, and paramilitary units from Kosovo and agrees to the presence of a NATO-led, international peace-keeping force and the safe return of refugees.

(iii) Future Options for Kosovo

The future status of Kosovo lies at the heart of the present dispute but is unlikely to be resolved finally until the international community has taken control of Kosovo and conditions are created for the safe return of refugees. At some point, however, it will be necessary to revisit the choices facing policymakers. None of the current options for Kosovo's future would be easily implemented; all of them raise concerns for the region's stability.

- **Last rites for Rambouillet:** In light of the ongoing atrocities, it should be clear that the Rambouillet formula, which would preserve Kosovo as part of Serbia, is dead. Kosovo's ethnic Albanians should not be expected to accept such a solution, even if Kosovo became a protectorate in which Belgrade had no say. With its murderous ethnic cleansing campaign, the regime in Belgrade has forfeited its claim to Kosovo.
- **An international protectorate with republic status:** An alternative would be to set up a temporary international protectorate in a Kosovo accorded the status of a Yugoslav republic. Again, any future for Kosovo in a common state with Serbia is almost impossible to imagine, and after all that has transpired, it will be very difficult to persuade ethnic Albanians of the merits of such a solution. Of course, there would also be resistance from the Serbian side, since as a republic, Kosovo could technically secede from Yugoslavia.
- **A judicious partition with international guarantees:** A third option would entail the partition of Kosovo and possible independence for the portion given to the Kosovo Albanians, with NATO providing total security for the refugees' return. The ethnic Albanians would be awarded the

larger portion, with self-government and international assistance guaranteed. Those who would become minorities after such a division could apply for international assistance to relocate in territories where they would be in the majority, or they could choose to stay in their homes, with international guarantees of their human and minority rights. One possible division would create a small Serb part comprising the six Serb-dominated municipalities in north western Kosovo: Gora, Leposavic, Novo Brdo, Potok, Zubin, and Zvecan. Serbia's three most important religious sites, the monasteries of Visoki Decani and Gračanica and the Patriarchate of Pec, could become Serbian protectorates, as well, administered by Belgrade under UN guarantee.

This option is neither likely nor desirable for a number of reasons. First, it would reward Milosevic's campaign of ethnic cleansing, and many ethnic Albanians would not be able to return to their original homes. Second, Belgrade would not only try to keep the Orthodox monasteries in Kosovo, but also the valuable mines, industrial centres, and key towns, including Pristina, Pec, and Mitrovica. This would leave the poorer parts of Kosovo to the ethnic Albanians who then, in all likelihood, would at some point try to join their Albanian neighbours in a "Greater Albania." This would destabilise the whole region, especially Macedonia. The only advantage to a partition would be that Serbia would be unlikely to go to war over Kosovo in the future, since they already would control the parts they are interested in.

- **Internationally secured independence:** In yet another scenario, the West would recognise the independence of the entire province of Kosovo and provide the Kosovars with the means necessary to safeguard their independence even before the end of the current conflict. Apart from the apparent unwillingness of some governments to contemplate such a solution, such an approach would in all likelihood plant the seeds for future conflict in the region. Independence would be followed by the near certain mass exodus of Kosovar Serbs, and ethnic Serbs, backed by Belgrade, could well try to retake Kosovo. Moreover, an independent Kosovo would no doubt have unsettling repercussions in neighbouring states, particularly in Macedonia, with its own delicate ethnic balance, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the precedent may encourage extreme nationalists to press for their own independence.
- **An interim, international protectorate:** A protectorate status that would create the conditions for effective self-governance but leave open any final status determination seems to be the most promising option. With a substantial, NATO-led, international peace-keeping force, and with the complete withdrawal of Serbian and Yugoslav military, paramilitary, and police forces from Kosovo, refugees would be secure in returning and rebuilding their lives. With significant, but carefully modulated international assistance, Kosovar Albanians and

Serbs alike could begin to rebuild their economy, their health and educational systems, their civil institutions. The OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission, which has established its credibility as a stabilising presence, would return and assist in constructing the necessary framework for Kosovo's future development, and the NATO-led ground force would guarantee Kosovo's stability and safety and protect its borders with Serbia and third countries.

Even this plan provides no guarantee for future stability in the Balkans. Above all, NATO must assure the safety of the ethnic Albanians and Kosovar Serbs alike, so as to avoid the equivalent in Kosovo of either the massacre of 8000 Bosniacs in the UN-guarded "safe haven" of Srebrenica or the mass expulsion of Serbs from the Krajina during the summer of 1995. But an interim, international protectorate would put an end to the ethnic cleansing and guarantee far-reaching self-government for Kosovo's ethnic Albanians without interference from Belgrade. Under this scenario, it is conceivable that the temper of the region might change substantially enough in the course of the next few years to permit a final settlement down the road.

2. MONTENEGRO AND SANDZAK

The conflict over Kosovo has often been portrayed inaccurately by some media as the natural conclusion of the decade's wars in the Balkans. As long as he is permitted to remain in power, Milosevic is likely to stoke further conflicts well into the future. Kosovo is not Milosevic's last card. Once the Kosovo question has been settled, the Yugoslav leader is likely to turn his attention to other potentially obstreperous parts of the country. High on the list of likely next targets are Montenegro and Sandzak.

After three weeks of NATO air strikes, Montenegro, the last bastion of opposition to Milosevic within Yugoslavia, is in trouble. US and British officials have reliable intelligence information indicating that Milosevic is preparing a coup against Montenegro's pro-western president, Milo Djukanovic. A first step was the sacking of General Radoslav Martinovic, the Montenegrin chief of Yugoslavia's Second Army division, whom Milosevic replaced with pro-Milosevic Serb nationalist General Milorad Obradovic. Obradovic now commands 10,000-12,000 Yugoslav Army troops and some 4,000 reservists in Montenegro, and has threatened to take over the Montenegro Television building, which has already been surrounded by special police. Since his installation on 2 April, Obradovic has ordered independent media outlets to broadcast only Serbian state news programs, created military tribunals which supersede Montenegrin courts, and ordered the arrest of Djukanovic's vice-president, Novak Kilibarda, who declared that Montenegrin conscripts should not be forced to fight in Kosovo.

But it is not only General Obradovic and his godfather in Belgrade who pose a threat to Montenegro. The refugee influx of 74,000 Kosovar Albanians constitutes nearly 12 percent of the population in this Connecticut- or Corsica-sized republic and threatens to upset the already precarious ethnic balance.¹ The NATO bombings of Yugoslav military bases and key military infrastructure there have enraged and disappointed many Montenegrins, who cite their government's bold persistence at democratisation in the face of ominous threats from Belgrade as well as the republic's official neutrality toward the NATO air strikes. Montenegro's nine percent Serbian minority has held ferocious daily anti-NATO demonstrations outside the US cultural centre in Podgorica, and local analysts fear outbreaks of violence and a full-fledged coup attempt that could lead to civil war. "I don't fear NATO, I fear my brother," said Drasko Djuranovic, the editor of the independent Montenegrin weekly *Monitor*, about his concern that tensions there will result in bloodshed.

Those tensions have been made palpable by the presence of sharpshooters on rooftop buildings in Podgorica and the thousands of heavily armed police and soldiers throughout the capital. Police have been called up to protect the liberal Djukanovic government from a coup attempt by either the Yugoslav military or Djukanovic's Socialist rival Momir Bulatovic, who is currently Milosevic's deputy prime minister.

The Montenegrin government has welcomed the international press corps which was thrown out of Serbia and Kosovo on 25 March and has been a champion of Yugoslav independent media throughout the Kosovo crisis. For months, Montenegro has served as a refuge for Serbia's besieged independent press, many of which have set up shop in Podgorica after having been shut down in Belgrade. The first and most prominent of the publications to have relocated to Podgorica were the daily *Dnevni Telegraph* and the weekly *Evropljanin*, whose publisher, Slavko Curuvija, a onetime confidant of Milosevic's wife and Yugoslav United Left leader Mira Markovic who had become an outspoken critic of the regime, was murdered in front of his Belgrade apartment on Orthodox Easter Sunday.

The deluge of Kosovar Albanian deportees to arrive in Macedonia in the last three weeks follows earlier influxes of some 50,000 refugees from Kosovo, Bosnia, and Croatia. Although it has taken in more refugees per capita than either Albania or Macedonia, Montenegro has not yet received much in the way of international financial assistance to provide for the refugees. Montenegrin Foreign Minister Branko Perovic has appealed for immediate financial assistance to the United Nations and the international community, which has finally begun to respond.

¹ UNHCR Kosovo Displacement Statistics, 16 April.

The little information that has leaked out of the largely Muslim Sandzak region of Serbia and Montenegro is grim.² Refugees from Sandzak say several villages there have become completely depopulated ghost towns; in the village of Fljevlje, at least, the Yugoslav Army has reportedly armed Serb civilians. As of March 30, according to the Germany-based Society for Threatened Peoples, some 5,000 Sandzak Muslims had fled to Bosnia and Herzegovina; people trying to flee through the border at Bistrice were being forced to pay bribes of 1,000 Deutsche Marks (\$600). There are also reports that Serbian police have seized Muslim men of fighting age from buses headed toward Bosnia. So far, however, incoming refugees have said they fled out of fear rather than because they were actually attacked, and UNHCR and the Bosnian Refugee Ministry have reported that most of the Sandzak refugees are using the crisis as an opportunity to move to Turkey or Germany, where they believe they can create better lives for themselves. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic recently issued a public plea urging residents of the Sandzak to remain there rather than to assist Belgrade in its cleansing of the region.

3. YUGOSLAVIA AFTER THE CONFLICT

(i) Removing Milosevic

There can be no lasting stability in the Balkans without the removal of Milosevic and his entourage and the installation of more moderate governments in Yugoslavia and Serbia.

However, NATO air strikes thus far seem to have worked against this objective. Far from toppling Milosevic and his regime, they have increased his standing, at least in the short run. Most Serbs, even those critical of Milosevic, condemn the air strikes and have rallied around his leadership. Repeated statements by NATO and top Western political leaders have failed to convince the Serbian public that the alliance is not at war with the Serb people but is only out to crush Milosevic's ability to wage war against the Kosovar Albanians. Pro-democracy forces in Serbia, faced now with almost unanimous anti-Western sentiment, have been entirely silenced. Some of them have said that NATO's attack on Yugoslavia has set back their efforts by ten years. Meanwhile, the reformist government in Montenegro is desperately trying to keep from being overthrown in a coup orchestrated by Milosevic.

² According to the most recent census figures available, in 1991 about 54 percent of the Sandzak's 420,000 people were Slavic Muslims who lived intermixed with Serbs and Montenegrins. For more information on Sandzak, see ICG Balkans Report N°48, "Sandzak: Calm for Now", 09 November 1999.

The first question is how Milosevic can be removed from power once and for all. A military coup by Yugoslav army officers appears less and less likely, as Milosevic has continued to purge the armed forces of “unreliable” officers and replace them with people who are loyal to him. An assassination attempt against Milosevic also seems highly unlikely, since he no longer appears in public and is surrounded only by people of unimpeachable loyalty. There remains the option of coercing or persuading Milosevic to leave the scene voluntarily and retire to a third country, such as Russia, Belarus, Greece, or Cyprus, making room for a more moderate government. This solution becomes less and less palatable, because those responsible for the atrocities committed in Kosovo must be punished, and because it would send the wrong signal to other dictators.

The most aggressive option, one entailing considerable risk, would be for NATO to march into Belgrade, presumably across the Vojvodina plains from Hungary, which has so far opposed any ground deployment from its territory. The alliance's objectives would be to remove Milosevic from power, occupy Serbia, and set about building real democratic alternatives to the current regime. Of course, this path could escalate the conflict to a whole new level and set dangerous international precedents and jeopardise NATO force safety by invading and occupying a hostile nation. Moreover, such a move would no doubt exacerbate already frayed relations with Russia and could irreparably divide the Western alliance.

Given the likely costs of such an undertaking, it may be necessary to acknowledge that, at least in the short-term, Milosevic will remain in power in Belgrade. Accepting this reality, however, entails critical responsibilities on the part of the international community to isolate Milosevic as much as possible, to minimise his influence, and to make sure he is held accountable for his actions.

Western governments should refuse all further contact with Milosevic – and take every possible measure to isolate and undermine his regime. The Yugoslav regime should be denied all diplomatic representation and economic sanctions should be maintained. Wherever possible, the personal assets of Milosevic and his supporters should be seized and frozen – the proceeds held over to fund reparations for damages wrought in Kosovo.

A sealed criminal indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague may have already been issued, although it also seems unlikely, as the Tribunal only began investigating Milosevic's role in the Bosnian war in October 1998. So far, the Chief Prosecutor's office has not exercised its UN-mandated jurisdiction over all of the former Yugoslavia by sending an investigative team into Kosovo

without an engraved invitation from Milosevic to gather evidence of alleged war crimes there.

A hand-over this week to the Tribunal of intelligence data gathered by the United Kingdom implicating six Serbian field commanders in 87 cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity marks the first known concrete evidence supporting charges against commanders in Kosovo that has been supplied by NATO member countries, which, until now, have delivered little more than indictment-rattling rhetoric. Because the charge of "command responsibility" is extremely difficult to prove, involving as it does the delicate, three-part test of establishing a clear chain of command, a *priori* knowledge of the crimes on the part of the accused superiors, and failure to prevent those crimes or to punish their actual perpetrators, it is all the more essential that the international community come forward with telephone intercepts and other possible evidence that most governments jealously guard as classified information.

(ii) Looking Past the Dictator

Whatever the outcome of the current crisis, Serbia is and will continue to be a key player in the Balkans. Therefore it must not remain a pariah state. It is imperative that the international community act now to develop a short- and long-term strategy that will promote stability, democracy, civil society, and prosperity throughout Serbia and Montenegro.

To prepare for the time when Milosevic is no longer in power, the West should immediately identify and vigorously support alternative leaders who might ultimately take his place. Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, the second largest party in Serbia, is clearly not an option. Not only is he Serbia's deputy prime minister and thus part of the current regime, he is also an ultra-nationalist and alleged war criminal. His paramilitaries, the Cetniks, are said to have committed among the most atrocious war crimes in Bosnia and elsewhere. Far from being a viable political alternative to Milosevic, Seselj himself should be indicted, arrested, and tried in The Hague. Vuk Draskovic, now Yugoslavia's deputy prime minister, heads the Serbian Renewal Movement and was once the big hope for Serbian democratisation. But he is an ardent nationalist (unlike Milosevic, for whom nationalism is just a tool for consolidating his power) and an allegedly corrupt opportunist who speaks decent English and has been used by Milosevic to put a reasonable sounding public face on the regime.

The two remaining options are not mutually exclusive. The West can pin its hopes on smaller democratic and more moderate forces in Serbia, such as Zoran Djindjic and his Democratic Party, Vesna Pesic of the Serb Civic Alliance, and Nebojsa Covic or Milan Panic, both of whom lead the Alliance

for Change. The other possibility is that Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic might play a more important role in Yugoslavia's future. Again, there are certain risks: particularly after NATO's intervention, too close an association with the West and too much backing from the international community might discredit all moderate politicians in the eyes of the Serb public. Already they are regarded with suspicion by many Serbs, for being opportunistic, weak-willed, and for fighting among themselves. Thus far, their parties have not done too well in most elections, and it is not clear that this was only because of Milosevic's control of most media.

4. ALBANIA

Some 365,000 Kosovo Albanian refugees have fled to Albania since the start of the NATO air strikes, further aggravating an already difficult refugee situation there.³ Prior to this latest wave of refugees, around 25,000 Kosovo Albanians had already sought refuge in Albania in the course of the past year.

The Albanian government announced on 11 April that it has given NATO total control of all Albania's military infrastructure, including air space, ports, etc., in support of the NATO alliance's air strikes against Serbia. The Albanian government has also called for the immediate deployment of more NATO troops in northern Albania, and for NATO to establish an international protectorate in Kosovo.

These calls reflect Tirana's acute fears, following increased tensions along the border with Kosovo, of being dragged into a wider regional war. Indeed, the Albanian government had grounds for concern. Yugoslav and Albanian forces clashed for five hours on 16 April, while on 13 April Serbian soldiers invaded Albanian territory and briefly held the border town of Kemenica before withdrawing. On 10 April two Albanian civilians were killed in Tropoja, 300 kilometres north of Tirana, by a mortar fired from Serb positions inside Kosovo, and on 9 April four KLA guerrillas were killed in skirmishes with Yugoslav border police. While border clashes between the KLA and Serb forces are not unusual, the fighting in the past week has been especially fierce and prolonged. It is unlikely, however, that any number of NATO troops stationed in northern Albania will be able to halt the guerrilla activities of the KLA, which is provoking Serb retaliation. This makes the situation particularly volatile, as it can only be a matter of time before the Albanian border becomes a war zone, as the KLA currently has no other launching pad for its assaults.

³ UNHCR Kosovo Displacement Statistics, 16 April.

(i) Impact of the Refugees on Albania's Already Compromised Social Order

The Albanian authorities are struggling to cope with such a sudden and massive influx of refugees, though the crisis has eased slightly as more aid had arrived and with Yugoslavia's illegal move to seal the Kosovo-Albanian border during the second and third weeks of April. The UN World Food Program (WFP) has said that, in contrast to Macedonia, where the plight of stranded refugees is critical, food distribution in Albania is now working. Although the 8,000 NATO troops now in Albania are using helicopters to provide logistical support for the humanitarian relief effort, there are not enough lorries available, and transport nevertheless remains a problem. The WFP is providing flour to bakeries in Tirana in the northern town of Kukes, and in the port city of Durres. Bakeries are now working 24 hours a day to provide the refugees with bread.

The European Union has announced \$11 million in refugee aid for Albania, and emergency aid is being airlifted and distributed to the refugees via the UNHCR, the Albanian Red Cross (in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross), the World Food Program, and UNICEF. The town of Kukes is an arduous, 10-hour journey from Tirana along an appallingly bad, narrow road, which is choked with vehicles trying to reach the refugees. A priority is to move the bulk of the refugees away from the harsh winter conditions still pervading northern Albania down to the much milder climate around Tirana, where the infrastructure can accommodate speedier deliveries of aid from Tirana airport and the nearby seaport of Durres.

As of 11 April, around 100,000 refugees had left the border region to be housed in camps and private homes further south, notably, in and around Tirana. The refugees appear shocked at the lawlessness of the Bajram Curri district, where bandits have already looted some of the aid for the "privileged" Kosovars. Since the collapse of Communism in Albania in 1992, thousands of unemployed northern Albanians have moved down to the outskirts of Tirana, where they have established various shanty towns. This has put tremendous pressure on the capital's limited infrastructural capacity and has contributed not only to the city's deteriorating physical appearance, but, more importantly, to the anarchic social conditions and the high level of crime.⁴

Despite the undoubted sympathy felt towards the Kosovars by ordinary Albanians, the country's overall economic ruin means that the average Albanian, especially in the poorest districts of the north, feels himself to be just as needy and deserving of international aid as any fleeing Kosovar. There is, therefore, likely to be some degree of resentment on the part of

⁴ For more on the security situation inside Albania, see ICG Balkans Report N°54, "The State of Albania", 06 January 1999.

local people towards the newcomers, should the aid allocated to the refugees go beyond that of mere subsistence-level handouts. This, in turn, could lead to tensions arising from theft and to increasing social disorder.

Albanian Public Order Minister Petro Koci is particularly worried about the prospect of large numbers of young Kosovar men remaining in Albania for a prolonged period of time. These men and boys will be unemployed and frustrated by their plight, and there is fear amongst the Tirana authorities that the public order situation, already threatened by the country's general lawlessness, will deteriorate further. The two prime concerns, apart from a possible rise in general crime levels, are that illegal traffickers will exploit the refugee situation and escalate the traffic of illegal immigrants into Western Europe, and that former Albanian president Sali Berisha will exploit the Kosovars' discontent by rallying them to back another bid to return to power. Last September's coup attempt by Berisha supporters was assisted by several Kosovo Albanians, 25 of whom are still in prison in Tirana, awaiting trial on charges relating to their participation in the coup. Berisha has already accused the government of stealing aid for the refugees. Mindful of all this, the public order minister has appealed to all Kosovar men under 50 years of age to return to Kosovo to fight, leaving their families to be cared for by Albanian authorities and international agencies.

(ii) Political Fallout from the Kosovar Albanian Presence in Albania

The influx into Albania of large numbers of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo has been accompanied by a growing number of KLA activists and potential recruits. Since the start of the NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia, the KLA, which has strong support from the Socialist-led administration of Pandeli Majko, has consolidated its presence in Tirana. This has caused concern among those on the right in Albanian politics, who are mistrustful of the KLA and its left-wing orientation.

On 2 April, the political head of the KLA, Hashim Thaci, announced the formation of a new Kosovar "government" to be dominated by KLA members. Thaci was designated "prime minister," replacing Bujar Bukoshi, who had been appointed by moderate ethnic Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova in 1992. This new "government" includes two vice-premiers, one from the United Democratic Movement (UDM), the other, as yet unnamed, to come from Rugova's Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). The announcement of the Thaci "government" has deepened the rift in Albanian politics between the ruling Socialist and centre-left parties, who are backing Thaci, and the right-wing opposition parties, led by Sali

Berisha's Democratic Party (DP), who support Rugova's previous LDK-dominated "government".⁵

The DP was particularly concerned that the Thaci "government" was proclaimed without having the support of all the political factions in Kosovo and without any preliminary consultations. In a press statement, the DP said it did not welcome the proclamation of the Thaci "government," describing it as "a hasty step bearing a grave impact on the unity of the Albanian people of Kosovo, who are fighting against the Serb occupiers".⁶ In response, the Socialist Party daily Zeri-i-Popullit denounced the DP's opposition to the Thaci "government," saying it should be "seen within the framework of its (the DP's) failure in the handling of the political developments in Kosovo in recent years. The gist of the DP's harsh stance against the self-proclaimed heads of Kosovo's new government is that they are "Marxists" and "leftists", and should not be in leadership positions.⁷ Thus the ever present antagonisms between left and right in Albanian politics have taken on a new twist, incorporating into their own respective camps the left and right of Kosovo Albanian politics.

5. MACEDONIA

(i) Current Implications of the Refugee Crisis for Macedonia

At this moment, the most urgent task facing the Macedonian government and international organisations is the refugee crisis. Up to this point, international organisations and foreign governments have pledged close to \$100 million for the 132,500 refugees in Macedonia alone.⁸ Macedonian government officials, however, have complained that most of the promised assistance has thus far failed to materialise, that it cannot cope with the crisis, and that third countries must provide shelter to refugees currently in Macedonia. More substantial aid deliveries have since begun to arrive, NATO troops already in Macedonia have been extremely effective in setting up camps and delivering humanitarian assistance, and EU nations, after dragging their heels for close to a week, have finally agreed to accommodate 100,000 refugees. Turkey, Greece, Israel, Kuwait, the U.S., and Canada have also agreed to accept Kosovar refugees; some of these countries have already done so.

Both the reportedly widespread mistreatment of refugees by Macedonian police and border guards and the Macedonian government's forced

⁵ For an analysis of the divisions in Kosovar politics, see ICG Balkans Report N°58, "Unifying the Kosovar Factions, The Way Forward", 12 March 1999.

⁶ Albania Daily News, 6 April 1999.

⁷ Zeri-i-Popullit, 5 April 1999.

⁸ UNHCR Kosovo Displacement Statistics, 16 April 1999.

midnight transfer of tens of thousands of refugees from Blace camp into Albania are violations of international humanitarian law and must be forcefully condemned. However, the Macedonian government was not unreasonable in claiming that Macedonia's capacities to accept refugees have been exhausted. Macedonia is a poor country and was faced with a difficult economic and social situation even before the refugees started arriving. Between one-third and one-half of the country's workforce is believed to be unemployed, and the average salary of those employed is about 200 Deutsch Marks. The state budget, most of which is earmarked for pensions and salaries, leaves the government little room to manoeuvre.⁹ Since the air strikes began, Macedonia's economy has faced an even more difficult predicament. The main transit route to Europe, which leads through Yugoslavia, cannot be used, and trade with Yugoslavia, one of Macedonia's more important trading partners, has ceased. Several factories in Macedonia, out of raw materials, had to close down and put their employees on unpaid leave. The effects of NATO action against Yugoslavia will certainly have a considerable mid- to long-term, adverse impact on the country's economic life.

(ii) Possible Consequences for Macedonia's Future

If the refugees from Kosovo stay in Macedonia for a protracted period of time, the consequences could be grave. As noted earlier, the current number of refugees has already exceeded the country's capacity; more would almost certainly cause considerable problems should they stay for more than just a few weeks.

A sizeable, prolonged presence of refugees in Macedonia will almost certainly affect inter-ethnic relations in the country. About one quarter of Macedonia's citizens are ethnic Albanians, although some ethnic Albanians insist that they make up at least one-third, possibly as much as 40 percent, of the country's population. In any case, the ethnic Albanian community is a significant political constituency with two big parties, one of which is in the current government. Both parties' agendas include better educational opportunities, greater representation in the state administration, and recognition of ethnic Albanians as one of the country's constituent nations. However, the ethnic Albanians have incurred considerable mistrust from many in the ethnic Macedonian community, who suspect them of wanting autonomy or even secession and who fear their demands could undermine the country's future stability. There is also widespread concern that because of their considerably higher birth rate, the ethnic Albanians will shortly become the country's dominant ethnic group.

⁹ For more information on Macedonia, see ICG Balkans Report N°60, "Macedonia Update: Challenges and Choices for the New Government", 29 March 1999.

With these already existing problems, the possible long-term presence of refugees poses a considerable threat. Already, Macedonian Albanians are volunteering to join the KLA, and arms shipments from Albania bound for the KLA in Kosovo have exacerbated the tension between the government and the ethnic Albanian population. Ethnic Macedonians are likely to see the refugees' presence as yet another proof of Albanians' alleged intentions to take over the state and will resent the draining of government coffers to support tens of thousands of foreigners. Ethnic Albanians, for their part, are likely to complain that the refugees are being neglected or even abused by the state and marginalized by ethnic Macedonians.

In the best case, Macedonia will somehow manage to cope. The country's success in dealing with this crisis will be contingent on three factors: a realistic prospect of refugee return; considerable and sustained assistance from the international community, and restraint and moderation on the part of all Macedonian politicians regarding the refugee issue.

In what is probably the most likely scenario, inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia will suffer but remain manageable. Mistrust, isolated violent incidents, and further segregation between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians will probably increase, but no full-scale confrontation is likely. Such a situation can only be controlled if all major political forces adopt a prudent approach. Nonetheless, it would set Macedonia back several years and could create an ugly, unstable climate of incivility for an indefinite period of time.

In the worst case, inter-ethnic relations would quickly deteriorate to the point where violence would erupt. Irresponsible nationalist elements in both groups might try to capitalise on an ongoing economic crisis to create unrest, blaming Macedonia's precarious situation on the prolonged stay of the refugees and on the ethnic Albanians in general. The current government coalition could collapse as a result, which in turn would pose the possibility of a government forming without ethnic Albanians. This would further destabilise the nation and could lead eventually to a total breakdown in communication between the two largest ethnic groups. Calls for autonomy or secession might then increase, endangering Macedonia's very existence. Neighbouring states could be drawn into the conflict, with unforeseeable consequences for the region.

Macedonian politicians and the international community alike must be aware of these dangers and do everything in their power to prevent this potentially disastrous scenario from becoming a reality. Within Macedonia, this will require prudence, moderation, and the political will to keep the situation stable even in the face of popular discontent. For the international community, this will mean furnishing considerable assistance not only for the support of the refugees, but for the government of Macedonia itself.

6. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In the Republika Srpska (RS) of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), reactions to NATO action in Kosovo have exacerbated an already unsettled political situation. After months of wrangling, on 5 March the High Representative removed from office the RS President Nikola Poplasen, whose Serb Radical Party (SRS), in alliance with the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), formed a strong nationalist bloc in the RS National Assembly opposing the moderate SLOGA coalition government headed by Milorad Dodik. That same day, the international arbitrator, Roberts Owen, against the wishes of all RS political parties, awarded the municipality of Brcko neither to RS nor to the Federation, but to both.

The Brcko decision brought a much more emotional reaction than Poplasen's dismissal, but the coincidence of these two unwelcome, summary foreign dispositions, which were given tremendous coverage by a biased media, was exploited by troublemakers eager to mobilise public outrage. Demonstrations were held as early as 5 March and continued throughout the month, showing occasional tendencies to become violent.

The trend towards violence gained momentum later, even as the two decisions started to appear manageable at the political level. Two bombs exploded at the OHR office in Banja Luka and one at a US military office in Bijeljina. Public opinion, already anti-international, was not at all alienated by the acts of the extremists. Western countries started advising their citizens to leave, and international organisations began withdrawing staff. The RS government directly accused Poplasen's Serb Radical Party of using force for political ends.

Against this angry and volatile background, NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia began on the night of 24-25 March.

News of the strikes instantly radicalised the atmosphere. As in Serbia, the entire population was hostile to NATO action, and demonstrators took to the streets in large numbers. Official and private media coverage was one-sided, and fuelled the general agitation. Faced with the clear increase in public hostility, international organisations withdrew the rest of their staffs. The government attempted to pursue a moderate path, calling upon Serb members of BiH bodies to resume their duties so as to be able to defend Serb interests at state level. It did all it could to distance RS from the conflict in Kosovo.

But the government had difficulty controlling the actions of the demonstrators. The mostly vacant offices of international organisations were attacked, and with the population receiving extremely pro-Serbian media coverage of the air strikes, much of the public, far from opposing the actions of extremists, appeared to feel that the foreigners deserved

whatever harassment they were getting. The RS information minister was quoted as saying the situation was getting out of control and warned of possible attempts by radical forces to make RS secede from BiH or join Serbia.

The two political blocs in the RS Assembly were now further apart than ever. SDS President Dragan Kalinic accused Prime Minister Dodik of wishing to stay in power forever, in alliance with the 'armed occupiers' of RS. Most recently, Socialist and SDS leaders have issued a new threat to Dodik's position, with statements that a 'government of national unity' would soon be formed under an independent, Mladen Ivanic. It is still not clear which way the Socialists will jump – most recently they seem to have re-committed themselves to remaining in the governing coalition – but without them, Dodik's government would fall.

Meanwhile, neither of the earlier crises has yet been resolved. The High Representative has declared the RS presidency vacant, though Poplasen still considers himself president. RS politicians are still united against the Brcko decision, though before Kosovo, they were at least ready to talk about it. But for RS the external crisis of Kosovo has raised tension far higher than the internal crises of Poplasen and Brcko. Had these earlier events not already created a tense atmosphere, the Kosovo crisis might not have had such an inflammatory effect.

With tempers running so high, this is a dangerous moment for RS and a dangerous time as well for the Dayton Peace Agreement. The government in Banja Luka has tried to re-establish stability, but its efforts to distance RS from the Kosovo conflict have not been very successful, and do not reflect the views of the public. Dodik's position will be extremely vulnerable if the Socialist party and/or Biljana Plavsic's Serb National Alliance do finally decide to leave the governing coalition.

Ivanic would almost certainly be the prime ministerial nominee. Under such conditions, if and only if the break-up of the government were irretrievable, the best option might be for the international community to give Ivanic a chance. His own political platform is not abhorrent. As prime minister he might be able to command a more general level of consent from the public than Dodik is now able to attract, and this would reduce the potential support for violent insurrection. Recent statements from the Socialist Party and the SDS suggest that Ivanic would have to include them both in his government. Although the return of SDS to any position of authority is a dangerous step backwards - and will be seen as such by the international community and protested by the Bosniacs in the Federation - it could at least drive a wedge between the SDS/SRS alliance, as long as Ivanic is able to form a government without the SRS. He is experienced enough to realise that including the SRS would forfeit any hope of

international support, and he is realistic enough to know that he needs that support if RS is to prosper once the present unrest is over.

Whatever the prospects for a new government, at the moment the greatest danger continues to be possible outbreaks of violence. The number of people in RS actively prepared to behave violently against the international community or against the RS government is probably small; but, as 1992 showed, it does not take many determined men to cause tremendous harm, and the isolated violent acts perpetrated so far have met little hostility from a populace either too frightened to resist or sympathetic to the trend. In any case, the public mood is ripe for being roused to support violent action.

Another issue is the reliability of the RS police. Anti-NATO demonstrators have targeted the International Police Task Force (IPTF), among other organisations. According to IPTF, the RS police have said they cannot guarantee their safety, and so IPTF officers are keeping a low profile. This argues poorly for police determination to resist mob or other violence. The RS army would be a very dangerous tool to use, for its allegiance, also, cannot be taken for granted.

If a campaign of violence is launched, it looks as if it will be up to SFOR to defy it. This situation will be watched closely by the Federation, as well: Bosniac elements in the government there would take any steps necessary, perhaps including the use of military force, to prevent the break-up of Bosnia should SFOR be unwilling or unable to control the situation. Any such action would mark the complete collapse of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kosovo conflict and the mass deportations have been tremendously destabilising to the region. Albania and Macedonia simply cannot absorb the 620,000 Kosovars who have already flooded into their countries, much less the hundreds of thousands more still trapped inside Kosovo.

The humanitarian crisis, the NATO air strikes, and the Serbian military incursions into Albania have revealed just how wide are the shock waves of this conflict. To re-establish regional stability, it may not be enough for NATO just to take Kosovo and to enable the refugees to return. The region has been entirely transformed in the past few weeks, and it will not regain its equanimity without a permanent solution for Serbia and Montenegro as a whole.

(i) For Kosovo

A NATO ground force must move now to secure Kosovo and clear the province of all Yugoslav and Serbian forces. NATO must then establish an international protectorate so that deportees and internally displaced persons can safely return to their homes and the rights of all Kosovo citizens, Albanian and Serb, will be safeguarded. NATO should also seize or take out state-controlled transmitters and further override Serbian media by broadcasting into Kosovo and Serbia from neighbouring countries or elsewhere in Europe.

While a substantial contingent of NATO troops would remain to protect Kosovo's borders and keep it clear of Serbian forces, the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission should return to assure the protection of the population's human rights and civil freedoms and to assist in rebuilding the province's physical and economic infrastructure and in creating self-sustaining democratic structures. In the medium- to long-term, the international community must make a substantial commitment of financial and technical resources that can enable Kosovo citizens to rebuild their ravaged infrastructure, agriculture, economy, and civil society.

For a decade, ethnic Albanians have been forced to create their own parallel society, involving every domain from kindergartens to health clinics to architecture schools to a vibrant independent media. It is critical that the international community not "colonise" Kosovo with a sudden "invasion" of well-intended but overbearing humanitarian assistance. Such a misguided deluge of aid last autumn, in the wake of the ill-fated October cease-fire agreements, seriously jeopardised the integrity and growth of Kosovo's home-grown, still fragile, civil society institutions. It is clear from the many mistakes made by the international community in its efforts to rebuild Bosnia that a peremptory, non-consultative approach using "in-and-out" commercial contractors can inhibit the efforts of a vulnerable, war-torn population to get back on its feet. Instead, all assistance to Kosovo should be carefully co-ordinated with indigenous professionals and non-governmental organisations with some history in the province.

(ii) For Yugoslavia

The first and most critical step toward a peaceful, stable Yugoslavia is to get rid of Slobodan Milosevic. Toward this end, it is essential that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia commit all necessary resources to prepare indictments for Milosevic and other top Serbian officials as quickly as possible. It is equally important that the UN assist its Tribunal with the requisite financial backing and support staff, and that NATO and its member states turn over all relevant satellite data and other potential evidence, provide armed escort to Tribunal investigators

where necessary throughout the former Yugoslavia, and otherwise assist the Chief Prosecutor in every way her office deems essential. As in Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO must be the Tribunal's enforcement arm in Kosovo and throughout the former Yugoslavia. As in Bosnia, until the main, named alleged war criminals are apprehended, interned, and tried, extreme nationalists will retain considerable power, elections can never be free or fair, and the process of reconciliation can never get underway. In addition, the international community should work to isolate the regime at every opportunity – suspending contact with the leadership, maintaining economic sanctions and, where possible, seizing the assets of Milosevic and other top Serbian officials.

The international community must now make a far greater investment than in the past to put Serbia on track towards democracy. NATO and its member states, in particular, need to prove to the Yugoslav people that their attacks were indeed directed solely against Milosevic's regime and not against the Serb people. The international community will need to provide financial and technical assistance to democratic political forces, independent media, and academic institutions, lift sanctions against Yugoslavia once a moderate government is in place, and furnish extensive reconstruction assistance to help the country recover from the severe material damage inflicted by the NATO air strikes and by Yugoslav and Serbian forces.

NATO member countries should move immediately to provide substantial relief for the tens of thousands of Kosovar refugees now swamping Montenegro and should develop a comprehensive financial and technical assistance package to strengthen and encourage the democratically elected Djukanovic government in its reformist course. NATO must also hold firm to its security guarantee to protect Montenegro in the event that Milosevic attempts to overthrow Djukanovic.

Ultimately, some form of Marshall Plan for Yugoslavia and the region will be essential to the future stability of the Balkans. The European Union's proposal of a Balkans Stability Pact that would attempt to integrate all countries of the former Yugoslavia into NATO and the EU should be energetically studied as a constructive option. Without some such plan, Serbia may more closely resemble the Germany of the Weimar Republic than that of the post-Nazi Federal Republic. In the absence of a comprehensive, international assistance package designed to propel Yugoslavia into the ranks of emerging east European democracies, we may witness the emergence of an unstable, revanchist political system which could readily fall prey to yet another demagogue who promises to restore Serbia to its "former glory" and to reunite the nation's parts.

(iii) For Albania

Most critical is the establishment by UNHCR and/or the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) of a computerized registry of names of refugees, together with specific details about the districts and villages they came from in Kosovo. Before leaving the province, the majority of ethnic Albanian refugees had all their documentation, including passports, identity cards, and even vehicle registration plates taken from them in order to deny their return to Kosovo as Yugoslav citizens. Many of the homes of these refugees have subsequently been destroyed. It is essential, therefore, that UNHCR organise the collection of accurate and detailed accounts of where these refugees came from before they inevitably become dispersed and the task of collecting this vitally necessary data becomes impossible.

Despite the threat of social disorder if the refugees should remain in neighbouring countries, the refugees should not be moved on to third countries. They should not be dispersed throughout the world, but should stay as close to home as possible, in Albania and Macedonia, so as not to consolidate the results of ethnic cleansing. They should, however, be placed in relatively small, rather than large camps, each accommodating no more than 25,000 people, to take the pressure off local institutions and populations. Their collective presence will also serve as a reminder to the world's print and visual media that their plight must not be ignored, and that they will not suffer the fate of the Palestinians, who, four generations on, are still living in refugee camps. To disperse the Kosovar refugees is an attempt to dilute the problem: to give out the wrong signals, not only to the refugees themselves, but to Milosevic, that the West cannot deal with the situation, that the refugees will not be going home for a very long time, and that, if and when a settlement is ever negotiated, the few remaining in neighbouring countries will trickle back. The international community should instead make clear to Belgrade that all refugees must be allowed to return to their homes in Kosovo and that the camps it establishes in Albania and Macedonia are only temporary.

Whether air strikes are eventually successful or a wider ground war ensues, a peaceful settlement to this crisis remains far off. It is unlikely, therefore, that the Kosovar refugees will be able, or feel safe enough, to return to Kosovo in the foreseeable future. If Kosovo refugee settlements remain a semi-permanent fixture in the Tirana environs, as is likely, then it is essential to plan water and sanitation issues now, ahead of the summer. One immediate concern is the ever-present threat of cholera in lowland Albania, where summer temperatures reach an average of 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and fresh water is scarce. Three years ago, forty people died in a cholera epidemic in and around Tirana. Apart from sanitation, food, and shelter, schools and medical facilities will have to be provided for.

With the KLA actively and openly recruiting from the ranks of the refugee population, close scrutiny should be paid to the activities of the KLA in the Kukes, Krume, and Tropoje districts. In these areas, where the KLA operates openly, the guerrillas have set up road blocks to check incoming refugee vehicles for Kosovo Albanians whom they believe have collaborated with the Serb administration in Kosovo. Some of these people have then reportedly been assassinated.

As KLA members are forced from Kosovo, they will have little choice but to reactivate their campaign against the Serbs from the territory of northern Albania. This is causing great concern to the Tirana authorities, as any escalation of the already serious border altercations will provide Belgrade with the excuse to further attack Albania. On 3 April, the day after the announcement of the new Kosovar "government," the KLA ordered a general mobilisation of all Kosovo Albanians of fighting age who had arrived in Albania.

Pressure should also be put on the Albanian government and opposition forces not to exploit the refugee and Kosovo Albanian political presence in Albania. This situation is volatile enough, with the potential conflict of interests between local Albanians and the large numbers of refugees settled near them. The Albanian political class must be cautioned about the dangers of using the serious divisions in Kosovar political circles to enhance their own political aspirations in Tirana.

Critically, the international community should consider a significant financial and technical assistance package for Albania in light of the fact that it is Europe's poorest nation, its generosity in opening its borders to the Kosovar Albanians, and its having been suddenly overwhelmed by a desperate refugee situation not likely to be alleviated any time soon. Now is the time to begin to lay the foundation for Albania's future political stability and economic growth.

(iv) For Macedonia

Only if NATO remains committed to its security guarantee and additional assistance continues to flow from foreign governments and international organisations will Macedonia be able to cope with the refugee crisis. Without that support, the country will be increasingly strapped economically, and its stability could be seriously threatened by Serb nationalist adventurism and/or the radicalisation of the ethnic Albanian community. Ethnic tensions coupled with anti-Western sentiments could become explosive, and the situation could deteriorate significantly, with unforeseeable consequences both for Macedonia and the region. Even so, it should be made clear to the Macedonian government that an uninterrupted international aid flow is contingent on the government's

maintaining an open border with Kosovo and on the humane and dignified treatment of all Kosovar refugees by Macedonian officials.

Before any new influx of refugees, the Macedonian government should be pressed to allow the OSCE and/or the UNHCR to administer the registration and processing of refugees so that they can be swiftly accommodated without the tortuous delays encountered in the first weeks of the crisis. People should be registered at Stankovac, the first transit camp inside Macedonia, which until now has been run by NATO and UNHCR, rather than at the Macedonian border itself. This will not only expedite the refugee processing, but could reduce the likelihood of violent incidents, such as the shooting last week of a Macedonian border guard from the Serbian side.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia should immediately establish a presence at the border and begin to train OSCE/KVM monitors, UNHCR, and appropriate NGO staff to take testimonies from refugees who were victims of, or witnesses to, alleged war crimes. An inter-agency mechanism should be put in place to coordinate this critical effort, so that unimpeachable evidence can be gathered in an organised, educated, and efficient fashion.

A proper, computerized system for registering and locating refugees must be set up as soon as possible and posted on the Internet.

(v) For Bosnia and Herzegovina

NATO action in Yugoslavia, however welcome, has been a setback for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia. The Serbs of RS have made clear that their sympathies with the Serbs of Serbia are much stronger than their feelings for their fellow citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and no amount of clever propaganda (or truth) will sway them. The policy options available to the international community in RS will remain limited as long as NATO action continues against Yugoslavia. But a number of measures can be taken and are necessary:

- The international community must try to insulate RS from the effects of NATO action in Kosovo. In this regard, SFOR should be advised that, given the heightened emotional climate, it is unwise to needlessly provoke the Serb population. SFOR's recent interdiction of the Belgrade-Bar railway line, for example, which resulted in the death of a local man, would have been better carried out by NATO aircraft. SFOR involvement in the campaign against Serbia blurs the distinction, which SFOR itself has sought to make, between NATO's action in Yugoslavia and SFOR's role in Bosnia.

- SFOR also needs to be aware that a concerted campaign of violence could spring up at any time, particularly in the eastern RS. Measures to forestall such a campaign could easily be counter-productive, since displays of strength alienate the public, but SFOR units will need to be ready to use force at the first sign of armed disturbances. The RS police cannot be relied upon to control them.
- Given the political volatility of the RS in the wake of recent events and the weakening of the governing SLOGA coalition, the international community and the OHR may have little choice other than to accept a change in government for the RS. The SLOGA coalition has done good work, but the forces pulling it apart are quite strong. Dodik's laudable attempts to restore normality to the RS have not captured the public mood, and on the street he is tainted by the perception that he is too pro-Western. Mladen Ivanic is neither a fool nor a puppet and will not let the SDS drag the RS back into international isolation. Still, there must be limits: the SRS must not enter government, and the SDS must not hold key posts such as the ministries of finance or refugees, if Ivanic hopes to obtain any international assistance.
- SRT (the RS Radio and Television network) must be reminded that balanced reporting is central to responsible journalism. If the current bias continues, SRT must be threatened with financial penalties and closure. The people of RS have a right to know what is happening in Yugoslavia, but they also have a right to hear both sides of the story. Recent experience with the population of Serbia, and past experience from wartime Bosnia, suggest that the public simply will not believe any point of view which reflects badly on the Serbs. Nevertheless, the one-way propaganda must at least receive some countervailing views. The recent appearance of OHR spokesman Simon Haselock in a long interview is a welcome step.
- The impact of political or financial leverage at times of high passion is limited, and the Serbs are stubborn under pressure. But it is worthwhile and fair to remind the public that a major aid donors' conference is scheduled for May. Donors will not be impressed if violence and political tension in RS persist. The population and political parties will need to weigh their passions against their own long-term needs for development and international acceptance.

(vi) For the Region

Whatever the outcome of the Kosovo conflict, it is important to acknowledge that after Milosevic's mass expulsion from Kosovo and NATO's intervention to stop him, nothing in the region will ever again be quite the same.

The international community cannot continue to address each successive Balkan crisis in isolation with the goal of finding a quick fix that will enable a quick exit. The consequences of this approach have been disastrous: for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for Kosovo, for Serbia and Montenegro, and for Macedonia and Albania, as well. If it is ever to help to engender a sustainable peace and regional stability, the West must finally begin to conceive of the Balkans as an inter-related whole. It also must recognise the necessity of a long-term international presence there which would be capable of supervising the implementation of carefully reasoned policies that are backed by the credible threat of force.

ICG continues to advocate a comprehensive regional settlement that would include planning for Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, as well.¹⁰ This settlement could take place within the context of a new Conference on the Balkans, a kind of super-Dayton for the whole region. The issue throughout the Balkans is essentially the same, namely how to find a political framework which reconciles the legitimate interests of different ethnic groups sharing the same territory. The solution may be democratisation, but this entails more than just elections. To date, processes that have served to promote democracy elsewhere have largely proved destabilising in the region. Mechanisms tailored to local conditions should be explored, including redesigned electoral systems, regional security and disarmament treaties, the creation of a regional broadcasting network and regional and/or reciprocal commitments to "special measures" to protect the employment, property, educational and other rights of minorities.

Such a co-ordinated effort on the part of the international community, while requiring an enormous initial investment, might preclude having to spend yet another decade putting out local Balkan fires.

¹⁰ See ICG Balkans Report N°47, "State of the Balkans", 04 November 1998.