

KOSOVO: AN EXAMPLE FOR SELF-GOVERNANCE?

1-2 April 1998

Princeton, New Jersey

Conference Summary

A special two-day meeting April 1-2, 1998 at Princeton University under the auspices of the Woodrow Wilson School's Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination brought together experts from Kosovo, Serbia, and European representatives of the UN, as well as some twenty graduate students specializing in problems related to self-determination.

The conference discussed the case of Kosovo as an example for self-governance. Conceptually several degrees of self-governance could be possible: complete independence and classical sovereignty, or maximum autonomy within the existing international boundaries but with great rights, and obligations, for Kosovo. This would also entail becoming a Republic within the remaining Yugoslav federation.

“We ought to prepare for a possible swap between Kosovo or Parts of it and Republica Srpska (RS), instigated by President Milosevic of Yugoslavia,” argued Sonja Biserko. The swap would add the RS—today an integral part of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH)—to Yugoslav, i.e. Serbian territory, and would release Kosovo or part of it to the international community; possibly creating havoc in the immediate neighborhood. To this date, Belgrade has failed to establish official diplomatic relations with BiH and Macedonia, and the new Bosnian-Serb Prime Minister Dodik is to be considered an old Milosevic ally. Obviously, such a solution would destroy the Dayton Accords' objective of a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina and completely redraw the map of Southeastern Europe, particularly of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and also Macedonia.

Mrs. Sonja Biserko, Executive Director of the Serbian Helsinki Committee in Belgrade also found that once the Kosovo case is opened, re-emerging interests of Serbia in parts of Macedonia may surface as well. Veton Surroi demonstrated that to this day, the borders between Serbia and Macedonia, have neither been fully delineated nor implemented. Indicators demonstrate continued interest from Serbian orthodox church in Macedonia. “Only ethnically pure states are secure states” appears to be an accepted assumption in the Balkans, and Presidents Tudjman and Milosevic have fully accepted this dictum. This observation came from Dr. Zarko Korac, Professor of Psychology at the University of Belgrade, and President of UDV. On the other hand, Belgrade will try to just muddle along and gain time, but avoid receiving economic sanctions, while trying to maximize its gain and split of the international community.

Mrs. Sonja Biserko suggested that “economic sanctions” are today indeed a threat taken very seriously by Milosevic and the newly rich marketeers within the FRY – this in contrast to the common understanding that economic sanctions will not work. Mrs. Biserko's assumption is supported by the interest of the regions' and Belgrade's newly rich to legalize and open up their business interests and to gain acceptance in the international community, especially in Europe. They would like to white-wash financial gains from corruption, embezzlement, war-mongering,

and other illegal or shadowy economic operations. Re-imposed sanctions would hinder that and freezing of international assets by Yugoslavs (in Cyprus and even Hong Kong) would hamper if not harm those interests.

As usual, the international community remains in a reactive mode—rather than an anticipatory one: while attempting to solve one particular problem others appear elsewhere in South Eastern Europe. Wolfgang Danspeckgruber argued that “we deal with several realities, with only the most public and burning one being addressed by outside powers.” This demands for a comprehensive approach to effective crisis solution in the Balkans. The channeling, analysis, organization and implementation should be arranged through a clearing mechanism, perhaps based on the Contact Group organization, Danspeckgruber suggested—otherwise even duplication of efforts and/or rivalry among international organizations will be the consequence, and continuous absence of anticipatory strategy. For instance today throughout the area of entire former Yugoslavia, exchanges of territories and properties, population movements, and resettlement continue under the direction from the respective leaderships in Zagreb, Belgrade, Pale and Sarajevo, in order to purify the populations and streamline the territories. Examples can be found in Bosnia, Eastern Slavonia, Vojvodina, Sandjak, and Montenegro. That means that while the international community is pre-occupied with one specific problem—like today Kosovo—in the regional reality, several other dimensions with significant long-term effect develop, warned Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, chair of the Seminar and director of Princeton’s Liechtenstein Research Program on Self-Determination, which sponsored the seminar. Furthermore, other minorities in the region begin to take up the issue of greater self-governance. Examples are the 200,000 Romanians in Serbia, the more than 100,000 Albanians in Montenegro, the Albanians in Greece and Macedonia, and the Hungarians and Roma in Romania.

Veton Surroi, publisher of *Koha Ditore* and member in the negotiation team of Kosovar President Rugova, finds that Kosovo has to have all freedoms, and any discussion about them would be a step back. Only NATO and OSCE but not the UN are desired international instruments to assist Kosovo. The UN’s involvement has proven too cumbersome and ineffective in Bosnia, Russia and China, the permanent members in the Security Council, will be continuously opposed to greater autonomy or back Serbian interests. Surroi insists that the most important first step should be NATO involvement to stabilize the region and avoid further bloodshed. At this point, the Kosovars are not willing any longer to just give up their demands for self-governance—rather they want to fight. And the UCK attracts increasing popular support. Surroi however emphasized the importance to treat the Serbian minority in Kosovo, some 200,000 people, with all respects of accepted international standards. Then a greater Albania including that region, but perhaps also the 100,000 Albanians in Montenegro is a likely consequence and may pose a vital threat to the territorial stability of Macedonia (so far some 15,000 refugees joined their friends and relatives among the more than 25% Albanians in the Macedonian population).

Both Biserko and Surroi demanded an international conference on Kosovo – like a Dayton II. In its absence however, continuous bloodshed may develop until the international community will undertake more specific steps. In view of the latest bloodshed, it appears unlikely that Pristina will accept any limitations to self-government in the area of education, health, even finance

and—increasingly—security. The status of a third republic independent from Serbia but within the Yugoslav Federation is a possibility—Though another cycle of violence and continuing Serb suppression will intensify the drive to complete independence. But the borders with Albania and Macedonia continue to remain uncontrollable as always. It appears that as long as Messrs Milosevic and Tudjman remain in power there will be continuous effort to solidify gains, purify population and stratify borders in the region of the former Yugoslavia.