

Helsinki FILES

No. 20



UNTYING THE KOSOVO KNOT
A Two-Sided View

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Contents:

Editor's foreword: Framework for Talks	7
The author's preface	9

Serbian Side

Vuk Draskovic	13
Goran Svilanovic	20
Dušan Prorokovic	24
Cedomir Antic	28
Milan St. Protic	34
Zoran Zivkovic	43
Oliver Ivanovic	46
Slobodan Samardžic	55
Dušan Janjic	60
Dušan Batakovic	68
Latinka Perovic	75
Zivorad Kovacevic	81
Predrag Simic	87
Svetozar Stojanovic	95
Cedomir Jovanovic	101
Desimir Tosic	105
Mileta Prodanovic	109
Zoran Djindjic	114
Rada Trajkovic	120
Dušan Mihajlovic	125
Bosko Mijatovic	129
Aleksandar Lojpur	132
Ivan Ahel	135
Nebojsa Covic	139

Albanian Side

Bajram Kosumi	145
Hashim Thaqi	151
Ramush Haradinaj	158
Enver Hoxhaj	165
Ilber Hisa	176
Gjergj Dedaj	181
Bujar Bukoshi	188
Edita Tahiri	195
Rexhep Qosja	206
Esad Stavileci	213
Enver Hasani	221
Fadil Maloku.....	225
Belul Beqaj	233
Pajazit Nushi	237
Adem Demaqi	243
Albin Kurti	246
Azem Vllasi	252
Mehmed Kraja	258
Skelzen Maliqi	266

Annex

• Dobrica Cosic - "Proposal for co-existence between Albanian and Serb people"	273
• Miroljub Labus – "Twelve principles for Kosovo and Metohija program"	281
• Group for Kosovo: "The Free State of Kosovo"	283
• The US Institute of Peace: "Eight options for Kosovo"	288
• International Commission on the Balkans: "Kosovo's Final Status"	290
• Contact Group Political Directors visit to Belgrade and Pristina": "Key Messages"	294
• The International Crisis Group: "Executive Summary and Recommendations"	297

Framework for Talks

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia has striven to start an Albanian-Serb dialogue for over a decade. In 1997 in Ulcinj (Montenegro), the Helsinki Committee organized, jointly with the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms in Pristina, the first conference which brought together Albanians and Serbs in the country itself, then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The participants adopted a joint declaration stressing the need to convene an international conference to solve the Kosovo question. The next conference, held in Belgrade at the end of November 1998 and co-organized by the Helsinki Committee, the Kosovo Helsinki Committee and the International Helsinki Federation, dealt with the matter of self-determination. The third conference, scheduled to take place in Pristina in June 2005, is a logical follow-up to the first two, this time inevitably focusing on Kosovo's status. This unquestionably worthy undertaking has the backing of the US Institute of Peace, and we appreciate its recognition that the Kosovo question cannot be solved without the participation of local actors.

Bearing this in mind, the Helsinki Committee has put together a book of interviews with prominent Serbs and Albanians who will be participating in determining the status of Kosovo in some way or another. The book offers an overview of the positions of the two sides to be referred to by the third conference participants in thinking through the future of Kosovo.

The past decade marked by turbulent developments in Albanian-Serb relations has laid down the framework for present Serb-Albanian talks. However, it was the events in Kosovo in the early 1980s that triggered the Serb question and the subsequent coming to power of Slobodan Milošević. The wars that came later were precipitated by the abolition of Kosovo's and Vojvodina's autonomy in 1990. The policy of ethnic nationalism plunged Serbia into international isolation and made its chief advocate end up in The Hague. The tragic events in Kosovo during 1998 and 1999, the ruinous degeneracy of Serbian society and Serbia's wholesale political, economic, societal and moral decline are the results of that policy.

Our recent past and our present are marked by these events; our present task is to prevent them from marking our future too by coming to terms with our haunting memories. The future status of Kosovo has

been determined by these past events and the international community, especially the Contact Group, is quite clear in this regard: there will be no return to the state of affairs existing before March 1999, no partition of Kosovo, and no union with another country or part of another country once the status of Kosovo is determined. It is within this set framework that the Serbs and Albanians must find a solution opening the way for Serbia and Kosovo to Euro-Atlantic integration.

It is hoped that this book and the upcoming conference will encourage the local actors to adopt a more proactive attitude towards their own future. If they do, they will have demonstrated that the local elites have come of age and are ready to take far-reaching decisions jointly with the international community concerning not only the Albanians and Serbs but the whole region and, I should say, Europe.

Sonja Biserko

The Author's Preface

The idea to publish a book of interviews with Serbia's and Kosovo's prominent politicians, public figures, scientists and intellectuals (both Serbs and Albanians) dealing with the problem of Kosovo's future status occurred to me two years ago. My intention was to find out whether leading Albanian and Serb politicians and others who influence public opinion in both environments have modified their positions and thinking on Kosovo since June 1999. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia has made this book possible as part of its project 'Belgrade - Pristina: Steps Towards Confidence-Building'.

When I started the book at the end of November 2004, with help from my colleague Dragan Banjac, I was confident that I would have no problem finding interviewees because both Serb and Albanian representatives appeared very keen to solve the Kosovo problem as soon as possible and eager to make what contribution they could to this end.

However, things did not work out this way and the job in hand took almost six months to complete. But surprisingly the principal political actors in Kosovo and Serbia who are chiefly responsible for solving the question and who talk about Kosovo all the time were precisely the ones who did not want to answer our questions, judging by the various excuses given by their closest associates. Such an attitude is least expected from persons of their rank and profession. For this reason, this book does not include interviews with the heads of top state political institutions in Serbia and Kosovo and of leading political parties in Serbia.

In planning the book, I decided to ask each interviewee a set of identical questions in addition to others varying according to his or her office and profession. However, some of the interviewees, such as Desimir Tošić and Čedomir Jovanović, supplied their own texts. The book also includes a number of interesting texts from a panel discussion on Kosovo's status published in the daily Politika in November and December 2004, as well as several concrete proposals by individuals and groups from Belgrade and abroad.

There is also the author's 7 February 2003 interview with the former Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Đinđić, broadcast in the VOA Albanian-language news programme Ditari on 14 February, a month

before Đinđić was assassinated. I included it in the book because in it Đinđić tried to break the impasse over the Kosovo question.

I am also publishing an interview with Ramush Haradinaj, president of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo and former Kosovo Prime Minister (now in the Hague tribunal detention unit), which he gave on being elected Kosovo Prime Minister Designate at the end of November 2004.

I avail myself of this opportunity to thank the interviewees for their consideration and their contribution to the efforts to solve the Kosovo question.

Fahri Musliu
Belgrade, May 2005

SERBIAN SIDE

**Vuk Draskovic:
More than autonomy, but less than independence
- a formula with two meanings**

1. Mr Drašković, what is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

For me, a Serb, Kosovo is and will go on being what it was in the past: the cradle of the Serb state, spirituality, culture, epos.

2. What is your view of the situation in Kosovo, do you accept the newly-created reality since 1999, and what do you make of the contention of certain circles that Kosovo is lost for Serbia?

My hope is that a new reality is in place. In the past, we've seen two extreme political positions. Milošević's extreme position was: either Serbia's full sovereignty and power over the whole of Kosovo and Metohija, or death. The other, Albanian, extreme position was: either Kosovo and Metohija's complete independence from Serbia, or death. These two extreme positions had only one point of contact, namely death, and death indeed was what befell both Albanians and Serbs. The new reality commands that Kosovo must have a new status, not the one it had before 1999, and that we must make every effort - Serbs and Albanians, Belgrade, Pristina, and the international community - to hammer out a new humane and, above all, European status for Kosovo.

3. There are two positions on Kosovo: Serb and Albanian. Do you envisage a compromise between the two peoples at present?

If there is no compromise, the two peoples will have no future. The past ought to teach us what to do in the future. Both Serbs and Albanians ought to draw a moral from a trait they have in common: in the past, both have sought to exploit the circumstances brought on by international developments to fully or largely deny the rights of the weaker side. As the historical circumstances and cycles alternated, the weaker side often gained the upper hand only to succumb yet again - and both suffered. The time has come for both Serbs and Albanians to understand that we're living in the twenty-first century, that a new entity we can already call the united states of Europe is being established across a huge area stretching from Portugal in the west to ever new boundaries in the east, that Europe is not and cannot be built upon the eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century independence projects, but on the interdependence of states, nations, cultures, and markets. We must understand that once we're part of Europe, we shall both have to relinquish part of our sovereignty and devolve it to the organs and institutions of the European Union.

4. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved then? You've put forward a few proposals yourself. The Serbian government has ideas of its own, so can you explain to me what the 'more than autonomy, but less than independence' formula means within that framework?

'More than autonomy, but less than independence' is a formula which has a twofold content, an internal and, tentatively, an external one. The internal content of this new status of Kosovo, according to this formula, is that Serbia and Montenegro recognizes the reality that Albanians live on some 75-80 per cent of the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, that our state and national interests are not to control the life and organization of the Albanian people, but to ensure that the rights of the Serb people in Kosovo and Metohija, who are a minority people in Kosovo, as well as the rights of other non-Albanians are fully protected according to European standards and at European level. This means guarantees from the Kosovo Government and Parliament, the European Union, and the United Nations of full protection of Serb rights: the right to life, freedom of movement, the commitment to rebuild everything destroyed between 10 June 1999 and today such as houses, churches, monasteries, cultural monuments. This also means maximum decentralization of power on the territory inhabited by Serbs, where local government would be in charge of schooling, first-instance courts, education, health care, with pilot projects operating in those islets called enclaves, such as Goraždevac, Velika Hoča, the upper part of Orahovac, Gračanica, the villages in the Kosovo Morava valley, Štrpce, and so on.

As to the external content, we demand guarantees from the European Union and the UN Security Council for the present status of Serbia and Montenegro's frontier with Albania and Macedonia. While this frontier cannot be changed and renamed, it must be a true European frontier in that it should exist on maps and in documents but not in practice, being open as a symbol of a Kosovo which is equally open in every direction.

We'd also like the so-called internal boundary of Kosovo with SCG [Serbia and Montenegro] to be invisible on the ground, we'd like an open Kosovo to be a bridge of cooperation and reconciliation throughout the region. We want every citizen of Kosovo to have the right to decide with whom to associate in the spheres of politics, culture, commerce, business, education, whether with Serbia, with Albania, with Macedonia, with Montenegro, or simultaneously with Serbia, Albania, Montenegro.

I think that such things will be determined by people's interests and that thanks to this formula the Albanian population of Kosovo and Metohija will want a free access to Serbia and Montenegro above all in an economic sense.

5. In effect, this means an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia and/or the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. There is however one practical question: how can such a state function with, say, two

million Albanians refusing to live according to Belgrade's dictate, considering that [Kosovo] is the least developed part in the region with an enormously high birth rate? Could that state function normally in such circumstances?

This new status for Kosovo is no status dictated by Belgrade - the position of our state on the matter is quite clear. Second, how come South Tyrol is able to function? I've talked with people from the European Union who believe that the arrangements in South Tyrol might somehow be grafted onto Kosovo's new status. On the map, South Tyrol is a part of Italy; in practice the Austrian majority in South Tyrol has full sovereignty and affirmative action is taken to protect the Italian minority there. The arrangements work perfectly. Thirty years ago, people died every day, bombs were planted, and the relationship between the two states was a disaster. All of a sudden, a solution was found which worked well, and it has worked perfectly well especially since the creation of the European Union.

Your question was about what the Albanians want. But what about what the Serbs want, considering all that Kosovo means to the Serb nation in a historical sense? Where the Serbs are concerned, Kosovo was not just any piece of land, it is a special place to them, and I think that our Albanian friends ought to acknowledge this all the more so because we have absolutely no desire to challenge their full power over the huge territory of Kosovo they inhabit.

You raised the question of the birth rate. This appears to be the key issue and I think that the responsible Albanian politicians in Pristina must give much thought to the fact. The present situation of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija is tragic, but if Kosovo and Metohija were to become independent, I could give you a hundred reasons why in that case the situation of the Albanian people in Kosovo and Metohija would be the most tragic of all. Why? The proclamation of an independent Kosovo could only be against the will of the Serbs and Serbia. I know what would happen next: such Serbs as remain in Kosovo and Metohija - and there are very few of them left there indeed - would leave Kosovo and Metohija; there would probably be a new 'Berlin Wall' between Serbia and Kosovo; another dangerous Serb national myth would be launched and people would be awaiting a historic chance to liberate their Holy Land. The relations between Serbs and Albanians would be deeply poisoned, the relations between Serbia and Albania would be burdened by the unilateral violent proclamation of Kosovo's independence. The Kosovo Albanians are a young nation, an exploding nation, I think that some 80 per cent of them are unemployed at present. Neither the European Union nor the UN can go on dipping into their coffers to support an economy, a state which has no real chance of survival, so there'd be huge problems among Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija itself.

Let us now consider what Serbia and Montenegro and the international community advocate, that is, a European status for Kosovo,

an open Kosovo. Its borders would be on the map, their names the same as before, but they would not be there in reality. The whole of the western Balkans would join NATO and the European Union. It has been calculated that two years after joining NATO Serbia would have a shortage of manpower of some 400,000. There are projects according to which we shall have an absolute shortage of all professions. Serbia and Montenegro is a bridge between Europe and Asia, a bridge between the Adriatic and the Balkans, between the Balkans and the Russian markets. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia will also be short of manpower. We and the Albanians from Kosovo lived in one state for seventy years; if we forget the ugly moments and focus on the fact that we knew each other outstandingly well, we shall come to the conclusion that in their search of job and profit most Albanians will gravitate towards the countries of the former Yugoslavia, above all towards Serbia and Montenegro. Those seventy years in the joint state mean that most Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija have a better knowledge of the situation in the Slovenian economy and a better knowledge of Slovenian companies, let alone those in Serbia, than companies in Albania. So, all this is in support of what we advocate.

6. So, in effect, you are against Kosovo's independence, that's what you propose. But when it comes to concrete talks, what final solution would you advocate, would it be a conditional independence, a confederation with Serbia and Montenegro, a union? How do you personally envision such talks?

These talks, arrangements will proceed in two stages. The first will concern the implementation of democratic standards and the substance of this new status; in the second, we shall try to give a name to this new substance, this new status. This seems logical to me, because the child must first be born then christened.

A number of combinations are in circulation, that is, conditional independence, controlled or monitored independence, limited independence. Internal sovereignty has also been mentioned, but I'm not overly concerned about the name, I'm interested in the substance and its implications. There's so much in the world that we do not know. I'm not drawing a parallel between Kosovo and, say, Puerto Rico, but a solution has been found for Puerto Rico. Its name is Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, although it is a state it is not called so, it is Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Its citizens serve in the US army but it is not represented by a star on the US flag. It is not a member of the UN but has its flag, a coat of arms, a full array of state organs. I wish to point out again that South Tyrol is the best European model for the substance about to be created in Kosovo.

One thing is certain: the crucial understanding regarding all these talks must be that everything will be dealt with through dialogue and nothing by force. If you go to Belgium, the country in which the European Union has its seat, you will be surprised by some arrangements which have

been in operation there for one hundred years. Although people have been saying for the past hundred years that these arrangements are not the best, no one has ever attacked or killed anybody else there; these arrangements are often not logical, with Flemings enjoying sovereignty in their areas and Walloons not being able to use their language, and vice versa. Such are their arrangements and they work, they have joint institutions, but local self-government is above central government.

7. Who would take part in these talks: would they be between Belgrade and Pristina in the guiding presence of the international community, would a decision be taken by the Security Council without any other extensive talks, or would a decision perhaps be taken at an international conference as has occasionally been the case?

To begin with, I think there must be a purely Serb-Albanian dialogue in Kosovo itself. A dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The dialogue between Belgrade and Tirana has fortunately got off to the best possible start and been established at the highest level. Two months ago, Tirana was visited by [our] foreign minister for the first time since 1948, and I'm expecting my Albanian colleague here in Belgrade soon. I think I have a lot to show him here: I told him that the building which symbolizes Belgrade is called 'Albania', that one of our central streets is named after Shkoder, that the most attractive quarter of Belgrade boasting our national restaurants is called Skadarlija, that we Serbs and Albanians have much more in common than our differences and disputes suggest, that playing down our similarities and playing up our differences has been our common mistake. Our histories are similar, our myths, customs and songs are similar and it is natural that they should be so. I think that these talks will end in success if the people participating in them embrace the principle of not looking for a mote in another's eye while failing to see a beam in their own.

8. Now that you've raised the possibility of talks between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo itself, one has the impression that the Kosovo Serbs are not all that independent, that they receive their instructions from Belgrade and that they are even afraid to join the self-governing institutions in Kosovo, let alone start talks with the Albanians.

They are, above all, frightened and concerned about their future. A man deprived of his basic human rights including the right to freedom of movement is like a slave, and there are many Serbs in Kosovo in that position, especially those in the so-called enclaves. Take for instance the deplorable and tragic situation of those in Orahovac who can't visit the cemetery 300 metres away and whose children go to school under KFOR escort, let alone the terrible position of those who remain in the towns and are forgotten. Of the nearly 40,000 Serbs who used to live in Pristina, I don't believe that more than one hundred remain. One wouldn't have thought that the principle of chivalry, that is, protecting others from oneself, was once strong in the tradition of the two peoples. We've failed to live up to our tradition.

9. Are they waiting for clues from Belgrade? They say they can't do anything without Belgrade. I've spoken to them and many say that.

I don't think there's anything incomprehensible about their desire to have the support of their mother country. I believe that the only clues they'll receive will be for them to take part in the dialogue, in all kinds of dialogue, in working groups, institutions of government, and that agreements and talks are not to be obstructed in any way.

10. How much are the Albanian political structures and the Albanians themselves to blame for failing to ensure a sufficient Serb presence and to help Serb return to Kosovo?

This is the key question and the key responsibility. What if, after 10 June 1999, the Albanian political leaders had taken a leaf out of Willy Brandt's book and said: Our Serb brothers, our neighbours, Slobodan Milošević's gone, he was our and your greatest evil and enemy, the obstacles and the gulf between us is gone, you have no cause to run away from your homes, you'll have your protectors in us, your neighbours and friends. I think that the talks about Kosovo's status would have been concluded long ago.

11. I think, Vuk, that the talks about Kosovo would have been over in no time if Belgrade had a courageous political elite, politicians who would settle the matter at a stroke. Seeing that things are going ill with Serbia and that it must integrate, they ought to convince their people that Kosovo must be recognized as independent on certain conditions. By doing so, they would show the world that they are a democratic government and can solve the matter themselves.

There is no country in the region which will say that an independent Kosovo is the solution. I've already given you the reasons why. A cancer-like source of permanent instability not only in Serb-Albanian relations but in the whole of Western Balkans and, I dare say, in the region of south-eastern Europe cannot be a solution.

12. Why call such an independence a cancer in the whole of the Balkans and Europe in advance?

Simply because the answer is summarized in two principles: principle one - international democratic standards must be implemented; principle two - the UN Charter must be respected. The UN Charter is very clear: a sovereign state cannot be proclaimed on the territory of an internationally recognized state without the consent of that state, that is, the state on whose territory the new state is coming into being - such a thing has no precedent for absolutely justified reasons. Serbia will sign no document proclaiming another state on part of her territory.

13. Can democratic standards for Kosovo can be made to work and would it be necessary to amend UN Security Council resolution 1244 in any way?

What is there that cannot be made to work? There are eight standards, each consisting of ten principles, their gist being that there

cannot be first-rate and second-rate citizens and that ethnic cleansing and racially-motivated persecution cannot acquire legitimacy.

14. Why do the Belgrade authorities encourage parallel structures in Kosovo, in the enclaves, at the same time when the former structures of the former government which used to operate in Kosovo are being financed in Serbia? Can Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo at all?

A life together of Serbs and Albanians is possible in Kosovo because it must exist. There are no parallel structures in the enclaves. But there's something else: the northern part of Kosovo comprising the municipalities of Northern Mitrovica, Leposavić and Zubin Potok was not historically part of Kosovo, and it was only in 1957 that it was incorporated in the province by decision of Petar Stambolić and the then leadership of Serbia for reasons best known to themselves. Serbs are the majority population in that part. The Serb National Council for Kosovo and Metohija represents only these municipalities, and unrightfully and without basis at that. I consider that document illegitimate because it leaves out three-quarters of the territory comprising the enclaves. That is a selfish act for which I see no excuse at all. A short while ago, I was speaking about the epic and historic importance of Kosovo to the Serbs: all that is located in central Kosovo and Metohija, not in northern Kosovo. Zvečan is only mentioned in the epic where Kosačić Ivan counts the Turks on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo. The Albanians are acquainted with the Kosovo epic too. The Patriarchate, Dečani, Prizren...all that lies outside northern Kosovo and very few Serbs remain there. When those who want to return do so, there'll be just enough Serbs there to salvage the multiethnic relations in the area. The Albanians will constitute the vast majority there too, but they'll be able to show Brussels and the whole world that the Serbs who live in their midst are the best bridge of cooperation and reconciliation of the two nations.

SCG Foreign Minister, SPO President, writer

Goran Svilanovic: Kosovo will be a state

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

My associations with Kosovo are very personal: I was born in Gnjilane where I spent the first seven years of my life; until I went to university, I spent every school vacation there with the large family I had there. All of them have moved out now. The last ones to remain emigrated after the outbreak of Albanian violence against the Serbs on 17 March 2004.

2. What is your view of the present situation in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality there. How much truth is there in the contention of certain circles that Kosovo is de facto lost for Serbia?

Yes, I certainly accept the new reality in Kosovo. It is true that one should not expect any connection between Kosovo and Serbia in future other than good-neighbourly relations, but to build such relations will require a lot of courage on the part of politicians among both Serbs and Albanians. Kosovo will remain important to Serbia for two reasons: first, the Serbs who live there, provided they're still there after the change of status; second, the vast national wealth, the churches and monasteries. As to the first, I'm not an optimist and while I should like to be proven wrong, I'm afraid that the Serbs inhabiting the enclaves other than those in the north will find it very hard to remain and go on living there after the change of status. The Albanians themselves are not making it any easier for them, what with the constant incidents they've been provoking over the years. So, I'm afraid they're going to move out. As to those in the north, I believe that they will stay in their homes, though I'm not sure that they will accept the Kosovo institutions as their own central institutions. There will be lots of problems in this regard.

3. Albanians and Serbs continue to look upon Kosovo in two different ways. Do you foresee a reconciliation and a historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

There will be a reconciliation between people and between the nations, I have no doubts about that. But I don't think that there will be a compromise solution, I believe that Kosovo will have a new status, it will be a state.

4. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved? (Please state your views in some detail)

Kosovo's status ought to be solved by the end of 2006, along with the other statuses in the western Balkans I consider unresolved. I'm referring

to the non-workability of Serbia and Montenegro and the non-workability of Dayton Bosnia. Anyway, I believe that new constitutions must be adopted to supersede those based on broad agreements that merely 'fixate' a situation such as the end of the war in Bosnia, the end of the conflict in Macedonia, the cessation of tensions between Serbia and Montenegro (The Dayton, Ohrid and Belgrade agreements will of necessity give way to constitutions which will take the countries concerned towards European Union membership). As to Kosovo, I think that the concepts of independence and sovereignty will be separated. I reckon that Kosovo will become independent of Serbia before the end of 2006 in order that, as early as 2007, it and the other western Balkans countries may enter into negotiations with the EU. But I don't think that it will become sovereign under international law; what is more, I think that it would be more useful to put off international recognition until the moment Kosovo enters the EU. In the interim, the institutions of Kosovo's society ought to be rendered operative. At present, they are not functioning. In the north, I think it will be necessary to apply a formula I'd call 'Ohrid-plus', providing for a degree of decentralization giving the local Serbs guarantees that they can stay in their homes. Regarding the enclaves, they too need a very high degree of decentralization modelled on the Ohrid agreement, something I'd call 'Ohrid-minus', or simply a new Ohrid agreement. The difference between these two solutions lies in the fact that the north relies on Serbia completely, so there must be guarantees to ensure that its communication with Serbia is very strong and very simple. The possibility of Serbia being able to exert an influence in the spheres of education, health care, and so on will be highly significant. Also, what is needed is a local police force as an additional encouragement to the Serbs to stay where they are.

5. If you were to sit on a delegation negotiating the final status of Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to accept: independence, conditional independence, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro, or some other solution?

I think I have answered this question already.

6. In what way should the question of Kosovo's status be resolved: by talks between Pristina and Belgrade in the presence of the international community, by a decision of the Security Council, or at an international conference?

I'd expect a more vigorous involvement on the part of the EU. Because it is the true future of the Balkan peoples, I'd like to see it intervene with greater resolve in the status-definition process and insist in particular on the new or old-new states being able to meet the Copenhagen membership criteria. The role of the EU is of crucial importance, the association process providing the impetus for the Balkan peoples and their states to reform. The EU should exercise its influence to a greater extent. However, as we've seen so far, it's Washington who's been cutting knots of this kind. So far as the Security Council is concerned, it will merely verify the new situation,

the new status, in a second stage when everything is clear. The best thing to my way of thinking would be for the Contact Group member countries to take part in the dialogue, and I would also suggest that our neighbours at least put in an appearance because, whatever final solution it turns out to be, they will have to live with it just as we do.

7. Why is Kosovo's independence unacceptable to Belgrade and could Serbia function as a normal state with Kosovo as its part, given that the overwhelming majority of Albanians do not want that?

It's too late now for such questions. Serbia cannot function with Kosovo as its constituent part. It has not functioned that way since 1999. You can't turn the clock back.

8. Why do Belgrade politicians keep using Kosovo to notch up political points by manipulating Serbs?

They will go on doing this, at least for a few more years. I've already stated the reasons why. The fact is, some 70,000 Serbs still live there, and another fact is, some of the most important cultural and historical monuments of the Serb people are in Kosovo. What is perhaps less significant but still relevant is the fact that some 600,000 of Serbia's citizens have their origins in Kosovo.

9. What role can Belgrade and the Serb political representatives from Kosovo play in working out the final status?

Belgrade's active participation in the dialogue and in decision-making on Kosovo's new status is of crucial importance. I'd like the key international actors - in the case of Kosovo, they are the EU and the US - to pursue a policy of constant involvement and engagement of Belgrade rather than its isolation. It is better to have Serbia's representatives at the table even if they disagree and oppose the decisions. As to the Serb politicians from Kosovo, Belgrade's destructive policy is making big problems for them by keeping them away from the institutions of Kosovo's society all the time. I'm referring in particular to those who represent the Serbs in the enclaves, because unlike those in the north, they do not have Serbia's direct assistance and support. At present they are deeply disappointed with what Belgrade is doing, that is, constantly avoiding participation in some processes and also prohibiting them in one way or another to take part in them. But then, each time Belgrade realizes that things are going to move on in spite of its boycott, it demands a place at the table. As it turns out, the decision to take part in the various processes always comes late, causing ever greater frustration in Belgrade and especially among the Serbs in Kosovo, who want to participate but get no support from Belgrade. A case in point is the drafting of the Constitutional Framework for Kosovo which Belgrade at first boycotted: when it was finally realized that the framework was going to be adopted all the same, Belgrade submitted its amendments which arrived too late to be taken into consideration. The Kosovo Serbs saw all this and felt they had been duped. Similarly, Belgrade is currently withholding its support to the

local Serbs to go to the polls and take part in the Kosovo Government's decentralization pilot projects. Yet another source of discontent among the Serbs, in Belgrade, and especially in Kosovo, is the failure on the part of international partners to stick to deals. One such agreement was reached over two years ago with [Hans] Hakkerup to set up a body comprising representatives from Kosovo, Serbia and UNMIK to monitor the situation in Kosovo. These are the things which work against the Serb politicians in Kosovo, they rob them of the support of their local voters, and they constantly undermine their credibility.

10. What should the Albanian politicians and the Albanian population do to get the Serbs to return and participate in Kosovo's institutions and political life?

The violence, incidents, provocations must stop at once; the entire Kosovo Albanian political elite must play a leading part in this regard, especially the government but other politicians too. They should show a much greater commitment in their work with both Albanians and Serbs. They should provide an example to boost the confidence of the Serb population of being able to live in Kosovo in security and peace with its neighbours after the status is defined.

11. Can Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo at all?

I'm not an optimist. The outcome of the wars attendant upon the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia - the formation of the Slovene nation state of Slovenians, the Croat nation state, the Serb nation state, the Macedonian-Albanian nation state, the Bosniak-Serb-Croat state - reinforces my conviction that, once its status is determined, Kosovo will be a nation state of Albanians with a negligible minority population. The break-up of the SFRY did not result in either multiethnic or civil states, merely in nation states tolerant of national minorities (under considerable international pressure at that).

12. Can the standards for Kosovo be made to work at all and would it be necessary to amend UN Security Council resolution 1244 in any way?

No, these standards are not feasible. If you interpret them in a certain way, you'll find that even the much more developed Western democracies cannot put them into practice. By the same token, interpret them in another way and already in a year or two there'll be someone saying that they have been fulfilled. As to the resolution, it will be amended at the very end of the process of defining Kosovo's status, probably after Kosovo has been functioning under its new status for some time.

Former SCG Foreign Minister, Serbian MP

Dusan Prorokovic:

A solution the like of which is not to be found anywhere in Europe!

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

My very first association on hearing the word 'Kosovo' is the word 'cradle'. Yesterday, today, tomorrow - Kosovo has always been and will be for me the cradle of Serb statehood, Serb spirituality, Serb culture. The Serb people are not unique in this regard because other European peoples have their cradles too. In the past, the political problems occurring at some time or other did not result in Kosovo's detachment from the rest of Serbia, so this must not happen in the future either. For all the problems, Belgrade must treat Kosovo in a special way.

2. What are your views on the current situation in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality there? How much truth is there in the contention of certain circles that Kosovo is de facto lost for Serbia?

I simply cannot reconcile myself to the promotion of mediaeval values. What does a newly-created reality mean? That because a far greater number of Albanians than Serbs live in Kosovo at present Kosovo ought to become independent? The task of the political elites must be to strive for the obliteration of borders to bring peoples much closer together rather than separate and alienate them. Those who want to use population and demographic criteria in order to draw new borders and create new states ought to be reminded that many European states have special regional, territorial wholes populated by ethnic groups in which they exercise their rights, for example the Basques in Spain, the Irish in Ulster, the Swedes in Oland, the Austrians in Trentino-Alto Adige, the Serbs in Republika Srpska. I don't see why a different set of criteria should be applied to Kosovo, all the more so as the 'newly-created' situation is a result of ethnic cleansing, among other things. You cannot lay the foundations of statehood on ethnic cleansing and crime.

3. There are two contrary positions on Kosovo: Albanian and Serb. Do you see any possibility of a reconciliation and historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

I've already said that the political elites must do everything in their power to bring peoples closer together rather than separate them. The present century will no doubt see further continental integration, probably the formation of an all-European security system and an all-European

diplomatic service. The Serbs and Albanians must make their contribution to this goal.

4. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved? (Please state your views in some detail)

The final negotiated solution will at all events be an original one. I see it as a broad autonomy for Kosovo and Metohija within a Serbian framework. There are no two identical solutions in the various parts of Europe. I think that Kosovo can have an independent administration for its economic, commercial, traffic system. I think that Kosovo can take part in sports and cultural events in the same way that Scotland does as part of Great Britain. I think that Kosovo can manage its own economy, education, health care. But again, one wonders what purpose would all that serve. Kosovo just cannot function as an independent economic entity. This is impossible in view of the fact that the interdependence of national economic systems in the region increases every year, with states jointly solving the question of traffic corridors. But I just don't see how the security question can be solved. Kosovo has in the past six years established itself as a region having the largest narcotics 'commodity reserves' in Europe. I fully doubt that the Kosovo police force or any other local security formation can solve the problem. The crime emanating from Kosovo and undermining the security of all countries in the region is something both Brussels and Strasbourg will have to get to grips with.

5. If you were to sit on a delegation negotiating the final status of Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to accept: independence, conditional independence, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro, or some other solution?

The solution will largely depend on the course of the negotiations themselves. One need only recall Dayton and Ohrid to realize that forecasts are a thankless task. The thing the chief decision-makers in Belgrade cannot accept is an independent Kosovo. As far as I am concerned, full or conditional independence are out of the question. To be sure, Kosovo may become independent without Belgrade's consent. Needs must when the devil drives. However, I think that solutions which are not to Belgrade's liking can create new problems in the region and set back the integration of the western Balkans into the EU.

6. In what way should the question of Kosovo's status be resolved: by talks between Pristina and Belgrade in the presence of the international community, by a decision of the Security Council, or at an international conference?

Of course, the best solution would be to settle everything by agreement between Pristina and Belgrade. However, in view of all that has happened, a common stance can hardly be hammered out without the verification of an international factor. There are a number of international institutions involved in the 'Kosovo process': the Contact Group, EU-US-NATO, Security Council, Council of Europe, OSCE. But when all is said

and done, no decision on Kosovo's future can be taken without the UN Security Council. If for no other reason, because resolution 1244 is still in force providing the basic legal framework within which Kosovo functions today.

7. Why do the Belgrade authorities want Kosovo to remain a part of Serbia, given that two million Albanians are opposed to that, Kosovo is extremely poor and has an enormous birth rate? Could Serbia function as a normal state under such circumstances?

In effect, your question was: Why does Belgrade want Kosovo to remain within Serbia given that the Kosovo Albanians will never accept Belgrade's sovereignty over the area? This question raises a number of others: Did the UCK come into being as a formation fighting Milošević, or did it fight for Kosovo's independence?; Was Serbia later bombed for violating fundamental rights of Kosovo Albanians, or in order that Kosovo may become independent? Milošević's gone, so if Kosovo is given a broad autonomy and remains within Serbia, its institutions will be able to look after human rights on its territory independently. If the Kosovo Albanians' real motive was the struggle against Milošević, the desire to protect their human rights and the desire to regain their autonomy, then the Albanian political elite has fulfilled its mission. But if the object of their struggle was to gain independence, then we're dealing with a radically different situation. Belgrade is quite naturally interested in settling every problem in Kosovo. The million and a half or so unemployed constitute a welfare time-bomb threatening the whole region, so we must address that question together.

8. What is your explanation of Belgrade's position that Kosovo should get more than autonomy but less than independence? Would that not be a return to the 1974 Constitution, the one the Serb authorities criticized the most and then destroyed?

The 1974 Constitution was the product of another era and a different set of circumstances having little in common with the present situation. I'll try to explain what 'more than autonomy but less than independence' means by way of an example. Republika Srpska is an entity within Bosnia-Herzegovina. What does that entity represent in constitutional-law terms is hard to explain. The entity has the attributes of a confederal unit, a federal unit, a provincial administration depending on how you look at it.

9. Can Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo, and what do you make of the proposals to split Kosovo into two entities?

Along with the return of internally-displaced persons, the question of decentralization is a most pertinent one. However, decentralization does not have to entail the division of Kosovo into two entities. Talking of decentralization as a mechanism to protect minority ethnic communities in Kosovo, I rather incline to the idea of giving the local units of self-government the status of legal condominiums in the way that the District of Brčko operates within the constitutional order of Bosnia-Herzegovina

and Republika Srpska. For instance, as a legal condominium, Štrpce should be able to choose whether the autonomous administration in Pristina or the state administration in Belgrade should have the main say in running the local health care and welfare services.

10. Do the Kosovo Albanians have any plans for the Serb community within an independent Kosovo and what should they do to get the Serbs to participate in Kosovo's political life?

The question of trust is by far the most important one. What the Albanian political elite must do - other than enabling return and substantial decentralization, to be sure - is to stop radicalizing Kosovo-Metohija public opinion. I can't wait to see who'll bear the political responsibility for Kosovo's failure to become independent. People who have been promising an independent Kosovo to the voters for the past twenty years are still active on the political stage in Pristina. Instituting the principle of political accountability is a test of a society's maturity and its democratic order.

11. Why does official Belgrade continue to use the Serbs in Kosovo for its own ends? What would be the role of the Serb representatives from Kosovo in determining the final status and in which delegation is their place?

In view of the fact that in the last six years there have been just under one thousand ethnically motivated terrorist attacks against the Serb population in Kosovo and Metohija (cases of arson, stoning, blowing up buses, brutal murder...), do you really think that the political representatives of that population need telling what to do?

12. Can the 'standards for Kosovo' be made to work and would it be necessary to amend UN Security Council resolution 1244 in any way?

Liberty of movement, freedom of speech, the right to work are not unattainable standards, they are norms of the European civilization's heritage and are respected, as a matter of course, in all normal environments. The failure on the part of the provisional institutions in Kosovo to ensure respect for such elementary rights and freedoms means that Pristina's democratic potential is low, not that the standards are set too high.

Senior DSS official, President of the Serbian Parliament's
Council for Kosovo and Metohija

Cedomir Antic:

Kosovo can be independent, but the Serbs should be given independence too

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

Kosovo and Metohija are territories measuring just over ten thousand square kilometres, constituting one of Europe's most densely populated and most underdeveloped regions. In Kosovo and Metohija two major Balkan peoples, as well as two religions and two cultures, come into contact. Also, Kosovo and Metohija is home to some ten diverse ethnic communities. Kosovo and Metohija is part of the collective identity of the Serb people, the 'cherished land of our Middle Ages', as Jovan Skerlić put it. Today, Kosovo and Metohija is the principal source of ammunition for all in Serbia who uphold conspiracy theories: the region is the only place in Europe where you can redraw borders legally and persecute national minorities with no major holds barred. Kosovo and Metohija will be a major problem in our peninsula in the years to come. The only viable solution, therefore, is a historic Serb-Albanian agreement.

2. What are your views on the current situation in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality there? How much truth is there in the contention of certain circles that Kosovo is de facto lost for Serbia?

A sense of reality is a chief prerequisite of a successful policy. While it is true that Kosovo and Metohija is today independent of Serbia, it is also true that it is not politically and economically independent. Also, it's a fact that without assistance from Serbia Kosovo and Metohija would soon become monoethnic, after all its Serbs have left to escape poverty, isolation and persecution. At the moment Serbia has no comprehensive program for Kosovo and Metohija; there's only the Serbian Government's plan, backed by the National Assembly, to ensure that the local Serbs have a status, though this would be much less than the Albanians had in 1974 and rejected as insufficient.

3. There are two contrary positions on Kosovo: Albanian and Serb. Do you see any possibility of a reconciliation and historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

A historic agreement between Serbs and Albanians (not between the Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija and the Albanian Government of Kosovo and Metohija) is the only road to a permanent and just settlement. On that road, the Serb political elites must rid themselves of their preoccupation with the past and their obsession with formal sovereignty; the Albanian

political elites for their part must cast off their hegemonic ideas and stop exporting crises because they cannot deal with the internal problems of their society (for instance, the 2000 crisis in Preševo and Bujanovac and the 17 March 2004 pogrom in Kosovo and Metohija).

The problem is, most Serb politicians are not overly concerned either about the rights of the Kosovo and Metohija Serbs or the rights of the state; their only concern is that once the crisis is over they'll no longer be able to manipulate Kosovo and Metohija, and that the citizens' anger at the bad solutions and the continuing suffering of the Serb people may prove fatal for their careers. On the other side, most Albanian politicians are aware that the independence demand is the only factor of cohesion on their political scene. Remove the Serbs and Serbia as an enemy and you may have internal tension and maybe even armed clashes in the years to come.

4. Would you, a person whose opinion is valued in Serbia, be prepared to apologize to the Kosovo Albanians for all they have been through in the last hundred years under the various Serb regimes?

When Willy Brandt went on his knees in the Warsaw ghetto, he made the gesture in the name of a people whose regime had kept Jews in concentration camps with the intention of exterminating them. The Jews never kept Germans in concentration camps, they did not round them up and killed them, they did not burn their national and cultural monuments. I belong to a people which officially accounts for 10 per cent of the population of Kosovo and Metohija, but whose members account for between 20 and 25 per cent of the victims of clashes and pogroms between 1998 and 2004. I am thirty years old, so I was old enough to witness the persecution of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija in 1981, and I also saw Mr Rugova avoid meeting Zoran Đinđić in 1998, having been rather in a hurry to shake hands with Slobodan Milošević only three months before. In 1999 my friend Ivan Milošević from Leposavić, aged twenty-four, was captured wounded by the OVK [UCK] and cut to pieces. The father and uncle of my acquaintance Mr Voštinić were employed as slave labour in the house of an OVK commander in Dragobilje; today, he doesn't even know where his father's grave is. From 1999 to 2004, which was a period of peace, 914 Serbs were killed in Kosovo and Metohija. Incidentally, had the Albanian politicians in Kosovo and Metohija not been immersed in their dreams of a great state to the exclusion of everything else, the Milošević regime would have been brought down as far back as 1992 or 1993 with the help of thirty or so of their MPs, and a balance of forces would have been established in Serbia similar to that in Macedonia. The victims of those politicians were not only Serbs but Albanians too, just as Serbs were among the victims of Slobodan Milošević. If you think that an apology would mean anything to someone in Kosovo who has lost his nearest and dearest, I am prepared to apologize personally to each of them although I did not contribute to their grief. For collective apologies are pointless and, in this

case, even mutually offensive. What would your reaction be if I were to ask the Albanians to thank the Serb state for the prosperity it brought them during the 20th century: democracy (the 1921 St Vitus's Day Constitution was passed thanks to the Džemijet party deputies), emancipation (the first Albanian woman graduate attended a Gymnasium in Kosovo and Metohija), education (the largest Albanian university in the Balkans was founded in Pristina), national pride (the main international celebration of the centenary of the League of Prizren in 1978 took place in Pristina not Tirana). Anyway, at the time the alleged persecution started (which you erroneously date to 1904 instead of 1912), Serbs made up 35 per cent of the population of Kosovo and Metohija and 25 per cent of the territory north of the Shkumbi River in Albania. Today there are almost no Serbs left in Albania while in Kosovo and Metohija they account for only some 5 per cent of the population.

5. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved?

I see a solution in moderation and readiness for historic agreement. The thing to do is to institute a dual sovereignty over the area and to gradually correct the administrative boundaries until they become entity boundaries based on geographic and ethnic principles. Later, if the two peoples come to an understanding, these boundaries could be turned into state frontiers.

6. Is Serbia today a hostage to Kosovo, and why does official Belgrade continue to use the Kosovo Serbs to further personal and party interests?

First of all, I can't help noticing that your question is in the form of a comment. In view of their wording and bias, are your questions any different from those which appeared in *Politika ekspres* in 1999 and the *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1934, other than stemming from different ideological and ethnic motives?

Now to answer your question. Today Serbia is a hostage to the Kosovo and Metohija Albanians of its own choosing. Unprepared to face the future, Serbia continues to service their 1.4 billion dollar debt, with nearly a quarter of a million of those long-suffering and persecuted people still possessing passports issued by the FRY 'aggressor' - in return for which Serbia can pay wages in five Serb municipalities and some ten enclaves in the region. Since 1989 no one in Serbia has made political capital out of Kosovo and Metohija and I don't believe that the local Serbs are being used; rather, I think that the roles have been reversed and that Serbia is being used today. But the blame attaches not to the Serbs or Albanians, but primarily to official Serbia.

It seems to me that the Albanian politicians in Kosovo and Metohija are rather disoriented. The trouble seems to stem from their belief, shared by many Serb politicians, that many political and economic problems would go away once Milošević was got out of the way, or if the Serbs were driven out. There are, of course, people in Serbia and in the north of Kosovo and Metohija who are drawing financial benefit from the present situation

in the province. Some of them occupy high-ranking political positions, so the 'special' budget for the province and the chaotic situation there is grist to their mill. All the same, the clout these politicians wield is not decisive. I think that under the present circumstances the Serb community has no future in an independent Kosovo and Metohija.

7. Could the Serbian government's decentralization plan for Kosovo be implemented in the rest of Serbia?

No. There is no crisis in majority-minority relations in the rest of Serbia, and besides Serbia's international status is defined and recognized. However, it seems to me that the this question, as well as the one about whether an individual should apologize to a collectivity, masks an intention to avoid a solution. It was for the same reason that in 1992 the Socialist deputies in the Serbian National Assembly asked why Great Britain should not become a confederation and why California's Mexicans did not have the same rights as the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija. The best way to avoid a solution is to change the subject or make a mockery of it. As soon as they are given Preševo and half of Bujanovac, Albanian politicians and their friends will first dredge up the Albanians driven out of Niš and the surrounding countryside by 'Serb fascists' in the 19th century, then the poor Illyrians whom various 'barbarous Nazis' pushed back from their historical borders on the Danube. Sadly, for some reason certain NGOs and various committees with leftist leanings are very prone to thinking in terms of the national and racial rhetoric of extreme rightists.

8. What is the Serbian Government's position on an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia and what jurisdiction would the province have?

Kosovo and Metohija would be given a status similar to Bavaria or Catalonia; it would have full jurisdiction over its education, culture, economy, independent courts up to the level of the Serbian Constitutional and Supreme Courts, an independent police force, and NATO troops on its territory. Jurisdiction would be shared in the domains of foreign policy, defence, joint judiciary and internal affairs, and some customs and tax affairs. In short, Kosovo and Metohija would have greater autonomy in relation to Serbia than the Kosovo and Metohija Serbs in relation to Pristina, though these two relations would be interlinked.

9. Do the Kosovo Serbs have any ideas about their status in an independent Kosovo?

The Serbs' opposition to an independent Kosovo and Metohija is based on many things, especially the pogrom of 17 March 2004. I think that the establishment of an independent Kosovo and Metohija is possible on condition that its borders are corrected; after that, the minority question could be solved by reciprocal recognition of the enclaves' cultural and educational autonomy.

10. Are the Kosovo Serbs ready to give up their parallel institutions, that is, their institutional links with Belgrade? Under what condition might they do that?

There are no parallel institutions in Kosovo and Metohija. There is one army (NATO, that is, KFOR) and one police force, the taxes are collected by the provisional institutions, the central institutions and the local self-government institutions were elected independently of Serbia. If education and health care services are parallel institutions, and if the payment of Kosovo benefits is detrimental to the interests of the Albanians, then it means that their interests are either that the Kosovo and Metohija Serbs should go or die of hunger.

11. Would you be prepared to recognize Kosovo's independence? If not, state your reasons. What do you think is the right approach to solving Kosovo's status?

Personally, I am prepared to accept that the Albanians are entitled to self-determination and an independent state, but I also expect that they give the same rights to the local Serbs. I think that the Serbs and official Serbia should realize that an early settlement of Kosovo's status is in their best interests, as well as bear in mind that no solution will bring rapid progress and an end to misunderstandings. I believe that the worst thing that could happen would be for either the Serbs or the Albanians to feel completely dissatisfied with Kosovo's new status. An autonomous Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia would facilitate the settlement of the question of Serb and Albanian enclaves and bring greater stability especially to the economic situation in the region. Anyway, there should be no obstacles to an independent Kosovo and Metohija on condition, of course, that the Serbs in northern Kosovo and the Kosovo Morava valley are given the same rights as the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija - the right to decide their own future. Although the enclaves and the minority question will continue in existence, such things will not carry as much political weight as before and could therefore be solved reciprocally.

Such a solution will acquire its legitimacy from the democratic will of the citizens living in Kosovo and Metohija. The legitimacy would rest on a historic agreement of the two peoples and their right of self-determination, rather than on the boundaries drawn by an international commission in 1913 or a dictatorial regime in the aftermath of the Second World War.

12. In case there is an independent Kosovo, what should be the future relations between the Kosovo and Metohija Serbs and Belgrade? Would Belgrade be willing to accept a 'conditional independence for Kosovo' and under what conditions?

The Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija should not be separated from Serbia. If Kosovo and Metohija becomes autonomous, their relationship with Belgrade will be the same as that of the Preševo Albanians with Pristina. If Kosovo and Metohija becomes independent, the borders should be corrected in the independence agreement and the enclaves remaining on both sides must enjoy identical very broad minority rights.

Belgrade is raising the Kosovo question only now; from 1923 until 2004, we merely dealt with the consequences. This is why all this is so difficult. For decades past all our politicians have been able to do was defend the state of affairs of the day however bad (even the present situation), their stock excuse being, 'things could get worse...'. Conditional independence is a possibility, but Belgrade has some way to go before this sinks in. However, independence is necessary for the Kosovo and Metohija Albanians, not Kosovo and Metohija itself.

13. Are there any preconditions for starting final status talks, who will be taking part in them, and which delegation would the Kosovo Serbs belong to?

Both sides must reach maturity in order to be able to negotiate. In Belgrade, parties such as G17+ must prevail which are aware that a postponement of solution is not in our interests and that the present situation is unsatisfactory; the Albanian side must be willing to jettison its great-state idea and give the Serbs the same rights the Albanians have been insisting upon over the years. I think that the successful arrangement from Dayton ten years ago should be applied. So, the Serbs would be part of the Serbian delegation, the negotiations would be about status for the two peoples and the region, and any issue could be mooted. The third negotiator would be representative of the UN (especially the US and EU).

14. Can the 'standards for Kosovo' be made to work and would it be necessary to amend UN Security Council resolution 1244 in any way?

The standards are feasible but the provisional institutions are incapable of implementing them. If Pristina were to become independent under the present circumstances, a multiethnic Kosovo would be a distant possibility. Resolution 1244 is a reality which stems from war; it could be substituted with greater success only by a new reality resulting from a historic agreement between the Serbs and Albanians.

High G17+ official and doctor of historical science

Milan St. Protic

The entire Balkans needs an international trustee

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

This is a large and oppressive topic: oppressive historically, oppressive politically, oppressive both in the past and at present and, so far as I can see, oppressive in future. I try not to let my feelings about Kosovo and Metohija or some of its parts weigh on my mind, for my family too has its origins in Kosovo: my wife was born in Prizren, her father's from Sredska municipality, I have connections with Kosovo too. But I try not to look at all this from a personal angle, I try to see the reality of it. In political life, as well as in daily life, such kind of subjectivity is a poor ally and it can lead a man astray. So, I try to look at the question of Kosovo and Metohija from as sober an angle as possible.

2. What are your views on the current situation in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality there? How much truth is there in the contention of certain circles that Kosovo is de facto lost for Serbia?

Let us consider these two questions separately: One concerns the actual state of affairs in Kosovo and Metohija, the other its future status or its relationship with Serbia. It was a long time ago that I came to the conclusion that the main problem of the central Balkans - which Westerners erroneously call 'Western Balkans' - is the lack of comprehensive emancipation. This absence of economic, cultural and other progress gives rise to a host of problems which weigh heavily on the central Balkans and on Kosovo and Metohija more than on other parts of it. This is a general problem: this very low general intellectual level in all these regions obstructs an acceptable, modern and, shall we say, European civilized solution for Kosovo and Metohija and for other relations in the Balkans. On the other hand, the question of Kosovo and Metohija is a much more regional affair than the Serb-Albanian question. It seems to me that the Kosovo Albanian leaders and especially Belgrade have found themselves in a trap, in that they keep convincing themselves of the correctness of their own way of looking at the matter while being incapable to grasp the wider issues such as security in the central Balkans as a whole. Kosovo is less and less Serbia's problem and more and more an issue whose settlement, whatever form it takes, will reflect on Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and, indirectly, on the other countries in the region - Bulgaria, Greece. To my mind Kosovo is an example par excellence and should best be addressed as such, rather than seek to resolve Belgrade's and Pristina's differences of opinion

and opposing positions. I think that's where the solution to the Kosovo-Metohija problem resides.

Let's assume for the sake of argument that Kosovo has become independent and Serbia has agreed. Next, let's consider the consequences of that in the Balkans. What would be the future relations between the two Albanian states which share a rather long frontier and whose populations spill over in both directions? Would Albania and Kosovo unite? Who could prevent that? Are there any mechanisms at all to prevent such unification? In what way would the situation in Kosovo reflect on Macedonia, which would border on two Albanian states, one in the north and the other in the west? If Serbia and Montenegro go their separate ways, which is a foregone conclusion, a very long eastern frontier with Albania and Kosovo would pose a problem for Montenegro. These problems are much bigger than meets the eye. I've been of the opinion all along that representatives of all the peoples and states likely to be affected by Kosovo and Metohija's new status in this way or that ought to participate in its solution. The way the matter's being dealt with at present - between Belgrade, Pristina and the international community alone - the solution will least have to do with Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija themselves.

3. There are two contrary positions on Kosovo: Albanian and Serb. Do you see any possibility of a reconciliation and historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

I think that the political elites throughout the Balkans are in thrall to one fundamental misconception, namely that national interests are best served by creating nation states and that a nation state is the ultimate achievement of national development. This belief tends to ignore all the other elements of the process of national emancipation. The political elites of all the Balkan peoples are slaves to this ancient fallacy because they are immature. The Serbs are no exception and, in all probability, stand out from all the rest in this regard: after all, haven't we in the last ten years been force-fed a steady diet of empty words and hackneyed phrases to the effect that the Serbs are entitled to their own state? But one wonders what kind of state that would be. Being a historian, I'm in a position to give you a pertinent example: the Serbs from Serbia started two uprisings to rid themselves of the Turks and create their own state. But then, in 1830, after Serbia had become a principality and independent in all but name, the charges and levies, the attitude of the authorities became unbearable, the citizens revolted against their own state and uprisings broke out one after the other. The ordinary Serb peasants, who then made up 90 per cent of the population, resisted their own state with greater determination than the Turkish state, and it was only after a full fifty years that they came to terms with it. The state they'd fought for, their state, made them pay high taxes and levies, conscripted their sons into the army, pushed up the price of just about everything and made them shoulder a much heavier burden.

Back in those days, people were often heard saying, 'We aren't that lucky to return under Turkish rule.' Every single uprising from 1835 until 1883 was politically rather than economically motivated and the last, the Timok Uprising, was put down by blood. It was our Serb government, then, that put down in bloodshed the revolts of its own citizens against their own state. This is an episode from our history we seem to have forgotten. The others have not been through this, so once they start building their own national institutions, independently from a foreign power they perceive as an obstacle, they'll come to realize how hard this is. I've often said that if Pristina University were to offer better education than its Belgrade counterpart, I would advise my children to learn Albanian and go to study in Pristina. But apparently my Albanian and other friends have never been overly concerned about the quality of schools their children attend. What mattered to them most was that the University of Pristina should be able to mobilize fighters for the national cause, to educate an 'Albanian elite' to step to the head of a movement fighting for an independent Kosovo. But this is not what a university is for, its job is to teach mathematics, biology, chemistry, communication...I was very interested to know which part of the Belgrade curriculum the Kosovo Albanians objected to at the time and I discovered that it was history, geography and, for some reason, music, the last having always been somewhat of a puzzle to me. As to the rest accounting for - shall we say - at least 80 per cent of the curriculum, they had no objections. For my part, I fault Serbia's entire educational system: I think that the curricula are outdated and sketchy and that our children go to bad schools. But the fact that none of this seemed to bother the Albanians tells us rather a lot. They didn't mind their children being taught mathematics, physics, chemistry or biology according to the out-of-date Serbian curricula; the only thing that mattered to them was that their children should be taught their history, their geography, their music - the rest was of no importance. This is where the problem lies. I wish we could sit down together some day - though I don't think this will be possible in our lifetime - to talk about the kind of schools we'd like our children to have, how we in Belgrade and Kragujevac and they in Pristina and Prizren would like to live, what kind of roads, schools, hospitals we should build, how to teach our children world languages and what's best in the world's cultural heritage for them, what foreign practices to adopt, what kind of theatre they in Pristina and we in Belgrade would like to have. As long as we stay entrenched in our own backwardness, we shall remain indifferent to the quality of our old people's homes or whether or not most of us wash themselves and brush our teeth. I was appalled to read in some paper or other that the annual per-capita toothpaste consumption in Serbia is one tube! Now, that is a problem too. Things like the state framework, who's in power, whether Serbs will be exploited by a fellow Serb and Albanians by a fellow Albanian no longer matter all that much. Why, we had a taste of this under Milošević who treated us worse than any occupier that ever

ruled us! I fear that the Kosovo Albanians are going to go through this and discover for themselves how cruel their own people can be once they are in power. When this process of national coming of age is over, we shall be on the right road. This question of borders, sovereignty, recognition...keeps us in Serbia and them in Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia, Montenegro from marching along that road. As to the toothpaste thing, it's the same all over the place and probably not much better in Romania and Bulgaria either. Emancipating the whole region to develop its own identity is our job. I wouldn't call it European, that would be too amorphous. The European cultural model is a broad topic; besides, it may have narrowed over the years so there's no more room in it for Plato, Shakespeare, Thomas Aquinas, Dostoyevsky, Alexandre Dumas, Alberto Moravia...I'd like all of us in the Balkans to embark on a road of true European emancipation so I could go to Pristina to see a superb rendition of a Strindberg play. Or to visit Skopje and hear its phenomenal violinist play Haydn's music. But this is unthinkable even for us in Belgrade. The only thing which binds us together is our common primitiveness. Why is it that we all fall for entertainment of the most vulgar kind, such as the newly-composed commercial folk songs called 'turbo-folk'? My friend Veton Suroi once told me that Albanian children watching Serbian TV broadcasts of cheap Spanish series were asking their parents to teach them Serbian so they could read the titles. This is a humiliation for both us and them. I'd be happy to know that some Albanian children are learning Serbian because they want to read Meša Selimović and Ivo Andrić, whose works rank among the world's finest, rather than because they want understand the titles of some trite Mexican soap on TV. During our parallel talks sometime in 1999 with the late Fehmi Agani, Veton Suroi and Gazimend Pula, I always insisted that we change the subject. I always insisted that together we should rise above the circumstances, that Serbs should stop ruling Albanians and Albanians Serbs, and that we should find a common language as to how to emancipate our peoples - that done, we shall inevitably draw together. But as long we have pot-holed roads and primitive populations we don't want to emancipate, things will go on being as they are. If people start thinking for themselves, there'll be no armies, we won't have any more characters walking about stirring up villagers and casting votes on their behalf. This is a problem those who want power will have to deal with.

4. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved then?

I believe that for quite some time we in the Balkans will have to live under some sort of overt or covert protectorate; whatever its form, we shall certainly have to be watched over by someone and we probably deserve that. To my mind, having a guardian and being under heightened surveillance is insulting; but the conduct of the Belgrade government, both in Milošević's time and now, tells us that we need a guardian. And, so far as I can see, both Macedonia and Kosovo need a guardian too. In the final analysis, integration with Europe looks to me as some kind of

guardianship. Even if we become a full member, we shall still be under a guardian. They're never going to regard us as their equals and perhaps we are to blame for their attitude. There's one more thing I think at least we on the Serb side ought to point out, though this may not be the right moment to say it, because it might later be taken advantage of. To the Western powers, which stuck to their colonies right up until the Second World War or, in some cases, as late as the 1960s, Serbia is another colonial power loath to part with Kosovo and Metohija. Having had to give up their own colonies (many of which later became independent states), they don't see why Serbia should not follow suit and give up Kosovo and Metohija whether or not this would be historically justified. Their logic is roughly as follows: if we, the big ones, had to give up our colonies (the English India and the Spanish the whole of South America), what right has this small tribe of warlike and violent Serbs to keep a colony of its own, and in Europe at that? In other words, we must be aware of their attitude towards us in spite of the fact that the situation here is different and, I dare say, their way of thinking is not based on historical fact.

The overwhelming majority of the population of Kosovo and Metohija does not want to be ruled by Belgrade any more. We might perhaps discuss the matter in terms of comprehensive emancipation both in Kosovo and in Serbia. I think that Kosovo and Metohija will remain under an international protectorate though its status may not stay the same, it may evolve through successive stages. But international representatives will have to stay in Kosovo in the foreseeable future to hand over power to local organs of government in a process that will take some time. Otherwise, there will be a whole range of questions to answer, for example: if Kosovo becomes independent, what happens if the parliaments in Pristina and Tirana vote on a union? Something like that could throw the whole process in the Balkans into disarray and the foreigners are aware of the danger. The Europeans will stay in Kosovo another few decades playing an ever diminishing role in decision-making; but stay they will in a sort of umbrella capacity to make sure the status quo stays in place.

5. If you were to sit on a delegation negotiating the final status of Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to accept: independence for Kosovo, federation, confederation, union...?

I would insist on a tripartite Balkan conference on Kosovo involving the international community, Belgrade and Pristina. This thing, which I've been saying for a long time, is frowned upon in Belgrade and I have been accused of internationalizing the Kosovo question. Anyway, I'd be happiest if we in the Balkans could come to an understanding about certain principles, certain standards for the whole region rather than standards for Kosovo alone. If we all could reach agreement on such principles as to which direction to take as a region, what our relations should be and on what foundations they should be built, than we could find a solution

for Kosovo. This ought to be decided by the representatives of Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Serbia, Romania. We ought to sit down and find out what is it that we want. The question of Kosovo's status is important only in a symbolic and rational sense; otherwise, it is not crucial, just as the question of Serbia's status is not. The problem is, what would such a creation, such an entity have to offer its citizens in the way of fundamental principles and could we in the Balkans build them into a charter expressing our common aspirations? Kosovo's status could then follow from such a common statement. It's all very well to say 'We want into the EU', but does it mean anything? It's an empty phrase, so you might just as well have said 'I want to be seen knocking about with the coolest guys in town' or such like. Such an utterance is devoid of substance. Our true aim must be to enlighten and emancipate ourselves; this done, we shall be accepted by those who have achieved this as a matter of course. If we are admitted into the EU tomorrow, does that mean that we shall become better overnight? Or, at the risk of appearing unmannerly, are we going to wash out feet more often? My friend Alex Rondos, former foreign minister Papandreou's adviser, and I worked on such a Balkan platform, with Nadezhda Mihailova also thinking along these lines. But unfortunately I've found no one in Belgrade to discuss this with. But there are still people among the Kosovo Albanians and in Macedonia who are willing to search for common values, who aspire to a common future. We and the Albanians must start building - well, I wouldn't want to use a cliché like bridges - we must realize that the others exist too. After all, they have the same needs, doubts, fears, hopes, ambitions as we do. There are children over there too who go to school, like playing football, dream of seeing Disneyland. We must start talking to each other like normal people, aware that although our past has seen injustice, death, murder, destruction, we can't let this thing go on for ever - picking up where we left off will get us nowhere. There's an episode I still remember: Vesna Pešić, Gazmend Pula and I were on our way to a conference in Athens, waiting at Belgrade airport for our flight. But the flight was cancelled. Vesna asked me if I wouldn't mind driving and I said no. Pula was standing not far off. When I called out to him and told him to come along, he gave me a blank stare, then asked: 'You sure?' 'Wouldn't be right to leave you or anyone else behind, would it?' was the natural reply.

6. Who is going to solve Kosovo's status: Belgrade and Pristina with international mediation, or the international community with help from the UN Security Council?

I think that the big powers are going to settle it among themselves. There is, however, the problem of putting this across to the public and probably they're not going to say this in so many words. I figure that the matter is going to be dealt with by the Contact Group on one hand, because it is a European issue par excellence, and the United States on the other, though the latter seems to have been losing its interest in

Kosovo especially since George Bush came in. This doesn't mean that the Americans won't be there, only that they won't be running the show the way they did at Dayton and Rambouillet. The onus is on the Europeans to show how mature they are, to assume responsibility and work out a phased solution. This is no time for a final solution though in some ten or fifteen years there'll probably be one.

7. Why is Kosovo's independence unacceptable to Belgrade? Could Serbia function as a normal state with Kosovo as its part, in view of Kosovo's extreme poverty and enormous birth-rate, as well as the fact that the overwhelming majority of Albanians do not want Belgrade in such a role?

We're dealing with the legacy of Milošević's policy which Koštunica hasn't cast off. This explains why there's been no substantial move in the right direction. The thinking not only on Kosovo but on Serbia remains the same. After the 5th of October we failed to make a big step forward and make a clean break with a disastrous policy. I was among the people who insisted that we wipe the slate clean in the domains of both home and foreign policy and make a fresh start. We had a chance because we weren't weighed down by the things Milošević had done in Kosovo, we were his opponents and therefore we had a chance to establish communication with the Kosovo political elite. No one could have accused us of persecuting and displacing Albanians, of murdering them...There were things which could have made communication possible. When once I met Veton Suroi, after all that had happened, I was somewhat worried what his reaction would be and whether he was going to vent his resentment on me - but he didn't. After all, people communicate even after bigger wars, so we have no choice but to communicate.

8. Does Belgrade continue to use the Kosovo Serbs? Having no uniform position of their own, they seem to be wandering from one centre to another in search for guidance, say from the Serbian Prime Minister to the President?

This is plain as day. It'll bring the Kosovo Serbs no good. As in Milošević's day, the Kosovo Serbs are being used as a living bulwark to be sacrificed in order to prove how anti-Serb the Kosovo government is. Such things as could be solved are not being solved on purpose! The principle is: the worse things get, the better. The worse off the Kosovo Serbs are, the stronger Belgrade's arguments. Some of the Kosovo Serbs have fallen into this trap. They are not experienced and strong enough, and Belgrade is incapable of formulating any coherent policy. Actually, Belgrade has no policy at all. Take for instance 17 March of last year: they (the government) blazon it as symbolizing the sacrifice of a nation and keep returning to it in a sort of morbid way. One would have thought that they're glad that it happened, that they relish cataloguing torched and wrecked Serb places of worship, even that there should be more of that to bolster their case. You can't build a policy on a misguided concept of national interests,

gloating over the misfortune of others; we shouldn't be forever counting our casualties to prove that we got the worst deal of all, nor should the Albanians be doing that. That way, we'll never get to understand each other.

9. What role do you think Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs should play in solving Kosovo's status? Should the Kosovo Serbs sit on the Belgrade or Pristina delegation?

I don't know. I don't think that the Kosovo Serbs are mature enough and have the right political posture. True, they represent the local population which is very small, but they just don't know what they want. All those questions of decentralization, cantonization and so forth are unrealistic. If the Serbs were to be given cantons, then the Albanians in the three southern Serbian municipalities (Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa) would have the same rights - so where would that take us? Or take Haradinaj, for example, all that clamour that he be charged by the Hague tribunal. He was charged in the event and he turned himself in peacefully even before the indictment was unsealed. Now Belgrade is saying that Haradinaj mustn't be allowed to remain at liberty during his trial, although it insists that the Serb indictees who have surrendered voluntarily should enjoy precisely this privilege. Is anyone going to take us seriously if we keep on applying such double standards? Unless we adopt the same standards in respect of all, we shall merely be repeating Milošević's mistake of applying one set of standards to ourselves and another to others. That just isn't on. It seems to me that Belgrade bases its policy on the belief that it can lead the whole big world up the garden path, as if the people sitting in Brussels don't see through its game. You can't put a fast one over on somebody who's twice as experienced and wily as you. Otherwise, I don't think highly of Ramush Haradinaj and I don't believe he's without a blemish, but the move he made left many people open-mouthed.

10. Can Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo? Who ought to apologize to whom for the atrocities committed in the recent and distant past?

A life-together will be possible only after the one as well as the other environment is sufficiently emancipated. I'm not for apologizing, I don't hold with false apologies and all that. We ought to start building joint principles. As to kneeling down, Willy Brandt didn't go down on his knees as early as 1946 but in 1976 or thereabouts. We must get busy doing healing work in our respective environments. This is a lengthy process but we must do it ourselves: we Serbs must heal ourselves, Albanians themselves, Croats themselves, Bosniaks themselves...There isn't going to be a life-together for some time: it's like when you separate two children sitting next to each other in the classroom who can't help fighting; but later, when they enter secondary school, they can be friends if they want. For the moment, I wouldn't insist on things against people's will; rather, we must

start to reform ourselves and respect the other side. At the moment we may not love or understand them, but let us at least respect them.

11. Do the Kosovo Albanians have any plans concerning the Serb community within an independent Kosovo?

Quite frankly, I think the Kosovo Albanians have no solution for themselves, let alone the Serbs. Give them all the power they want and make them independent tomorrow, and they still won't be able to do much without foreign aid and foreign advisers. When, under Tito, they enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, they drew assistance from some regional development fund, but that didn't seem enough. The opening of alternative Albanian schools under Milošević was an inevitable outcome but not necessarily good. Those schools weren't good and their children paid a high price for that. Though admittedly they served a purpose, one must have real, good schools where pupils will be given marks according to merit rather than ethnicity. This is a problem the Albanian elite will have to address. The criteria should be set by the very best among Albanians and Serbs. The English- and Spanish-language instruction criteria should be set by Veton Suroi, not because he is our and my friend, but because he has full command of these languages.

12. Can the standards for Kosovo be made to work and would it be necessary to amend UN Security Council resolution 1244 in any way?

The resolution is a compromise reached at a time when it was necessary to stop the bombing campaign. I doubt that it could be used as a basis for future arrangements in Kosovo. It features the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which has meanwhile ceased to exist. The Security Council is reluctant to replace a resolution even where the political situation has changed. I don't think that clinging desperately to this resolution would do much good. The relations on the ground are much more complicated and intricate than they were six years ago when the resolution was drafted. International relations have not the force of laws and constitutions. Besides, what does international law stand for? A resolution is not a law. A resolution is voted upon by fifteen states, five of which have veto powers - this doesn't look very democratic, does it?

(Christian Democratic Party official
and doctor of historical science)

**Zoran Zivkovic:
Division first, independence
for the Albanian part next**

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

It's a problem.

Unfortunately, during the past few decades Kosovo's history has been marked by unsolved problems and nothing else. While there is no doubt that the Serb historical legacy in Kosovo is the result of an important period in our past, the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries will go down as a period of great suffering among the citizens of Kosovo and Metohija - Serbs, Albanians and others.

2. What is your view of the situation in Kosovo, do you accept the newly-created reality since 1999, and what do you make of the contention of certain circles that Kosovo is lost for Serbia?

The present situation in Kosovo is the product of the traditionally bad policies of Serbian and Albanian political elites pursued during the past sixty years. None of the politicians concerned with Kosovo has done anything to facilitate the solution of the problem - on the contrary. The present reality in Kosovo is: a land drenched in blood, a population brimming with hostility - and there's no hope of something changing in the foreseeable future. Those who argue that Kosovo and Metohija are lost for Serbia are unfortunately right. There have been many good opportunities during the past half-century for a settlement in Kosovo and Metohija, the best of which were squandered by Milošević.

3. Albanians and Serbs continue to look upon Kosovo in two different ways. Do you foresee a reconciliation and a historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

The historical experience of the two peoples tells me that a reconciliation and historical compromise are impossible. The divisions and hostilities are very deep-rooted and the intellectual minority, which exists on both sides, lacks the strength to change anything.

4. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved then?

A division of Kosovo and Metohija would be the most equitable solution to the problem. It would verify the historical reality that the two peoples can live next to each other but not together.

5. If you were to sit on a delegation negotiating the final status of Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to accept: independence, conditional independence, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro, or some other solution?

The only final solution for Kosovo and Metohija is first to divide it, then to give the Albanian part independence; all the international standards will, of course, have to be respected.

6. In what way should the question of Kosovo's status be resolved: by talks between Pristina and Belgrade in the presence of the international community, by a decision of the Security Council, or at an international conference?

The international community is an abstract notion, its correct definition being the 'centres of decision-making'. Whatever methodology is applied in dealing with a political issue, the bottom line is that the final decision is mostly the work of the State Department and the European Commission. Sad but true...

My hope is that these two decision-makers will take heed of the positions of the Albanian and Serb political elites.

7. Belgrade wants an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia. Could Serbia function as a normal state with the poorest region having the highest birth rate as its part, with two million Albanians opposed to the idea?

No, it's not possible for a variety of reasons. The position of some people in Belgrade that Kosovo and Metohija must remain part of Serbia is the worst example of 'rhetorical patriotism'. Such a position can lead to no solution. Division and then independence for the Albanian part of Kosovo is Serbia's ultimate state and national interest. This is the best choice that's left, however bad: Milošević has already squandered all the better ones.

8. Is there a political elite in Serbia which would be willing to recognize Kosovo's independence in return for specific guarantees for the local Serb community, so that Serbia could overcome this greatest obstacle to its development and European integration?

I'm sure that most politicians in Belgrade think along these lines but are afraid to say so publicly because of the 'rhetorical patriotism' I've already mentioned.

9. Why does official Belgrade go on using the Kosovo Serbs? What role should Belgrade play in settling Kosovo's status? Which delegation should the Kosovo Serbs sit on?

I don't think that Belgrade's communication with the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija differs in any way from Budapest's communication with the Hungarians in Serbia and Romania, and Tirana's communication with the Albanians in Kosovo, Macedonia and Greece. The natural place of the Kosovo Serbs is in the Belgrade delegation because the question of Kosovo and Metohija is not only a question of human rights but the ultimate state and national question.

10. Can Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo, and who ought to apologize to whom for the wrongs inflicted in the distant and recent past?

Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija can't live together because they have never lived that way, only side by side. Serb and Albanian quarters, Serb and Albanian town districts, Serb and Albanian streets have existed there for centuries.

If today we were to start apologizing for the wrongs inflicted in the distant and recent past, many generations to come would be preoccupied with just this and nothing else.

11. What is your view of the attitude so far of the Kosovo Albanians and their political elite towards the Serbs? What should they do to encourage Serbs to return and integrate with Kosovo's political life?

The policy of the Kosovo political elite has much in common with the policy of Slobodan Milošević. One of the reasons is that they both graduated from the same Kumrovec political school and earned diplomas in political hypocrisy. The only difference is that the Albanian politicians are going to achieve their political goal.

12. Can the standards for Kosovo be made to work and is it necessary to replace UN resolution 1244?

Resolution 1244 ought to be replaced with a new resolution defining a feasible political objective, which is a division of Kosovo.

Former Serbian Prime Minister and Democratic Party official

Oliver Ivanovic:
Mutual obstructions cannot solve problems

1. What does Kosovo mean to you today?

No one has asked me this question before, so I find it very difficult to answer. I was born here, I live in a certain way and I think in a certain way - in general, we all share this way of thinking though you probably wouldn't take me for a local on the strength of my enunciation, my diction's not quite typical. Attachment to land - not as arable land but as territory - is perhaps strongest among all the Serbs here in Kosovo. The residents of Belgrade, Užice, Bor are not as strongly attached to their respective towns as are the people from Kosmet attached to Kosovo and Metohija.

Kosovo and the Kosovo problem are the biggest problem not only of us who live here but of Serbs in general wherever they live. The sense that I'm at the focus of the problem and that I could help somehow places me at the centre of things. This accounts for everything I have done since I went into politics five years ago.

2. As it went through its phases the problem had different implications for the community of Yugoslav peoples, but somehow it always appeared to be chiefly Serbia's problem. Has it transcended this framework of recent years?

I was never a purely Serbian problem. You may recall that it was a Slovenian problem too, it was everybody's problem for various specific reasons. It reflected on both those who wished nothing but well and wanted to help, and those who used Kosovo to solve some of their own problems (in Slovenia's case, for example, the question of status). The failure to solve the Kosovo problem has implications for the entire region. I heard the president of Germany's SPD party say recently that the bad situation in Kosovo was telling on the region and even had certain repercussions in Germany itself. Looked at objectively, this is Europe's biggest problem affecting its south-east in particular. The previous, Milošević's government tried to treat it as an internal problem in spite of the protestations of all in the world that it had long been internationalized. It definitely became internationalized on the arrival of the international mission and will stay so until a final solution is found, if at all, in the foreseeable future.

3. What is your assessment of the situation in Kosovo at present and what does the expression 'factual state of affairs' tell you?

To begin with, I'm new to politics and this is my advantage. I'm not weighed down by past experiences. They limit and distort your outlook

and make you use strong words in expressing your feelings and emotions. Too much emotion is bad in politics; some yes, but it mustn't show.

Second, some people from Kosovo are playing upon the emotions of others to bring out their fears or aggressiveness; their tearing at open wounds is the most sordid business in all this. Fear is a bad and irrational guide, aggressiveness and euphoria too. Although I am a very emotional man, I don't let my emotions get the better of me. Those who can't make a rational assessment of their and their opponents' strength ought not to engage in politics. Today we're in a position to engage in politics in a different way, we're no longer primitives beating our chests and making passionate speeches catching people at their heart strings but having no good effect otherwise. Playing up to one's own public in order to score politically has done no good. The domestic public and the domestic media aren't going to solve our problem. Foreign media might do something about it because their influence in Europe and the West in general is greater than it is here. Public opinion over there may make a government reverse a decision; public opinion here - never. These are the considerations that actuate me and I've been trying to behave rationally all along. So, if we ask for 10 or 15 per cent more than we really should, we stand a chance of getting it; but to ask for 100 per cent - that way, we're merely making ourselves look frivolous. This is not the way I go about this business.

Today Kosovo is a ruin. A ruin in terms of demolished buildings - to state the most obvious - as well as a ruin in civilizational terms. It is full of destroyed homes and churches as well as hopes, relationships, prospects. Economically Kosovo is in a worse situation now than in 1998. International representatives say that although more than two billion US dollars has been pumped into Kosovo in the last few years, its economy is in a worse state than in 1999 prior to the bombing. Its gross income is less now than at that time. The vital industries such as power generation were more efficient before the war. In 1995-99 the power industry turned out on average 700 MW a day against 'current maintenance' costs amounting to some eighteen million US dollars; since UNMIK and KFOR arrived, 780 million US dollars or perhaps more has been sunk into it to just manage an average of 340 MW a day. The money could have been used to build a new power station to fully meet Kosovo's needs and even export some electricity during the summer months.

Regarding relations between people, we've been through several phases in the last five and a half years, but on the whole the Albanians are still largely aggressive and euphoric and the Serbs still largely frustrated, dissatisfied and afraid. The gulf between the two ethnic groups is considerable. Unfortunately, the Albanians believe that they will be able to solve their problems and get the status they want with the help of the international community alone, without establishing dialogue and contacts (and making deals) with the Serbs; most Serbs (and some irresponsible politicians) believe that the international community will

have to let the [Serbian] army and police come back and to arrange Kosovo to their satisfaction. This is an illusion, a forlorn hope, because this is not the way of the world. We have no muscle, we lost the war, we failed to organize properly after the war and help our population to stay. Our population has left and it will be a major problem for it to return. Besides, we don't matter all that much, in our communication with foreigners we're only perceived as 'another kind of problem' and a minor one at that. A very intelligent man once explained the situation to me in these terms: 'It's like your football team is playing against a much stronger side, with 100,000 of their fans cheering them on thunderously from the stands. You expect the referee to be impartial, but at best he'll only be slightly partial'. In other words, we must give it a hundred per cent to get some sort of result. We must choose tactics which suit us: if your tactics are obstruction, you're shown the yellow card or sent out. And it's nothing but yellow cards we'd been getting since 1999.

4. Is Kosovo de facto lost for Serbia, or is it only one part of it that is lost?

I can't say it is and I don't want to think in such terms. I'm thinking about chances of recovering Kosovo to some extent, and if we put our shoulder to the wheel Kosovo may end up being Serb as much as Albanian. At present we're not fighting but employing obstruction tactics and we know it, just as the Albanians and the foreigners know it. We're extremely naive in our belief that we can go on employing our delaying tactics without the foreigners being able to see through them. They're astute people and nothing escapes their notice. They've dealt with many such crises and seen many similar situations before. Bosnia, Croatia and Macedonia are cases in point. They know everything there is to know about the Balkans. But I think we have our chances. Recently, I heard a senior German foreign ministry official tell a public meeting that there were two misconceptions as to how to address the Kosovo problem, and what he said synthesized the thoughts I'd been having for some time. In effect, he said: the Albanians labour under the illusion that they can get their independence in talks with Brussels, Washington and possibly New York, without talking to the Serbs and Belgrade. Wrong. If they want independence, Belgrade is their chief interlocutor. The Serbs too labour under the illusion that they can recover Kosovo and Metohija in talks with Brussels, New York and Moscow alone, without talking to the Albanians. Wrong again. If you want to revert to the previous state of affairs, he said, you must talk to Pristina. The things he said led me to the conclusion that a solution is bound to be sought in negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, but only when they're ready for that. At present, neither side is ready.

5. Albanians and Serbs continue to look upon Kosovo in two different ways. Do you foresee a reconciliation and a historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

In 1999-2000 the international community was anti-Serb, its occupation of Kosovo being largely a method for undermining and eventually bringing Milošević down. At that time it held a misconception which, roughly speaking, held that independence was the best solution, that the Albanians wouldn't hear of any alternative, and that the Serbs were going to accept Kosovo's independence under certain conditions (pressure, financial aid, donations and the like). However, 1999 and 2000 are gone and Milošević is in The Hague and, though much of his legacy remains, this is no longer Milošević's Serbia. The Albanians are that kind of people and nation who will insist on what they think is best for them as long as they believe that pressure will get them a result. If they see that twisting the arm of the international community is bearing fruit, they will go on doing just that; but once they encounter resistance, they will consider changing tack and, eventually, even changing their objective. With the Serbs, this is not a question of territory and mineral resources - that's pure nonsense. With Serbia, it's a question of a responsible state being asked to give up part of its territory at the start of the twenty-first century. In connection with this, I always call to mind a woman, Margaret Thatcher, who some fifteen years ago dispatched 10,000 of her elite troops to the Falkland Islands, or Islas Malvinas. A rock jutting out from the ocean, an insignificant island inhabited by 500 people and a few thousand sheep. But a responsible statesman or stateswoman doesn't give up his or her country's territory. I think that no one in Serbia has the right to do that either. We must find a way to protect our rights, to make sure they're not jeopardized, while at the same time taking care not to go to war with NATO and the rest of the world again. Or a more recent example, the Spanish sent their elite troops to protect a tiny rock off the coast of Morocco. Why? Because a responsible state doesn't give up things easily. There are economic, social, cultural and other reasons why we can't cede Kosovo and Metohija. I'm not saying that we ought to dominate, say, have our mayors in Glogovac or Mališevo municipalities where there are no Serbs, or in Đakovica municipality which had 3 per cent Serbs before the war... That would make no sense, we oughtn't to insist on controlling the municipalities, on our people being mayors. I think that Albanians should occupy those and many other posts because that would be logical. But I don't discount the possibility of a Serb being appointed to a senior post in the foreseeable future.

6. Could do find it in yourself to apologize to the Albanians for the wrongs inflicted on them during their oppression, do you feel that necessary?

I don't mind the question. I think I've answered it already. I don't see any need to apologize and I don't consider myself responsible for the things that happened, which is not to say that I don't think that a very serious crime was committed against a people. But the question of apology begs the question as to who's going to apologize first. Because history does

not start on 24 March, our consciousness harks back to a much more distant past. Knut Vollebaeck once told me that while the things that were going on weren't easy at all, we ought to bear in mind that the Albanians had suffered terribly. I told him, 'Wait a minute, take it easy, you oughtn't be telling these things to me, go tell that to someone else. I could prove to you that this thing didn't start with the bombing of 24 March; I remember 1990 and 1981 and I've read or been told about 1968 and 1956 by my parents and others. I also know what happened in 1941, 1945 and so on. I'll have no difficulty proving to you that the thing you insist is the cause is in fact an effect. But if we choose to follow this cause-and-effect chain backwards we'll find ourselves ending up in the days of the Battle of Kosovo or maybe even before that.' I think we'd much better realize that we've been through an ugly, terrible and tragic episode which has left deep marks on people individually and on the collective consciousness of two ethnic communities condemned to inhabit the same area. So rather than make public apologies, which are often not sincere, I suggest we prove by our deeds that we are aware of our mistakes. I'm prepared to do things which will prove that, as a member of a nation, I feel partly guilty for the things done to the Albanians, provided there's an interlocutor on the other side who will say, 'Being Albanian I'm part of that nation and therefore I'm responsible for what happened to the Serbs, say in 1999.' We should go no further, that's quite enough. After all, 200,000 Serbs were driven out and nobody said a word about that. We must move on towards the future as soon as possible; we can't afford to dwell on the past because it's an extremely controversial topic, we and the Albanians are never going to see eye to eye on the past simply because what's effect to them is cause to us and vice versa. They view the distant future in terms of a particular status; we are doing the same, but with a somewhat different status in mind. I'm for medium-term plans designed to bring about a more favourable climate. I'm for talking to each other with a view to establishing an interactive relationship based on political, national or economic interests. If you achieve this you can start to smooth out the relations of the two ethnic communities. But, of course, a few people stand in the way of this.

7. A good many people believe that Belgrade is using the Kosovo Serbs. What is your comment on the allegation that Serbia is a hostage to Kosovo?

Kosovo will go on being a very sensitive topic for a long time to come. The fact that Kosovo figures as an ever-recurring topic does not surprise me at all because people use it to gain publicity. According to public opinion polls, Kosovo occasionally gets as low a rating as seventh or eighth place; but a rifle shot, a torched house, a stoned bus is all it takes for Kosovo to become number one topic in the wink of an eye. In other words, though it may momentarily be relegated to the background by some current problem or another event, Kosovo will always smoulder as a part of our collective consciousness that is difficult to put out. Consider,

for example, our folk music: so many songs about Kosovo were written or composed by people who have never lived there.

The allegation that today Serbia is a hostage to Kosovo is a very rude one: I don't like it and besides it's incorrect. If anything, Serbia is a hostage to an indeterminate state policy. There are people in Serbia who want things done at once, who want everything now. But instant solutions are characteristic of certain new nations, not of a nation with a long history and a tradition of doing things systematically. We always knew we were small and therefore we knew our proper place in the world. Now, however, people are trying to change everything during a single term of office, which is usually one or two years. And it's such people that are given to making rude comments, such as 'Why do we need two million lunatics who aren't going to respect...' I don't like this either. For one thing, they're no lunatics at all; for another, we need these 'lunatics'. They are part of our population; if they go, they'll take with them part of our territory which is a part of us. My reply to this comment is: these 'two million lunatics' are two million consumers. They account for one-quarter of the Serbian market, they are the right buyers for the things we produce. They're not consumers of high-tech goods because they aren't interested in them that much, but they're consumers of food and farming produce. In seven to eight years' time Serbia will have to import manpower, so we ought to bear in mind that they are very industrious. But when that time comes they won't be available, and we shan't be interesting to the Bulgarians: they will be part of the EU and working for much higher wages in Germany. It will be easier for the Albanians to come to terms with us.

8. Do the Albanians have a solution to the Serb question within an independent Kosovo?

At present they are making offers and mentioning high human rights standards. However, we mustn't let ourselves be relegated to a national minority status not only because it sounds pejorative, but because in that case we'll want the Albanians to have minority status in northern Mirovitica, Gračanica municipality...And that's where we don't agree. The Albanians have honed the presentation of their case to the international community to perfection, they're measured and know exactly what they're supposed to say. Unlike them, our people tend to use strong words and bang their fists on the table...all of which is counter-productive. The foreigner's comment is, 'That's the way of savages'. By contrast, the Albanians put their case over to the foreigner in a language he understands. In need go not further than the question of language: nearly every Albanian politician speaks a foreign language. What about ours?

9. Supposing Kosovo remains part of Serbia. Can you picture Kosovo's representatives attending meetings in Belgrade and heading governmental departments?

If one had asked the Republika Kosovo Serbs if they believed they'd be going to Sarajevo...The Albanians are not the RS Serbs and will need

more time because they see things in different, more rudimentary terms. It took the RS authorities three years to realize that they should send their best people rather than just anyone to represent them in Sarajevo, and the Albanians will come to the same conclusion soon. I shouldn't be surprised to see, say, forty Albanians from various parties sitting in the Serbian Parliament in six or seven years' time. The important thing is to weather 2005 and 2006: when they realize they can't have independence, they'll either change their tactics with the same object in view, or work towards integration. While Kosovo cannot be independent, the Albanians can achieve, they can be given full control of the territory in terms of exercising government.

10. Do the Kosovo Serbs have a plan for their status within an independent Kosovo, or are they perhaps not even considering such a possibility?

I think that none of them is envisaging his or her place in an independent Kosovo. It's hard to imagine the Albanians being overly responsible in the exercise of government without the presence of the international community - this isn't Northern Ireland. The Serbs aren't willing to place themselves at the mercy of the goodwill of the Albanian majority. That would be a disaster.

After all is said and done, Belgrade is where the seeds of discord are sown, where everybody in power wants to have on the ground his own representative he trusts. This is the problem. I've talked to a distinguished member of the present government, trying to explain to him that Belgrade was to blame for the absence of a Serb political elite in Kosovo. Every new government scraps the old elite and installs a new one in its place. Second, you don't stir trouble in Kosovo, you don't cram people into buses and unload them outside the government building to demonstrate in order to score political points; that just won't do. We introduced this practice in Kosovo in 1987 and 1988, the manipulation was transparent and it worked. It was Milošević who rode on the crest of that wave. So people in Kosovo still believe that they're doing something big and important by gathering outside the National Assembly. However, I think that the energy is spent, that the impact of such demonstrations is not nearly as strong as it was, and that it is time we changed something in this regard. Our unity over Kosovo and Metohija must be free of any ideological differences. We must reach consensus as a nation but must desist from maximum demands (army, police, generals, guns, tanks) because they merely confuse and frustrate the people.

11. Where do you think is the place of the Serb delegation?

I don't believe that the talks will be on one level only. To begin with, they will take place in September or October, not May, and at two levels at that. Talks between the Kosovo and Metohija Serbs and Albanians are inevitable, the [Serb] delegation being ideally composed of legitimate representatives who have passed muster repeatedly, and of 'others'.

These talks will concern technical issues, such as things to do to improve the quality of life; that would be our task and no more. The last item in the questionnaire we would get would be: would you stay to live in an independent Kosovo? The reply of all the Serb representatives will be - no.

The other level will be between Pristina and Belgrade. At present I'm not sure whether the delegations of Pristina and its institutions will be purely Albanian. I somehow feel that it would be better to have Kosovo Serbs in that delegation too.

12. What should be done to get the Serbs to return to Kosovo? Should the [Serbian] army and police return too?

What good would that bring us? What would the parents of the soldiers say, their children being dispatched to Kosovo by someone to provoke things, by some extreme circles bent on starting a new war? A thousand troops wouldn't solve our problem, all they would be doing there would be defending themselves. The police are another matter, they could come back. The Kosovo police force is something we must work at in earnest. There ought to be a lot more Serbs in the police force than now, that is, more than the allotted number computed as a percentage of their population (which may not be quite correct in the first place).

13. Are standards a precondition for a final solution, and ought UN Security Council resolution 1244 be replaced?

'Standards before status' has already been approved by the international factor and various institutions. This policy should have been modified since 17 March, bearing in mind that the Albanians' dissatisfaction with the present indeterminate state of affairs may have been a factor. However, no one has said so far that independence is the only option, and this is what I have been pointing out to all my interlocutors. I often observe in jest that I've met more prominent international representatives in the last five and a half years than Vuk Drašković, Goran Svilanović, Koštunica and Tadić put together have (those who go to Belgrade also go to Kosovo, but not all who go to Kosovo go to Belgrade). The conclusion I've drawn from these meetings is that, faced with pressure and aggression, the foreigners are trying to switch from their 'standards before status' doctrine to a 'standards and status' one in the hope that they will get the Albanians to work on the standards and adopt European values. After all, the object of these standards is to protect the Serb community. As to resolution 1244, it is the product of hard work and broad consultations under circumstances which will not return. Many of those who took part in the aggression have come to realize their mistakes; the present behaviour of, say, France and Germany, which are revising their positions, should therefore come as no surprise. These countries are unlikely to back a new resolution which would be to the liking of the entire international community. The matter must be discussed between Belgrade and Pristina and a compromise found. In view of the present state of affairs, a solution appears difficult of

achievement because the two negotiating sides stand wide apart; they are firmly entrenched in their positions and I don't see either backing down without putting up a fight.

Democratic Alternative official, Serb List for Kosovo head,
Assembly of Kosovo deputy

Slobodan Samardzic:

Only a mutually acceptable solution is a good one

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

For me, like for the overwhelming majority of Serbs, Kosovo has a great symbolic and cultural significance, above all in a historical and traditional sense. A people having so many precious cultural monuments and living religious places of worship cannot be indifferent towards the sacred meaning of that space. The worst thing would be to translate this meaning of Kosovo and Metohija for the Serbs into the question: Whose is Kosovo and Metohija? I'm saying this in reply to your question about its present and future. Bearing in mind the Province's present and future trials and tribulations, the Serb-Albanian dispute over it must be addressed in a different way than has been the case so far.

2. What is your view of the present situation in Kosovo ? Do you accept the newly-created reality there? How much truth is there in the contention of some circles that Kosovo is de facto lost for Serbia?

An assessment of the present situation in Kosovo can be made from several angles. On this occasion, I'm going to do so from only one which I consider of key importance, namely its jeopardized multi-ethnic character. This is the strongest impression left by the 'newly-created reality' since June 1999. If the survival of the Serbs is as seriously endangered as the facts show, they we must ask ourselves what is actually going on over there. The matter is much more dramatic than the opinions of certain circles would have us believe, namely that Kosovo is de facto lost for Serbia. The plan for Kosovo's separation can easily be placed within the framework of the right to secession and international law and could then be addressed at that level. But, if ethnic cleansing of a territory is the empirical basis of these efforts, then the whole problem assumes another dimension. In brief, we must first return to the problem of mass violations of human rights.

3. Albanians and Serbs continue to look upon Kosovo in two different ways. Do you foresee a reconciliation and a historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

Historic compromise and reconciliation on that basis is the only approach imaginable which guarantees a peaceful future, coexistence and good-neighbourly relations between Serbia and Albanians. But this is not easy to achieve; more correctly, this is not only the more difficult but, from the present perspective, the least probable road. The simple reason is that it presupposes the solution of the dispute through compromise.

And compromise, by definition, presupposes that either side give up its maximum demands. At the moment, the Albanian side is blocking compromise by insisting on independence for Kosovo and Metohija. Until recently, the constellation of international relations, as well as the internal situation in Serbia, has been to its advantage; but this is gradually changing. However, irrespective of the present situation, it is advantageous to deal with disputes between neighbours or peoples inhabiting the same territory through maximum consent possible. Such disputes and conflicts cannot really be solved otherwise, meaning that the side which emerges victorious can never be sure that its victory will last. This is especially true in the present general peaceful circumstances in Europe, which I consider durable.

4. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved? (Please state your views in some detail)

Telling you how I envision the future of Kosovo and Metohija in the future would serve no purpose here. After all, I couldn't do that in the first place because I think that the problem is highly complex and is therefore difficult to predict in terms of content and time. All the 'final' or, less rigidly, 'future' solutions I have had occasion to study so far do not satisfy my critical assessment of the predominantly bad consequences of all such solutions. To be honest, I have become firmly convinced that the very word 'solution' is wrong at this juncture. I'm going to give you an example in corroboration of my view. Although resolution 1244 was less ambitious than the 'solution' of the status of Kosovo and Metohija in that its objectives were not set as high, it has failed to realize them all the same. Take the question of liberty of movement and refugee return for example and you'll see that the results are a disaster. How can you possibly go on to dealing with the much more complex matter of status if you haven't been able to solve this more simple one, if you haven't achieved at least some progress? If we bear this failure in mind, we'll find that there is a much better approach to the problem, namely, gradual completion of the tasks set in the resolution in order to be able to build one thing upon another. The advantage of this approach over radical moves, which I wouldn't call solutions, is that it leaves tangible solutions to concrete problems and enables progress in confidence-building especially among the minority communities.

5. If you were to sit on a delegation negotiating the final status of Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to accept: independence, conditional independence, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro, or some other solution?

I have partly answered your question in my previous reply. The choices you give me suggest a subjectivized reply. If I were to follow the logic of your question, my reply would be 'some other solution'. I can't spell it out to you because I don't store it in my head. This is not a question of my knowing what I don't want and not knowing what I do: it's only

that I'm deeply convinced that an approach offering 'solutions' is not a productive one. I'd be happier to consider a procedure for talks and put every variant to test regardless of its good and bad points. I would also include the positions of the parties to the dispute on the acceptability or non-acceptability of a concrete proposal from the point of view of their interests. So, only a solution acceptable to both sides is a good one.

6. In what way should the question of Kosovo's status be resolved: by talks between Pristina and Belgrade in the presence of the international community, by a decision of the Security Council, or at an international conference?

So far as I know, the question of status will be discussed only if it is assessed that the standards have been fulfilled. For this reason I prefer to talk about this condition rather than about what comes next, because it is quite possible that the assessment of the standards fulfilment requirement will be negative. Actually, in view of the present situation of the Serb community in Kosovo and Metohija, I simply don't foresee a positive assessment. In making the assessment, there must be no excuses and no promises. As far as Belgrade is concerned, a positive standards assessment will be the basic requirement for any future status talks.

7. Why does official Belgrade not accept Kosovo's independence? Could Serbia function as a normal state in spite of an overwhelming Albanian opposition?

There are many reasons why Kosovo and Metohija's independence is unacceptable. To begin with, states in principle do not give up their internationally recognized territories; second, Serbia has tangible interests in Kosovo and Metohija; third, Serbia must protect its population, cultural heritage and property in the region. As regards the Albanians' fundamental lack of loyalty to Serbia as such, that is an objective problem which must be solved in such a way as to take care of the interests of the Albanians themselves. In the present international interregnum, one should strive to find the best solution to the Albanians' right to self-determination without at the same time harming the interests of Serbia and the Serbs. There are many such solutions in Europe. I'm not saying this because I believe that we should copy some of them, but because it is important to bear in mind that in modern European history there are examples of difficult situations having been solved to the satisfaction of seemingly irreconcilable interests.

8. Why do Belgrade politicians continue to use the Kosovo Serbs in order to chalk up political points?

Your question refers to a policy Belgrade has pursued in the past, but this is no longer the case. True, Kosovo and Metohija is still the focus of much public and political debate in Serbia, but I wouldn't say that the problem is being used for political ends. Although the matter continues to arouse national sentiments, especially regarding the situation of the Serbs in the province and the destruction of the Serb cultural heritage,

no politician in Serbia is able to manipulate such emotions any more. There was actually one politician who has exhausted his potential for manipulation, but the people in general no longer give any politician a free hand when it comes to Kosovo and Metohija. The politicians are aware of this, and I don't know any in Serbia who can or wants to do this. Everybody is more or less aware that Kosovo and Metohija is too serious a matter and that you can lose much more than you can gain if you don't watch your step.

9. Why does Serbia support the parallel structures of government in Kosovo while demanding strict observance of UN resolution 1244?

There is a real link between the so-called parallel structures in Kosovo and Metohija and resolution 1244. These parallel structures operate in proportion as the resolution is not implemented. If they were not there, the Serbs would be swallowed up by the majority Albanian institutions to the exclusion of their particular interests. The parallel institutions are the response of a minority to a tendency to assimilate them politically and segregate them ethnically and culturally. Such tendencies prevail in everyday relations between the minorities and the majority in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as being largely standardized by the Constitutional Framework for Kosovo and Metohija which the Serbs have never de facto accepted. The parallel structures are their only defence, so Serbia has no other choice but to accept and support them. Besides, Serbia has put forward a proposal for institutionalizing the status of the Serbs in the Province; it is contained in the Government Plan adopted by all the deputies of the National Assembly. It is the only practical way to abolish the parallel institutions. After all, no one in the world understands the Serbs' demand better than the Kosovo and Metohija Albanians themselves, given that they used the same methods in Milošević's Serbia against a system which did not suit them.

10. What role should Belgrade and the political representatives of the Kosovo Serbs play in determining the final status? Should the Kosovo Serbs' representatives sit on the Belgrade or Pristina delegation?

The reply is partly given in answer to your questions five, six and seven. I wish to use this opportunity to add that the basic problem between Serbs and Albanians will not be solved by the so-called final status for Kosovo and Metohija. This would mean solving a complex problem of two (or more) peoples sharing a territory by means of territorial delimitation involving state attributes. Those who look upon the question of Kosovo and Metohija in these terms ignore the fact that the two parties to the dispute have the same claims. On the basis of this, one may infer that the only 'final' solution would entail the division of the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. I'm not sure that we could reach an agreement on that, though it would be more just than letting only one people, the Albanians, have the whole of the territory. This is why one would do better to employ the method I have outlined in my preceding answers. Since you ask me on

which side the Kosovo Serbs should be during any negotiations, my reply is that one ought to be realistic about the nature of the dispute and realize that they must be on Belgrade's side. Any other arrangement would mean pretending that there is a Kosovo society (such as the fictitious 'Kosovars') aware of its interests vis-a-vis Belgrade. Let us be serious about this: 23 October 2004 should have been enough to dispel any such illusions.

11. What should the Albanian politicians and the Albanian population do to get the Serbs to return and participate in Kosovo's institutions and political life?

I'm afraid that the Albanian politicians and the Albanian population can do nothing more about that. To help them understand this, let me pose a rhetorical question: What should the Serb politicians and the Serbs in Serbia do to make the Albanians return under Serbia's political and legal system of their own free will and choice? The main role must be assumed by the party which assumed the formal responsibility in this matter, that is, the international factor. It ought to involve on the basis of equality the domestic factors, which are colloquially referred to as Belgrade and Pristina, to work out, to be sure with its consent and assistance, a correct procedure for settling the dispute including through negotiations on future relations.

12. Can standards be made to work in Kosovo and is it necessary to replace UN resolution 1244?

Judging by the last six years the standards, the way they are formulated, cannot be implemented especially the segment concerning the position of the minorities. And it is this segment that is of considerable importance for democracy, the rule of law, freedom of movement and refugee return. If assessment of the implementation of these standards is not distorted by severe politicization, it will have to ascertain the impermissible low level of implementation in these areas. For this reason, resolution 1244 will have to do as the UN's document regulating Kosovo and Metohija for an indefinite period of time, that is, until the standards in this area are substantially implemented.

Professor at Belgrade Faculty of Political Sciences
and adviser to Serbian Prime Minister

Dusan Janjic:
Territory for development
- a formula fit for mere subjects!

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

Until March 2004, many in the international community believed and maintained publicly that Kosovo was a success story; that UNMIK was about to complete its mandate by creating institutions ensuring substantial autonomy for Kosovo as envisaged in Security Council resolution 1244; and that Kosovo had been set going along the road leading to the European Union.

However, Kosovo's reality is a far cry from such embellishments, with the international community and local protagonists in the Kosovo saga manufacturing more history than they can consume. Hence no visible progress towards the reconciliation of the feuding Albanians and Serbs, which it is up to UNMIK to ensure and the key measure of the success of every peace mission. Furthermore, the Albanians regard the Serbs the main obstacle to their union with the Albanians in southern Serbia (the Preševo valley), Macedonia and Albania; the Serbs for their part look upon the Albanians as the usurpers of their historical fatherland and the 'cradle' of the Serb identity.

The survival of the old socio-economic structures and the present macroeconomic trends give no cause for optimism: Kosovo's economy has touched bottom, the living standards of the population have worsened. In spite of copious financial aid, there is little to show for it: the roads and the power industry are in a bad way, there's no sustainable economic growth, and privatization and restructuring of public companies is running late, with potential investors watching the privatization process with wary eyes. The state of affairs in Kosovo is made worse by lack of long-term sources of public investment, the absence of a strategy for ensuring investment from domestic sources (deposits, domestic savings, public company deposits, privatization receipts), the continued practice of subsidizing companies which ought to have been restructured long ago, the absence of socio-economic cohesion between the key bearers of economic reform (trades unions, government and business people).

Kosovo is still poor and unstable, its roads and power supply system are in a poor state of repair, and nearly 70 per cent of its working-age population is unemployed. The welfare situation is very bad with no social protection system to speak of. Over half the population live in abject poverty with 12 per cent lacking the basic

necessities of life; it therefore comes as no surprise that many are engaged in grey economy.

The human rights situation is extremely gloomy with hardly any protection for persons belonging to certain national communities. Of special concern is the lack of political will among Albanian political leaders to combat the widespread belief among the Albanians that the Serbs collectively are to blame for the crimes, killings, violence and human rights violations perpetrated by the Milošević regime against Albanians. The international administration continues to hail Kosovo as a multi-ethnic community while Serbs live in enclaves without any human rights and freedoms and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are discriminated against and denied any economic prospects.

There is only the hope that today's Kosovo will become a thing of the past in the years to come and that its society will join the family of European democratic societies.

2. What is your assessment of the present state of affairs in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality? How much truth is there in the contention of certain circles that Kosovo is lost for Serbia?

Kosovo is a trauma of the Serb nationalists and evidence of their impotence to solve the 'Kosovo question' to their liking. As far as the architects of this failure are concerned, Kosovo is lost. Actually, Kosovo ceased being attractive for the Serb nationalists as the cradle of the Serb nation as soon as they failed in their attempt to rule it against the will of the Albanians. At present they'd be happiest to be rid of it altogether or to be able to divide it on the principle 'Half a loaf is better than no bread'. To be sure, that would have to be done in such a manner that no blame whatever attaches to the nationalistic coryphaeuses and their followers. What one tends to leave out of account is the new reality and the fact that Kosovo is beyond the reach of Belgrade, which doesn't mean that Belgrade is no longer responsible not only for the Serbs in Kosovo but for the general solution of the Kosovo problem. The facts bespeak the opposite!

Only unreasonable people believe they can deny or reject the reality and facts! The facts say that Kosovo is an entity under an international protectorate - de facto independent from Belgrade but de jure a part of Serbia and SCG. Kosovo's future is on many lips: many have died and killed for it, but when it will arrive and in what shape is still not known.

Responsibility for the development of Serbia and the future of Kosmet, especially the Serbs in it, requires that Serbia's political, business and intellectual leaders treat the question of Kosovo's future status as their top priority. Since the question is of vital importance for Serbia, Serbia's politicians and public should take the trouble to learn about the numerous possibilities in existence. The most important proposals to solve Kosovo's future status under consideration by international expert and political circles are to be found in the following table:

1. Independent statehood	Conditional independence
	Unconditional independence
2. Institutionalization and territorialization of ethnic division	Cantonization on 'Bosnian model'
3. Independent statehood	Division on 'Cyprus model'
	Within Serbia
	Within SCG
4. Reintegration into SCG	Kosovo as third republic in state union with Serbia and Montenegro
5. Permanent international protectorate	Extension of present status quo
	EU role grows until UNMIK is replaced with EUMIK
6. Integration with EU	

3. Albanians and Serbs continue to look upon Kosovo in two different ways. Do you foresee a reconciliation and a historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

For decades past, Kosovo's society has been divided along ethnic, spiritual and religious lines and is almost entirely ethnicized. So with the Kosovo's very name: for the Albanians, it is 'Kosova'; for the Serbs, 'Kosovo and Metohija'. The disparate 'viewpoints' are backed by strong political movements and the ethno-nationalist mobilization of the masses. On the other hand, the need on both sides to cooperate and normalize life calls for dialogue on at least three levels.

First, dialogue on the so-called technical issue must be revived in the shortest time possible because it is in the interest of all for negotiations to proceed within the four working groups agreed upon at the Vienna talks, that is, to resume the work of the working groups for energy and missing persons and get the infrastructure and return working groups going;

Second, dialogue on minority security and institutional protection, including decentralization (local self-government and administration reform and synchronized devolution of power on central and regional authorities);

Third, the question of future, which calls for defining Kosovo's new status and the future relationship of Kosovo and Serbia, for which reason

the future must be built upon Serb-Albanian cooperation.

4. How, in your opinion, can the Kosovo problem be solved? (Please state your views in detail)

There are three groups of problems which render the question of Kosovo very complex and which must be solved. These are the questions of the past (especially clearing away the consequences of war, solving the question of missing persons, return of the refugees to their homes and, particularly, punishing the war criminals), the present (freedom of movement for the Serbs currently isolated in their enclaves and the Albanians' right to documents ensuring their movement in Serbia, strengthening of economic cooperation especially in the fields of energy, trade, etc.), and the future or status of Kosovo.

The question of Kosovo's status must be resolved in a negotiating process which will take some time and be fraught with trials. With the overwhelming majority of Kosovo Albanians wanting their own independent state on one hand, and the overwhelming majority of the residents of the Western Balkans, naturally including the Serbs, believing that pan-Albanian consolidation around an independent Kosovo might cause destabilization on the other, there must be a region-wide negotiating process and strengthening of regional cooperation on the following principles:

- the existing borders in the Balkans cannot be altered by force but by peaceful agreement between all sides;
- good-neighbourly cooperation;
- complete freedom of movement for people and free circulation of ideas, goods and capital;
- conformity with EU standards and regional harmonization of customs and administrative rules in areas of importance for regional cooperation, especially commencing cooperation in fighting organized crime and terrorism.

Given that the Kosovo conflict is a real societal conflict over the status of Albanians, Serbs and Kosovo, as well as over control of Kosovo's territory, it must be addressed as such. I'm therefore convinced that the winning formula for the Serbs and Serbia is: Territory for development! This does not mean using territory as a bargaining chip, buying territory for money or trading one territory for another; rather, it means trying to reduce the cost of managing the Kosovo crisis, attaching priority to development rather than the past, redirecting funds towards development, replacing the political rhetoric about the past with cooperation projects between Serbs and Albanians and between Serbia and Kosovo.

With the Albanian leadership sticking blindly to their 'final objective' of an independent Kosovo declared back in 1990, Albanian leaders and international representatives in Kosovo face the task of striking a balance between the need for democracy and the calls for Kosovo's independence, calling for replacing the policy of endless conditionality and blackmail with

the implementation of standards according to the formula: 'Final status now in exchange for peace and democracy!' Failing this, the Albanian movement won't be able to emerge from the present blockade. This is extremely dangerous because it frustrates the movement's followers, many of whom may easily resort to aggression and violence and thus endanger the peace and development of Kosovo and Serbia and the entire region.

The mantra for solving the Kosovo question, I'm sure, ought to run: Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo together in the EU!

If we adopt this approach to the question of Kosovo's future status, we have at least three possibilities:

- extending the 'provisional status' under enhanced EU involvement for another ten to fifteen years;
- Kosovo joins SCG as a republic;
- in conformity with the Helsinki Final Act, the Albanian national movement has the right to constitute a state on Kosovo's territory subject to a borders agreement.

5. If you were to sit on a delegation negotiating the final status of Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to accept: independence, conditional independence, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro, or some other solution?

I would never agree to sit on a team negotiating the 'final status' or looking for a 'final solution'. Many bandy the term 'final status' about but few bother to think what it really means. Because history is a process rather than fate, it isn't possible to win a 'final status' once and for all; therefore there can be no 'final status for the new Albanian state', that is, for Kosovo.

It is disturbing to realize that many proponents of 'final status' on the Serb and Albanian side, as well as among international bureaucrats, do not notice or care that 'final statuses' and 'final solutions' are demands characteristic of movements tending to racial and ethnic purity. The most notorious example of 'final solution' was Hitler's and the Nazis' goal of a 'New Europe' free of Jews, Slavs and Roma. By analogy, one suspects, the 'final solution' for Kosovo would be a Kosovo state free of Serbs.

For this reason it is better to follow the example of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who uses the term 'future status'.

Also, in the quest for pragmatic solutions, one must answer to the following considerations:

- first, the future status of Kosovo;
- second, the status of Kosovo's neighbourhood, that is, Serbia and Montenegro, given that there are going to be three different political and economic systems.

6. In what way should the question of Kosovo's status be resolved: by talks between Pristina and Belgrade in the presence of the international community, by a decision of the Security Council, or at an international conference?

The matter will be dealt with in a process involving many talks and a decision of the UN Security Council. Also, it would be advantageous for the process to be launched within a framework international (regional) conference on Kosovo's stabilization, development and status.

7. What role, in your opinion, should the Kosovo Serbs play in solving Kosovo's status? Who is to represent them and should they be sitting on Belgrade's or Pristina's delegation?

Whereas at present the Kosovo Serbs are mere subject matter of various 'solutions', they ought to take an active part in the future because Kosovo is their land too. The Serb community must develop internal democratic relations, assume its share of responsibility, and cooperate with Pristina and Belgrade, as well as the international community. In whose delegation the Serbs will be depends on whether the issue under discussion is part of 'local dialogue' or concerns the question of status and therefore affects Serbia's future; in the latter case, they should be part of Belgrade's delegation providing they are guaranteed autonomy in matters where their and Belgrade's interests don't coincide.

8. Are the conditions in place for the reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians? Who ought to apologize to whom for the wrongs inflicted in Kosovo in the distant and recent past?

In the case of Kosovo and the Serb-Albanian conflict, we're dealing with a conflict within an undemocratic state and an undemocratic society, the kind of state and society where violence tends to be severe. This is so because there's no institutional protection of civil liberties and no respect for human rights and freedoms to allow ethnic communities to express their demands at democratic elections. The government can't rule democratically while at the same time keeping its ethnic opposition under control. In such conditions, it lacks broad popular support for peaceful conflict resolution through democratic institutions.

A special role in this conflict is played by the new nationalist elites and their 'negative policies' such as internal colonialism, ethnocide and genocide.

Serb-Albanian relations are marked by confrontation having the nature of an ethnic conflict. At the bottom of this conflict is the question of who controls the territory of Kosovo and the Albanians' status there. This is a conflict between a Serb majority opting for self-isolation and an Albanian minority choosing separatism.

The order in Kosovo was based on a balance of fear: fear of the vendetta (which is especially widespread inside the Albanian community) and fear of state sanctions. The Serb-Albanian relations in Kosovo were patterned on a domination model, with each community seeking to institutionalize its domination. Both Serbs and Albanians took up arms in the hope of taking their destiny into their own hands. For the first time, survival in Kosovo became a personal problem of both Serbs and Albanians which could only be solved by force. The Serbs, who for eleven

years had supported Milošević in the belief that he would be able to 'solve the Kosovo problem once and for all', found it difficult to wipe the slate clean. The actions spearheaded by the police involved a wide circle of local Serbs. Those who took part in the ethnic cleansing fought armed battles with their Albanian neighbours. For their part, many Albanians believe it's a question of now or never, mindful of the message the OVK drummed into them that you can't have freedom without shedding blood.

Milošević's control of Kosovo ended in June 1999 with the arrival of UNMIK with the special representative of the UN Secretary-General at its head. A new reality came into being and a new legal framework was established for managing the Kosovo crisis under UN Security Council resolution 1244. All the same, the situation in Kosovo during 1999 and 2000 was worse than ever. If anything, the war of 1998-99 had added to the past problems and brought new ones such as the question of Kosovo's status. The particularly grave problems included: the war casualties; the expulsion and destruction; the military and civilian presence of the international community including NATO, UN, EU and OSCE, all of which were unprepared or insufficiently willing to realize the idea of a multi-ethnic Kosovo, which is the main objective of UN Security Council resolution 1244; absence of the rule of law and greater insecurity and instability across Kosovo. Criminal offences and political murders, kidnappings, thefts, illegal possession of weapons and so on abound. The Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanian communities live in fear in isolated and insecure enclaves amid repression and intolerance.

Taking all this into account, it is clear that the conditions for reconciliation are not there and that the present situation must be changed. Since history teaches us that violence creates new problems rather than solving old ones, politics is the clear choice with dialogue the most effective tool of a successful policy. Dialogue, that is, talks and negotiations, is the best means of reaching a solution where every side, including Serbia and the Serbs, will come out victorious. Both sides have cause to make apologies, and apologize they will if Serb and Albanian leaders embark on new policies of cooperation not conflict.

9. Can Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo, and what do you make of the proposals to split Kosovo into two entities?

A life together is a reality even in conditions where divisions and conflict are stronger than cooperation, which is the case right now. Kosovo is ethnically divided and therefore a far cry from the ideal of a multi-ethnic society. Since its ethnic divisions are deep, any attempt at a 'two entity split' might result in chaos and, in the present circumstances, continuation rather than termination of the conflict! The position of the Contact Group and the wider community that Kosovo can't be divided along ethnic boundaries doesn't surprise me; what surprises me is that the local political leaders and potentates don't realize this.

10. Is Serbia today a hostage to Kosovo? Why does official Belgrade continue using the Kosovo Serbs? What is the role of the Serb representatives from Kosovo in determining Kosovo's final status?

Today, like two decades ago, Serbia is a hostage to the deep crisis of state and national identity and the failure to solve the crisis by means other than ethno-nationalism. Kosovo is but one sad example of the failure of this policy.

11. Can the 'standards for Kosovo' be made to work and is it necessary to replace UN resolution 1244?

The Kosovo standards implementation plan resembles the Communist Manifesto in many ways, in that it is full of wishful thinking. This is why the plan cannot be implemented in full. Progress towards the EU can be made if at least the Kosovo institutions are made to operate, to follow the rule of law and democratic rules as their guiding principles. A lot remains to be done before Kosovo's society is raised to the level of 'normal societies'.

National question expert and Belgrade
Forum for Ethnic Relations coordinator

**Dusan Batakovic:
The solution lies in agreement between
Belgrade and Pristina**

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

Kosovo and Metohija is a notion arousing various feelings which give rise to contrary interpretations depending on one's origin and outlook. For the Serbs, it is the place of their solemn vows, the fountainhead of their historical traditions, mediaeval spirituality and culture, the scene of their historic battles and focus of their Kosovo tragedy cult built into the foundations of their national identity. Furthermore, the Serbs regard Kosovo as their ethnic space from which they have over the centuries been gradually and systematically displaced by the Ottoman, Nazi and communist rulers and in which they have unjustly and by force been reduced to an endangered minority. For them Kosovo is today a sore point, the last place in Europe where people are still persecuted and murdered on account of their ethnicity, where their survival and identity, and the precious cultural legacy they contributed to Europe's heritage, are at risk.

For the Albanians, Kosovo is a space populated by their Illyrian ancestors from time immemorial. According to the Illyrian ethnogenesis theory, all who arrived later, including the Serbs who settled in the area as far back as 1,300 years ago, are intruders on autochthonous Albanian land. They have been striving to this day to drive back these 'intruders' with help from various big powers and their mother country Albania, from the Ottomans, Austrians, Mussolini, communists, and it is only now, thanks to the NATO bombing campaign, that the just and logical end of their struggle is in sight. To be sure, the Serbs too are inclined to romanticize their history. But the findings of historical science - at least that segment with no political and ideological pretensions, with which I am well acquainted - do not support the continuity assumption of the Illyrian ethnogenesis theory: as between the sixth and eleventh centuries there is no trace of the Illyrians (as Alex Buda, the greatest of Albanian scholars of Illyrian history, points out, among others), it is difficult to link them to the later Albanians.

However, the power of ideological projections, coupled with strong irrational national-romantic sentiments, at times outweighs verifiable historical facts. The absurdity of the present state of affairs is this: by means of a persistent, and since recently internationally orchestrated, propaganda drive the new reality is projected on to a distant past in order to be used in support of present political and national claims.

For me, Kosovo is a space where a spiral of intolerance has prevailed for centuries, where the roles of victim and executioner seldom alternate during cycles of unmitigated violence, collective retribution and reciprocal extermination, where lack of tolerance, political culture, democratic traditions and willingness to live together and share things has been a constant which survives to the gloomy present. Both Serbs and Albanians have erred in Kosovo and Metohija. First the Albanians tried to determine Kosovo and Metohija's future against and without the Serbs, then Milošević reciprocated, which inevitably resulted in an escalation of violence. The restive former Yugoslav and Serbian province with a rebellious Albanian majority, Kosovo remains a place where ethnic cleansing continues six years after a bloody war. Unless sense, dialogue and compromise prevail, Kosovo will go on being the worst potential flashpoint in the Balkans.

2. What is your view of the present situation in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality? How much truth is there in the contention of some circles that Kosovo is de facto lost for Serbia?

The present state of affairs in Kosovo and Metohija is disturbing to say the least. Six years after the NATO intervention and the establishment of the UN protectorate none of the declared substantial aims has been realized: neither a multi-cultural society nor substantial autonomy and equality for all its citizens regardless of their religion or ethnicity. What is more, the ethnic cleansing continues accompanied by orchestrated waves of violence or random killings to speed up Serb exodus; their places of worship and cemeteries are being methodically destroyed amid disturbing indifference on the part of both local Albanians and the international community. But for the international troops giving some protection to the Serb enclaves, the affair would have ended in a slaughter of a minority by the majority as happened a few years back in Rwanda. This state of affairs cannot be viewed as acceptable because it calls into question all the fundamental human rights and all the time-honoured European values. Instead of the occasional invitation from the Albanian side, we need hard evidence about tangible and verifiable progress in standards implementation on the ground, and this over a long period of time.

The allegation one often hears that Kosovo is lost for Serbia implies a whole range of views depending on the outlook. There is no doubt that Kosovo and Metohija will not be under total Serb rule as envisaged by Milošević, just as there is no doubt that Serbia won't and can't give up Kosovo. Although the Kumanovo agreement effectively places Kosovo outside Serbia, resolution 1244 and the Kosovo Serbs' communication with the rest of Serbia show that a natural link cannot be severed by force. Despite what some people are saying these days, Kosovo and Metohija is not an ownerless piece of land whose destiny can be decided without Serbia's consent. It is equally wrong to think that one only need press Serbia a little further to give up Kosovo in return for accelerated EU association. Since the whole of the province is to become part of the European Union

in not too distant a future, there's no reason to draw new borders, create new armies and sow a new seed of discord in it. The Albanians and Serbs ought to reach agreement on the nature of their relations, first of all on the internal unity of Kosovo and Metohija so as to reflect its multi-cultural reality, then on the legal framework of its relations with Belgrade. Pristina and Belgrade will very soon be more interdependent than it can be assumed at present. This is how it's going to be.

3. Albanians and Serbs continue to look upon Kosovo in two different ways. Do you foresee a reconciliation and a historic compromise between the two peoples, in view of the historical experience of other peoples?

Reconciliation and historic compromise may occur at the end of a negotiating process with both sides accepting the outcome and making necessary, mutual and often risky compromises. No party to the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija may suffer defeat as that would make the region chronically unstable in the long term and prevent a peaceful life together and desirable multiethnic equality at local level. Reconciliation requires political will on the part of the elite to negotiate in the name of the people and to take bold initiatives in order to overcome the grave legacy of the past and further long-term national interests, like the Germans and French, or the Germany and Poles did in the aftermath of the Second World War. With most ethnic conflicts in Europe either surmounted or under control, the one in Kosovo will follow suit when sensible and moderate persons capable of making agreed compromises work appear as negotiators on both sides.

4. How in your opinion can the Kosovo question be solved? (Please state your views in detail)

Although by many standards of comparison Kosovo is a Gordian knot, it cannot be approached with a sword. Some time ago, on realizing what tragic conflict we were drifting towards, I drew up a cantonization plan incorporating the Swiss experience and based on predominantly linguistic criteria. Unlike Bosnia-Herzegovina, where, contrary to expectations, ethnic and cultural similarities divided rather than kept the people together, Kosovo and Metohija is home to two distinct and clearly separated cultures, two languages and two strong identities along with the separate identities of the minority communities. The ethnic distance in Kosovo was the widest of all in the former Yugoslavia and it was owing to the wrong political options of both Albanians and Serbs that it became wider rather than narrower.

As the events portending a major conflict drew increasingly close, I proposed a broad decentralization of Kosovo to prevent a free-for-all over land, rights and property and domination of one community over another. In 1998 it was still not too late to carry this into effect. After the NATO bombing, I put forward a more elaborate decentralization model in the hope that UNMIK, mandated to implement substantial autonomy, might

enforce this under resolution 1244. For substantial autonomy applies to the Serb community as much as to the Albanian. Meanwhile, the Milošević regime had fallen and democratic options were at hand. Six years after the establishment of the international administration, after a succession of orchestrated retributive acts of violence, substantial decentralization remains the only way of preserving the historical and cultural identity of the Serbs and other non-Albanian communities, ensuring their right to life in freedom and, in conformity to European standards, protecting their property and their human and civil rights.

Effective decentralization, which would be followed by massive return of displaced persons (at present over 230,000 or two-thirds of the Serb community), would create the conditions for addressing the question of status on a basis of equality, aiming for a solution which would not be imposed but agreed between Belgrade and Pristina with international community mediation and guarantees. Substantial decentralization would protect and preserve the individual identities of the local communities and create economically viable wholes held together on ethnic-linguistic grounds. In the absence of substantial decentralization, however, Kosovo's new status would lead to a de facto multi-ethnic Kosovo in contravention of all the principal European standards and values. This would be very dangerous for the future of Kosovo, Serbia and the whole Western Balkans.

5. If you were to sit on a delegation negotiating the final status of Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to accept: independence, conditional independence, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro, or some other solution?

Some connection between Kosovo and Metohija and Serbia is essential to ensure the long-term stability of the region. Though substantial autonomy under resolution 1244, giving Kosovo and Metohija a high degree of autonomy, would be my initial negotiating position, I wouldn't rule out another possibility provided it is not imposed but the result of patient negotiations and sensible compromise. It seems to me that either Kosovo's independence or unconditional independence would set a very dangerous precedent because it would compromise the present international order (an independent Kosovo would, in effect, mean a partition of Serbia!). Furthermore, one must bear in mind that none of the standards laid down by the international community has been fulfilled, nor that there is anything to indicate that they may be fulfilled in the foreseeable future, say the next ten years. Given that the international community has insisted that all the countries in the region cooperate with the Hague tribunal, there is no reason why it should not insist on the implementation of the standard in Kosovo's case with equal emphasis.

6. In what way should the question of Kosovo's status be resolved: by talks between Pristina and Belgrade in the presence of the

international community, by a decision of the Security Council, or at an international conference?

It is very important that the whole process associated with the question of status should remain within the framework of the United Nations because the organization is administering the province on behalf of the international community. This also implies negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina with international mediation. I think that a Security Council resolution will suffice; however, in case a more complex arrangement is necessary, there could be a closing international conference under UN auspices, subject to the negotiating parties' prior consent. The problem is, an international conference would be expected to approve a drastic rearrangement of the existing borders rather than provide a new constitutional arrangement between Belgrade and Pristina.

7. What role, in your opinion, should the Kosovo Serbs play in solving Kosovo's status? Who is to represent them and should they be sitting on Belgrade's or Pristina's delegation?

It would be illusory to expect the Kosovo Serbs to sit on the Pristina delegation: in the past six years, Albanian extremists have torn down more Serb temples than were destroyed during the five centuries of Turkish rule; the number of Serbs still living in Pristina is less than 1 per mill compared with 1999; that year Serbs were ethnically cleansed from all the major towns in the province (Peć, Prizren, Uroševac, Podujevo, Đakovica) other than northern Kosovska Mitrovica, which has since 1999 luckily been separated from the rest of Kosovo by KFOR troops. The anti-Serb pogrom in March 2004, in which 4,000 Serb houses were destroyed and thirty-five churches destroyed or burned, was attributed rather ineptly to Albanian youths' discontent with the economic situation. If one were to apply the same criterion, pogroms of this kind would be an excusable massive occurrence in all parts of Europe undergoing painful economic transitions. This is why it is imperative for the Kosovo Serbs that the negotiating process should take place with the support and active participation of Belgrade as the only guarantor of their survival in Kosovo and Metohija. Failing this, there can be no sustainable solution.

8. Are the conditions for Serb-Albanian reconciliation in place? Can they live together in Kosovo? Who should apologize to whom for the wrongs inflicted in Kosovo in the distant and recent past?

The conditions for reconciliation are still not there: the ethnic cleansing of Serbs goes on overtly or covertly, their security is drastically undermined, their survival is in question, their normal life a distant possibility. After all, wasn't it until fairly recently that the Serb deputies had to be taken to the provincial assembly in armoured vehicles? There are no conditions for genuine reconciliation where one of two dominant communities, in this case the Serbs, is so severely discriminated against that it has to fight for its bare survival. We're witnessing an archaic form of collective retribution where all the members of a community are punished

irrespective of whether or not they have committed a crime. Responsibility for the crimes committed by all the sides ought to be individual and the trials impartial. But in spite of the disturbing present, a life-together is possible at some point in the future provided there is broad decentralization (in their majority areas the Serbs would have the right to judicial, administrative, police, educational and health care autonomy) and the Albanians in their majority areas have wide autonomous powers to administer themselves. The key elements are, therefore, the abolition of overruling (wasn't this why the SFRY broke up in 1991 in the first place?) and affirmative action with respect to the numerically smaller community.

It is up to the politicians to decide when the time is ripe for making apologies; the moment will come when the situation normalizes and when the 230,000 displaced persons in the rest of Serbia and Montenegro are allowed to return.

9. Is Serbia today a hostage to Kosovo? Why does official Belgrade continue to use the Kosovo Serbs?

Serbia is not a hostage to Kosovo because you cannot possibly sever the Kosovo Serbs' vital connections with the rest of Serbia. Let me make this clear: there is no distinct Kosovo or Kosovar identity in the Western sense of the word meaning a community with a single will: there are mostly Albanians and Serbs, each community having its own ideas about life in freedom, personal safety and future. If there is, as some circles suggest, such a thing as a Kosovar identity, then why was the monument to Prince Lazar in Pristina torn down to make way for the monument to Albania's mediaeval ruler Skanderbeg, given that the first was born in Kosovo and the second had nothing to do with the area?

The Kosovo Serbs are not being used now, although they were in the worst possible way in Milošević's time. At present, Serbia is merely trying to provide additional protection for their imperilled rights and to institutionalize them because Serbia alone can guarantee this, bearing in mind its state and regional interests. If anyone on Serbia's political scene is trying to profit from and manipulate the tragedy of the Kosovo Serbs, they're an exception rather than a rule. Serbia's common position is that Kosovo must not be lost; this is a political reality carrying great weight, as much weight as the Albanians' rejection any connection with Belgrade. This is why we need to negotiate, make mutual concessions and, finally, reach compromise.

10. Do the Kosovo Albanians have any plans for a Serb community within an independent Kosovo?

I'm not aware that such plans exist; they may exist in a verbal form but the reality gives the lie to them. The only concept on the Albanian side I see at present is to gradually cleanse Kosovo of most of the remaining 130,000 Serbs; then, when their numbers have dwindled to, say, one per cent of their former strength, the showpiece folk group will be guaranteed 'all their rights'. How cynical and inhumane!

11. How could the Kosovo Albanians be won over in case Belgrade was given certain powers in Kosovo?

Just as Belgrade can't rule Kosovo like it did in Milošević's day, so the Albanians can't rule supreme over the whole of the province. Therefore, in an increasingly united Europe where countries share their sovereignty with many joint institutions, the Albanians must give up their nineteenth-century-style sovereignty demands. If they are willing to share much of their jurisdiction with the EU tomorrow, why couldn't share some of it with Belgrade? After all, is there a problem which can be solved only in Kosovo without Serbia's participation? Belgrade expects to see in Kosovo a new generation of responsible and moderate politicians aware of the values of life together and multi-ethnic cooperation.

12. Can the 'standards for Kosovo' be made to work? Ought Kosovo's new status be made conditional on their implementation? Should UN resolution 1244 be modified and if so, in what way?

I don't see any alternative to the international community's excellent 'standards before status' plan. The implementation of the standards is the precondition for any meaningful and equal debate on the province's status. It makes sense to modify UN Security Council resolution only after the standards are fulfilled. Application of the 'both standards and status' formula would be tantamount to admitting the failure of the international community and rewarding ethnic cleansing. In order to overcome this grave inter-ethnic conflict one must be patient, persistent and determined in implementing one's measures. Failing this, we shall have a rash solution which will satisfy the Albanian majority at least in the short term, as well as alienate the Serb community and bring about their new exodus. In that case Serbia could not bear the loss of Kosovo and a new wave of refugees: its hard-won democratic order would be in jeopardy and there would be more cries for revenge. One shouldn't try to please 1.7 million Kosovo Albanians by punishing eight million Serbs by turning them into losers. Using Kosovo to inflict punishment on Serbia would make the Western Balkans very unstable for a long time. Such a scenario must be avoided for the sake of peace, tolerance, compromise and freedom by a wise policy on the part of the international community and the participants in the negotiating process. I wish to underline once again that, when all is said and done, neither party to the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija may suffer defeat.

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Latinka Perovic:

Distrust has grown, but compromise is unavoidable

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

In my historical perception Kosovo has a constant meaning, but in my experience its meaning has evolved.

In my formative years - those after the Second World War - neither in the family nor in school was Kosovo either a taboo or a fetish. My history teachers in the Women's Secondary School in Kragujevac, and especially my professor of folk literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, Dr Vido Latković, presumably because they were genuine professionals, spontaneously led to us differentiate between the real past and tradition, nurturing in us a rational attitude to history and instilling in us a feeling of respect and admiration for its positive heroes.

So far as I know, during my secondary school and university years no one in my generation visited Kosovo. Maybe some of our classmates were from Kosovo, but we did not set them apart as such.

In my professional years, I gradually discovered that for romanticistic historiography Kosovo is the be-all and end-all of Serbhood. Critical historiography, from Stojan Novaković to Simo Ćirković, distinguished between science and historical tales. It was in that spirit that the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo was marked in 1889. I think I would enjoy reading a master's thesis in which the 1889 event would be compared with that which was organised in 1989.

My experiences with Kosovo have been many and very diverse. In my capacity as an official of first the Socialist Youth and then the women's organisation of the former Yugoslavia, and finally an official of the League of Communists of Serbia, I often travelled to Kosovo. I don't think there is any sizeable town that I have not visited. I observed. My most striking first impressions, even in the late 1960s, concerned desperate backwardness and subdued tensions in political relations between the Serb and ethnic Albanian officials - both carried handguns.

The end of the 1960s marked the beginning of the Albanians' emancipation. I think that the Albanians' leading figures endeavoured to secure their position in Yugoslavia while Tito was still alive. It is a historical truth, one that can be verified from numerous historical sources, that the Albanians achieved every one of their rights in the face of reservations and resistance from political structures in Serbia. Both then and now I have regarded this as a lack of political wisdom.

If the Albanians had felt in the past that they were being discriminated against, the Serbs began to feel that their position was being threatened and that there was no future for them individually. What was involved was a conflict between the real interests. The high birth-rate of the Albanians and the Serbs' emigration cannot be viewed only at a historical level. They have economic and social causes that have never been researched. Which strata of the Serb population are migrating away: the relatively well-off or the poor? What kind of status and relations with the locals do the migrants achieve in their new environments? Why do the educated Serbs choose not to return to Kosovo and instead remain in Belgrade, from where they rhetorically worry about Serbhood? Instead of working on these questions, Kosovo has become a political instrument, a key for opening the Serbian question, for its deconstruction.

2. How do you see the current situation in Kosovo and do you accept the new reality? How true are claims by some people that Serbia has de facto forfeited Kosovo?

If it weren't for some NGOs, and especially foreign literature, I would personally know little about the complexity of the situation in Kosovo. An exceptionally backward society now in transition, which was preceded by years of terror by the state against the majority population, the annulment of acquired rights and institutional solutions and, finally, the war, a society under a [foreign] protectorate, which has large and very specific problems. The propaganda machinery simplifies the image, because its very aim is to ultimately make that picture the way it looks -- two fronts: the Albanians, and the Serbs.

A process of dismantling the tradition-dominated society is under way, and the consequences of this are always many. One example is the revolutionary change of the position of the Albanian woman. At the same time, in a society lacking a rule of law there exists wide-ranging social pathology.

3. Two opposed views on Kosovo continue to exist: the Albanians' and the Serbs'. Do you see any prospects for conciliation and a historical compromise in Kosovo, having in mind other peoples' historical experiences?

The distrust has grown, but a compromise is unavoidable. It depends very much on the political representatives of both communities, both the Albanian one and the Serb one. The community which will profit is that which is the first to discard the winner-loser cliché and which accepts a partnership. That relationship is the future, and no price bigger than necessary should be paid.

4. How do you see the resolution of the problem of Kosovo?

Nowadays many people see the solution to the problem of Kosovo as squaring the circle. Is that really the case? Has it not already become a stereotype?

There are factors which need to be taken into account by every platform for resolving the Kosovo problem. I often cite Erich Hobsbaum, who says that no one can deny the Serbs' right to Kosovo as an element of historical perception - the fact that a battle was waged in Kosovo in 1389 in which the Serbs were defeated. That factual defeat was mentally altered through tradition into a victory. That is how identity was created and defended.

At the same time, Albanians now make up more than 90 per cent of the population of Kosovo. In realpolitik, this is a fact of the first magnitude. Serbs gradually moved from the south northwards, and by settling in Vojvodina became a Danubian people.

Historical perception is not the same as territory. What does it mean that the Serbs lost Kosovo? As a part of the perception, Kosovo is a constant. When one says that the Serbs will no longer be able to celebrate St. Vitus' Day, which, by the way, is a relatively recent coinage, one does not refer to history but to territory.

Besides, how does one perceive a mechanism which would after everything that has happened retain the Albanians' status as subjects of the Serbs? With the help of the army and police? That would be not just an involution of consciousness, but also playing a brutal game with Serbia's interests, economic as well as moral.

5. If you were a member of a delegation negotiating on the final status of Kosovo, which solution would you be willing to accept: independence, conditional independence, a federation, confederation or union of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, or another solution?

I believe that [the late] Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić was the last man to talk about various options and different stages in the resolution of the status of Kosovo. Valuable time has been lost. Instead of resolving the status of Kosovo immediately after the NATO intervention, for which the Serbian public was ready in spite of the misguided belief that Serbia was the victor, the conflict with the international community was continued, the position of the Serb minority worsened, the future of important Serbian cultural monuments threatened, and the Albanians radicalised. In short, there was a return to the position of the 1980s around which Milošević had achieved a consensus and embarked on state-led terror in Kosovo and wars in Yugoslavia.

Given that there continues to exist a huge gap between the positions of the Serb and Albanian political factors, there is no doubt in my mind that the role of the international community will be decisive. There are no pure solutions, only more or less acceptable ones. And the level of acceptability ultimately determines the weakening of ethno-nationalism in the entire Balkan region; optimal conditions for prosperity not only of ethnic communities but concrete people who belong to those communities.

Everyone can think and write about Kosovo, of course. But the basis for resolving its status cannot be defined by poets, professional agitators,

folk singers, clergymen - neither religious nor political ones. We may not yet have a society in which such a platform could be formulated by people who are proficient in economics and law, whose thoughts and deeds are guided by contemporary developments in the world. That has always been a problem of Balkan societies. Today, however, that problem has become somewhat smaller than in the past.

In any case, only a solution which would treat both the Albanians and the Serbs as subjects capable of assuming responsibility for their own fates and of respecting each others' rights can be a long-term one. At this moment in time it seems like Utopia. But with the help of enlightened people willing to stand up to prejudice, chauvinism and racism, designating that solution as an aim can lead to a turnabout in the thinking of the masses.

6. How should the issue of the status of Kosovo be resolved: talks between Belgrade and Pristina with the attendance of the international community, a UN Security Council decision, or an international conference?

I think that there are still illusions that the status of Kosovo can be resolved on the basis of a balance of forces in a new conflict. Why else would the international representatives in Kosovo be cautioning about increased tension, the frailty of institutions and an almost total crisis of confidence? But any new conflict would only serve to take Kosovo even further away from the resolution of its status, it would sap Serbia and disqualify the Albanians. Every crisis is followed by talks. Diplomacy was never the strong suit of Serbia's policies. There was always too much reliance on force. That model has been exhausted.

7. Should both the Albanian and the Serb side remain addicted to national aspirations dating back to the 19th century or should they adapt to contemporary European and world trends?

We are still slaves to the past. The potential to create a present - the main task of contemporaries - is small. There is a fear that changes could lead to a loss of identity; in the Balkans a collectivistic mentality was always dominant as a result of predominantly agrarian societies, religion and national ideologies. Changes in the direction of individual identities provoke fear of losing identity, and the circle closes, sealing in immobility and backwardness. Collectivism realised itself through two forms of totalitarianism: in the civilisational sense it has experienced a historical defeat. But its ideas are being restored. It is not enough just to condemn something, we also need to understand it, to decode individual identity as an alternative. In that context, these are truly revolutionary times. They are accompanied by: pauperisation, crime, conflicts, terror. But they also represent an opportunity, especially for the Balkan peoples, to leave behind them backwardness and the ethno-nationalism which generates wars for territories as compensation for backwardness.

8. Do the necessary preconditions exist for Serb-Albanian reconciliation and who should apologise to whom for the crimes committed in Kosovo in the distant and recent past?

Willy Brandt knew to whom he was apologising and why. And in particular after what and in the name of what. In the Balkans the apologies has been trivialised, it has become a part of the political protocol. Reconciliation is a lengthy process which proceeds from the maturing and purification of each individual member of every people. It is a synchronous process involving faith, emancipation, education, legality. It is inherent to every-day life of a society and involves the payment of a high individual and collective price. When the Germans - I say Germans, not Germany - had passed through the purgatory and when Brandt had formulated his Ostpolitik, which was built into the very foundations of the European Union, he knelt down. But his gesture did not simply mean "We beg forgiveness", but also "We have changed and you can trust us".

9. Can the Serbs and Albanians live in Kosovo alongside each other, and what is your opinion about proposals to divide Kosovo into two separate entities?

Dr Božidar Jakšić wrote during the wars in the 1990s that the slogan according to which communal life is impossible was a criminal slogan. There are now about 200 countries in the world, most of them multi-ethnic. Neither theoretically nor practically can I conceive Kosovo as anything but multi-ethnic.

A division of sorts is not only being encouraged, but actually exists de jure. But it actually shows that a division would not lead to stability, that it would fix ethno-nationalism in place and remain a source of conflicts between various interests which would always be described as having an ethnic character.

10. Is Serbia a hostage of Kosovo and why does Belgrade continue to use the Serbs in Kosovo? What is the role of Serbian representatives in Kosovo in the resolution of the final status?

The Serbian public does not have at its disposal all relevant facts it needs in order to gauge the magnitude of the price it is paying on account of the unresolved status of Kosovo. It does not know how much money from its budget goes to Kosovo and for what purposes. It is aware neither of the material losses sustained in the war nor of the number of those killed in it. Information about citizens of one and of the other ethnic community are selective. Someone who does not live in Serbia would have difficulty comprehending that there are also ethnic Albanians who live in Kosovo as citizens. In such a situation the opportunities for manipulation are endless.

I think that it is particularly dangerous that Kosovo is a trials site of conflict with the international community. None of its representatives, and there have been several since the intervention, ended his mandate without coming under intense attack. Is it possible that absolutely all of them exhibited such open bias in favour of the Albanians?

11. If Kosovo were to remain inside Serbia, what would be its status? Is Serbia economically able to support two million ethnic Albanians who do not accept Serbia as their state?

A policy that rejects a solution and after suffering heavy losses returns to that same solution is irresponsible, and, I must also say, unwise. The autonomy of Kosovo has unfortunately been exhausted. The unwillingness of the two sides to prepare an atmosphere conducive to dialogue before sitting down at the negotiating table demands international arbitration.

The Serbs in Kosovo must assume responsibility for their own fates. Like ethnic Albanians in southern Serbia, this is not possible without taking part in elections, working in joint institutions and encouraging joint initiatives. These things are now done by NGOs, but their activities are completely ignored by the media. Relations between the Serbs and the Albanians are present only in the form of incidents - past, present and potential future ones. All talk of Kosovo is chorused and there has been no dialogue for years. There has been no self-reflection, especially in respect of mass crimes. Dobrica Ćosić's argument that insisting on one's own responsibility would "provide the opposing side with arguments for blackmailing us" is intellectually and morally inferior and potentially very dangerous for Serbia in today's ever-changing environment.

12. Are the "standards for Kosovo" achievable, and is it necessary to change UN Security Council Resolution 1244?

Let us be realistic: in the long term the "standards for Kosovo" are a means of civilising both the Serbs and the Albanians. But at his moment in time the key tasks are ensuring the safety of the Serbs and defining their minority status in accordance with international standards.

As a means of discarding the ethno-nationalistic matrix, which reproduces self-containment, backwardness and a culture of crime, standards are a century-long process, and the status of Kosovo is a burning problem. A realistic policy would be one heading towards a solution. In respect of independence for Kosovo, the Serbs must not repeat the mistake they made when they abolished autonomy and rejected the idea of a republic within the former Yugoslav federation. Without that it is not possible to restore mutual confidence, if any had ever existed, or to establish peace, which has always been unstable here.

Ph.D. history, researcher, author

**Zivorad Kovacevic:
All Solutions Must Allow
for the Mutual European Future**

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

Associations of Kosovo in the past: a wonderful excursion I went on with friends in my youth; many friends I had there and an idiotic policy that drove a wedge between us and led peoples to regard each other as enemies. Kosovo today: I often visit Kosovo in my capacity as co-president of the Civil Dialogue - the first crossing of the border at Merdare was a shock for me (it is the most impenetrable border in Europe), Pristina has become disproportionately large and lost its former charm, the urban spread is uncontrolled and reflects huge social differences, people have a hard life; I have met many sensible and responsible people with whom we co-operate in an atmosphere full of mutual confidence which leads to friendship. Tomorrow: how would I know? Democracy, safety, progress and success - I guess. That is my heartfelt wish.

2. How do you see the current situation in Kosovo and do you accept the new reality? How true are claims by some people that Serbia has de facto forfeited Kosovo?

The situation is serious, full of tensions and feelings of transience. Only those who are politically blind do not accept the new realities and find inspiration for their actions in history or myth. Serbia has lost Kosovo for good, if one thinks in terms of restoring its former status. Kosovo is not lost for Serbia if it is not territory that is paramount but the establishment of normal relations, restoration of security and full equality for the Serbs and other non-Albanians and the protection of historical monuments and religious facilities. In that case Kosovo could again also be Serbian and the Serbs could be responsible participants in the political process.

3. Two opposed views on Kosovo continue to exist: the Albanians' and the Serbs'. Do you see any prospects for conciliation and a historical compromise in Kosovo, having in mind other peoples' historical experiences?

If one side says "full independence and nothing else", and the other "independence is out of the question", then there does not exist what we call in negotiation theory a zone of possible agreement. With such firmly entrenched positions dialogue is not possible, it is a farce and could only do damage. But dialogue is possible about a whole range of concrete existential questions of vital interest to both sides. The more or less universally-held view that all interests of the Albanians and the Serbs

are opposed and mutually exclusive is simply not true. We in the non-governmental sector will try to demonstrate this in practice (within the Civil Dialogue). The joint (Belgrade-Pristina) expert group is working on identifying those common interests and proposing concrete solutions.

Personally, I do not like great words like "reconciliation" and "historical compromise". The ambitions in this phase in history should be more realistic - to normalise institutional, economic, cultural, media and human relations, counting on a united European future as a key factor.

4. How do you see the resolution of the problem of Kosovo?

The word is not solution but solving. It is a process which requires wisdom, responsibility, patience and a readiness to make compromises and concessions. If the status quo cannot be maintained, that does not mean that the problem will be solved by some sort of "final" status - before as well as after that, there are many questions which can and must be solved.

5. If you were a member of a delegation negotiating on the final status of Kosovo, which solution would you be willing to accept: independence, conditional independence, a federation, confederation or union of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, or another option?

None of them. First of all, what does the "final" status of Kosovo mean? In the countries and region which are in transition, what can be described as "final"? For a certain stage in historical development, joining the European Union could be final. Every status (of not just Kosovo, but also Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) is transitional, provisional and developmental. For this reason all solutions need to count on a joint European future of all these regions, because the only thing that is indubitable is that the people and political elites of all of them have chosen to become a part of the European (and Euro-Atlantic) integrations. This is the key optic through which the resolution of the Kosovo problem should be viewed, because European conditions and standards already contain everything: development of democratic institutions, political stability, human rights and personal security, economic progress. And normalisation of relations in the region. The final status, which is most likely to be unsatisfactory to everyone, is in itself no guarantee that it will provide us and the world with an institutional framework in which disputes will be resolved more rapidly and priority given to the European goal. Quite the contrary: it could easily be an additional element of instability in the region.

Let us look at the solutions on offer, proceeding not from their attractiveness but from regional and broader international reality. Firstly, full independence for Kosovo. Kosovo has already achieved effective independence from Serbia, but not with respect to the international community - in that sphere there is an ongoing process of gradually functionally awarding/capturing de facto independence. The difference between de facto (conditional) independence and de jure

independence is nevertheless not at all unimportant. Internationally recognised independence for Kosovo will open up quite drastically the problem of regional stability: two Albanian states in Europe directly threaten the already fragile stability of Macedonia and Serbia, and of Albania itself. Such a solution also runs contrary to the principle of inviolability of borders in Europe. The fact that they can be altered by agreement of interested parties does not help in this particular case. The consent of Washington and Brussels is not enough for independence: UN Security Council Resolution 1244 also needs to be changed. The Russians and the Chinese are hardly likely to welcome such a move: they would have their own reasons for a veto (Chechnya, Tibet). The announcement that talks on the final status of Kosovo will open around the middle of next year strengthens the conviction that a solution has already been prepared and that the more powerful segment of the international community (especially the United States) has opted for independence. I do not think that things are that simple. It is not even certain that negotiations will begin next year, because the deciding factors in the world will not open up a problem before they develop a starting position. Another factor will influence the date when dialogue on the future status will begin: the "standards before status" concept means that a very long list of democratic and security standards needs to be realised before the time comes for talks on the status, and this is not very likely to happen by the summer of 2005. The Institute for Peace in Washington (which is a 'non-governmental organisation of the US Government') has drafted a document outlining eight different options for the final status, "but not including immediate independence or Kosovo's return under the rule of Belgrade". This and the public support expressed by prominent American and European figures for an international protectorate, "independence-minus", conditional independence and similar options indicate that genuine dialogue is yet to begin even in the innermost circles.

Whatever chance there was of retaining Kosmet as an integral (autonomous) part of Serbia was gambled away long ago thanks to Milošević's disastrous policy based on repression, and its fate was sealed once and for all by the rejection of the agreement offered at Rambouillet. All that remains is the empty shell of sovereignty "awarded" by Resolution 1244. Is it realistic and justified to continue fighting for that option, not only in view of the non-existent prospects in the current international environment, but also from the standpoint of Serbia's own interests? Processes have been going on in the meantime involving the establishment of a completely autonomous institutional framework for Kosovo, which have the imprimatur of the United Nations and which are irreversible, which means that they should be not just acknowledged but actively supported, particularly by the Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo, but also by Serbia's Government and its political elite.

In the third option on offer - territorial division, a sort of compromise solution - all the main problems remain intact, like they would in the case of full independence for Kosovo: redrawing of borders in Europe, a division means recognition of the independence of (a somewhat smaller) Kosovo, therefore also the creation of a new Albanian state in Europe, and to the preceding must also be added a completely new problem - that of a "humane" resettlement of peoples, as there does not exist an unbroken territorial link of the Serb minority with Serbia. The same goes for other equally unrealistic combinations: federation, confederation, a Serbia-Montenegro-Kosovo union and others. The state union of Serbia and Montenegro is also well on its way to disaster, and it would be ridiculous to add another and even more controversial element to that hybrid.

6. How should the issue of the status of Kosovo be resolved: talks between Belgrade and Pristina with the attendance of the international community, a UN Security Council decision, or an international conference?

Talks between official Pristina and official Belgrade do not have the tiniest chance of success. The decisive factor is the achievement of a consensus in the international community, and the main consideration will be security in Kosovo and the region. Only at the conclusion of that process would an international conference make sense. Nothing was ever settled at any conference, but rather in preceding processes involving patient and laborious negotiation behind closed doors. Everything else is just a show. Ultimately the Security Council will have to adopt a new resolution. Therefore, it is not or-or, but and-and.

7. Should both the Albanian and the Serb side remain addicted to national aspirations dating back to the 19th century or should they adapt to contemporary European and world trends?

Certainly not. Both sides seem to have their eyes in the back of their heads: they both trumpet about a European future, yet they look for inspiration in the past. The only correct approach with a chance for success is to move as quickly as possible towards the European family of united peoples, which means employing the coming decade as efficiently as possible for an internal restructuring and strict and creative implementation of the international obligations that have been assumed, not wasting time on myths, empty phrases and fiction. Time is our most important resource, but is also in very short supply.

8. Do the necessary preconditions exist for Serb-Albanian reconciliation and who should apologise to whom for the crimes committed in Kosovo in the distant and recent past?

I would rather talk about restoring understanding and trust than about reconciliation (to me the word reconciliation sounds overly moralistic). In that process an honest and clear-cut attitude towards our gloomy recent past, admission of the evils that were done and bringing those responsible before the judgement of international justice and of

the domestic public, gestures such as apologies (but without attaching conditions and demanding reciprocity) make very much sense.

9. Can the Serbs and Albanians live in Kosovo alongside each other, and what is your opinion about proposals to divide Kosovo into two separate entities?

If they were able to live together once, why could they not do so again? An institutional basis needs to be created to ensure that all citizens of Kosovo feel equal in every respect, feel protected from all repression, enjoy equal opportunities for education, employment, social security and participation in public life. That is absolutely possible. If a division into two entities happens, it will be the admission of a crushing defeat of the international community, the Kosovo institutions, the Serb community and the Serbian state.

10. Is Serbia a hostage of Kosovo and why does Belgrade continue to use the Serbs in Kosovo? What is the role of Serbian representatives in Kosovo in the resolution of the final status?

The only chance for Serbs in Kosovo (if they want to stay there, or cannot leave) would be if they were an active factor in the political process and not choose to remain outside it, or reject it, or continue looking towards Belgrade. A boycott would be the worst possible advice to give them, because by it they would exclude themselves from the game, however unfavourable the conditions, and the game is possibly not a fair one. They are confused, disunited and manipulated and they keep turning to Belgrade, which has its own interests and motives, which are not necessarily identical to those of the Kosovo Serbs and important for them. A politically powerful Serb community in Kosovo would be something neither the Albanian political elite nor the international community could ignore. Their voice is weaker when only Belgrade speaks for them (especially when it is not even united in its own position). That does not mean that Belgrade should be excluded from the general dialogue and care for the position of the Serb community and the fate of historical, religious and cultural monuments, but it should be involved in the way and to the extent to which parent countries care for their Diasporas. The Serbs should not focus on the question of the final status (on which their views would not carry decisive weight), but on their own position in Kosovo, whatever its status.

11. If Kosovo were to remain inside Serbia, what would be its status? Is Serbia economically able to support two million ethnic Albanians who do not accept Serbia as their state?

No, Even those who openly espouse that concept are well aware that it is unrealistic and would only take Serbia backwards.

12. Are the "standards for Kosovo" achievable and should their realisation be a precondition for the resolution of the final status of Kosovo? Is it necessary to alter UN Security Council Resolution 1244, and if it is, what should be changed?

The standards are achievable and everyone needs to focus on that. Their realisation is certainly a precondition for dialogue on the final status and a possible alteration of Resolution 1244, on which the current situation is founded.

President of the European Movement in Serbia

Predrag Simic:
I do not believe in “final” solutions

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo’s past, present and future?

First of all, it is the place where the Serb and Albanian national interests, national ideas and national myths intersect, which had been the cause of conflicts that have been going on, with varied intensity, since the second half of the 19th century. Kosovo is still the site of one of the most serious national and territorial disputes in Europe. But, after five years of international military and political presence, there is not even a glimpse of a permanent resolution that would not trigger conflicts and tension in Southeast Europe in the future. I would like to believe that moving closer to European and Euro-Atlantic integrations opens new opportunities, such as those we have observed over the past several decades in the countries that are about to get accepted in the European Union or had found a way, within the EU’s framework, to overcome old ethnic and territorial disputes and turn to future. South Tyrol is a similar example from the past, Northern Ireland and Transylvania perhaps of today, and tomorrow it may be Cyprus and, let us hope, Kosovo. Otherwise, the Serbs and Albanians, including their Western Balkan neighbors, are running a risk of becoming a ‘third Europe,’ or, to phrase it better, Europe’s ‘third world.’ Although surrounded by European Union members, they will remain in the margins of European integration and without many prospects of becoming part of it and solving their economic and social problems, which are currently instigating political radicalism and ethnic bigotry.

Although many in Pristina today believe that “Belgrade is not the partner” with whom the problem of Kosovo should be addressed, its solution, whatever it may be, will have to be reached through an agreement between the Serbs and Albanians. Without this, there is a slim chance that it would be approved by the United Nations, owing to the stand of the countries that see this problem as a precedent for solving their own problems in the future. Of course, a solution may also be imposed by a unilateral decision, but one should bear in mind that such a solution would not be imposed on an authoritarian regime that does not enjoy international legitimacy, but on the country that is undoubtedly a democratic country, despite its current problems, the country that is in the same position in which many Central European countries, which are now members of the European Union, were in the early 1990s. An imposed solution would, therefore, be a precedent that both European and many other countries are uncomfortable with. It would leave the problem

unresolved, which is, apparently, the last thing the EU is prepared to. That is why I see Kosovo today and tomorrow as the key to European future not only of the Serbs and Albanians but also of the Western Balkans as a whole.

2. There are still two opposing views on Kosovo: the Albanian and Serb. Do you believe reconciliation and historic compromise are possible between the two peoples, bearing in mind the historical experience of other peoples?

Certainly, although not now and, perhaps, not in the near future either. The Serbs and Albanians could stop each other on their way to European integration, which is the only option that enables both peoples to solve current problems, but, in that case, they would both suffer long-term consequences of such a decision. That is why those who claim that Belgrade and Pristina are not partners in the process and who are looking for a solution in an external arbitration are mistaken, as are those who see a solution in an “ultimate” separation, which would be followed by putting up a new Berlin Wall between the two peoples. The Serbs and Albanians will live together, or side-by-side, whatever a solution to the Kosovo problem will be, and they will, sooner or later, have to become each other’s partners. Also, both peoples will, sooner or later, have to accept the rules that are valid in Europe today. Borders will have to open, in the same manner other European borders are today, and mutual relations will have to be maintained the same way they are maintained in nearly all European countries.

The whole of the European integration structure is based on compromises among former rivals, who had decided, in some cases after numerous wars between them, to replace conflicts with cooperation, and I don’t see why this could not be the case between the Serbs and Albanians. If we put aside the Kosovo problem for a moment, we shall see that the interests of the two peoples are not inconsistent. This is evident in the relations between Belgrade and Tirana, which have been politically correct all this time, and which are today connected in a shared wish to join the EU and find a solution not only to mutual problems but, before all, to their internal problems. One should not forget that, despite the escalation of conflicts in Kosovo in the late 1980s, Belgrade and Tirana were the ones to host the first and the second ministerial conference of the Balkan countries. Also, after the signing of the Dayton Accord, they took an active part in renewing the regional cooperation, in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, and the Southeast Europe Cooperation Process. They shared wish to strengthened the regional cooperation originates from objective internal needs and national interests. That is why I believe that the process of reconciliation and historic compromise between the two peoples is not only possible but is a prerequisite for European integration of the region as a whole.

3. What solution do you see for the Kosovo issue?

I don’t believe in “final” solutions. During the 1990s, I was looking for a model among successful solutions to ethnic and territorial problems in Europe, similar to the solution the Italians and Austrians found for South Tyrol, not because I believed that they could be copied mechanically, but because I saw in them a political will to get out of the vicious circle of disputes and to open European prospects for both sides. In the meantime, similar solutions have multiplied (between Hungary and Romania, Great Britain and Ireland, etc.), and we see that all those solutions had helped those countries free themselves from the fear of ethnically motivated violence and start solving problems that were hidden behind the violence. The saying that “democracies do not make war,” at least not among themselves, may sound like a cliché, but it is certain that a democratic system helps put things into perspective and find a rational solution. Had Serbia not changed after 2000, the spring incidents in the Preševo valley and the March 2004 violence in Kosovo would have, possibly, developed into an armed conflict of wide proportions, regardless of the presence of international armed forces. The outcome of those events should also be viewed through the perspective of the countries that have been living with the presence of international troops for decades, failing to provide a solution to open conflicts. Actually, I believe that both the Serbs and Albanians need time to tackle their internal problems, primarily economic and social issues, which are the basis of radical national programs, and to organize their societies in a democratic way and on European foundations. After that, the choice of possible solutions would surely be much bigger than today.

I believe that what today is referred to as a “final” solution to the Kosovo problem will be an interim solution that would give both the Serbs and Albanians time to address, without mutual fear, the issues that are in the background of the Kosovo problem, primarily the issue of development, which is a critical issue in the region. On one side, Kosovo has, probably, the youngest population in Europe today, whose major part is not only unemployed but does not have much prospects of finding employment in the near future. On the other side, Kosovo’s resources are certainly not insignificant, but it is very unlikely that they can be exploited successfully without a developed regional cooperation, and this also applies to Serbia and Montenegro and other countries of the Western Balkans, the latter being more a political than an economic category. Although moving closer and accession to the EU is to all Balkan countries, probably, the only way out of the closed circle of underdevelopment and nationalism, those countries have to develop long-term mechanisms of mutual cooperation in order to become at all relevant actor in the modern European and world economy, which would, naturally, refer neighbors, including the Serbs and Albanians, to each other. Today, Belgrade is ready to give Kosovo Albanians a rather high autonomy, but it expects them to offer in return the same amount of autonomy to the Serbs, Albanians and other non-Albanian

population in Kosovo. This seems to me as a reasonable compromise, but I expect the Albanian side to also disclose their platform for talks and, above all, whether they are ready for a compromise and in what direction they see a possible compromise.

4. If you were a member of a delegation negotiating a final status for Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to agree to: independence, conditional independence, federation, confederation or a union of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, or some other solution?

Each one of these solutions has its advantages and drawbacks. It is unlikely that the majority of Albanians are prepared to agree to anything else but unconditional independence, but that is unacceptable not only to the Serbs, who after their experience following 1999 do not have any reason to believe that independence would bring them any good and the majority of whom would, most likely, move out, but also to the international community, which is well aware of the consequences that would have on the stability of other so-called Western Balkan countries. We already had a federation, which, in regards to the constitutional protection and status of its numerous ethnic communities, was more advanced than many other European countries at the time, but this still did not prevent it from disintegration. One should not forget that the Albanians had an equal status in the federation and participated in all of its republic and federal institutions, especially under the 1974 Constitution. Albanian Sinan Hassani, was president of the SFRY Presidency in the mid-1980s, but that didn't stop the centrifugal forces, which, following the 1981 Kosovo unrest, lead to the federation's disintegration and the bloody outcome during the 1990s.

Serbia and Montenegro are now in the state union that is moving closer to the EU on the so-called twin-track, and this political system may evolve over the next years, depending on the success of their reforms and, of course, on the democratically expressed will of their citizens. This also applies to Kosovo, whose political institutions have yet to show whether they are capable of providing normal and, above all, safe life to all of its citizens and accepting their legitimate interests. In that respect, the most serious trial for them will be the status of the Serbs, Montenegrins and other non-Albanian communities. The same way Albanian politicians nowadays often say that the Albanians cannot accept to go back to the status they had before 1999, the Serbs and Montenegrins could rightfully say that they cannot accept to return to the status they had after 1999, which was marked with ethnic violence and discrimination against the non-Albanian communities. The fact that preconditions for the return of those who were forced to leave Kosovo after 1999 have not been created does not leave much room for a dialogue on "final solutions." That is why I repeat that, whatever the status of Kosovo will be in the coming period, its final status will be defined by the readiness and capacity to build a multiethnic society, on which the future of relations between the two peoples will also depend.

5. How should the issue of Kosovo's status be solved: through a dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade with the presence of the international community, by a Security Council decision or at an international conference?

First of all, through a dialogue between those who live in Kosovo, because the type of a possible dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina would, to a large extent, depend on that. I believe that politicians who think that it is all over are mistaken and that, regardless of Belgrade's stand, the international community will impose a solution over the next year. I repeat, a "final" solution would lead straight into an ultimate ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, development of an insurmountable wall between the Serbs and Albanians, and would leave an open issue in Europe's Southeast for a long number of years.

6. What, according to you, is the role of Belgrade and Kosovo Serbs in solving the status of Kosovo? Who should represent the Serbs and which delegation they should be part of, that of Pristina or Belgrade?

This, primarily, depends on the political will and readiness of Albanian politicians to convince the Serbs, Montenegrins and other non-Albanian communities that their interests will be protected within the existing institutions. Apart from the occasional political declarations by Albanian politicians in Kosovo, such as those, for example, made under the pressure of the international community following the events of March 2004, there was little will to meet the legitimate requests of the non-Albanians in Kosovo. The reluctance of Albanian politicians to accept decentralization of government in Kosovo and to offer the Serbs, Montenegrins and all those who live with them today the same thing they had been demanding from Belgrade for themselves for years will not remove the justified fear of the non-Albanian communities, and it does not benefit their own demands either. Those who were forced to leave Kosovo after 1999 see status talks as their last chance to solve their own status. That is why, both the Serbs and Montenegrins living in Kosovo, as well as those who were forced to leave, see Belgrade as their only support in protecting their interests and their right to return. So, whether a delegation that would come from Pristina would include non-Albanians depends on Albanian politicians and their readiness and capacity to convince all those who live with them that the delegation will represent their interests too.

7. Do Kosovo Albanians have a concept for the Serb community within an independent Kosovo?

Judging by the events in Kosovo after 1999, the answer is negative. Despite the presence of international forces, several thousands of people went missing or were killed in Kosovo after 10 June 1999, over 200,000 people were forced to leave, while the violence of March 2004 showed that nothing much had changed in this respect after four years of international administration. Despite of it all, the Serbs accepted the invitation of the former U.N. high representative in Kosovo in 2001 to join the work on

what originally was referred to as a “legal framework,” and what soon became the Constitutional Framework for Kosovo, but none of their proposals were accepted. In autumn 2001, they responded to the high representative’s call to vote in the first election for the interim organs of authority, but that did not change their status essentially. One of the reasons for that was a “constructive” mistake made in the Constitutional Framework itself, which is based on the rule of a simple majority in the nationally mixed area, which does not leave mechanisms for protection of vital interests of ethnic communities that were recognized not only by the former Yugoslav constitution but also by the current constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example. Under those circumstances, participation of the Serb community in the Kosovo organs of authority does not provide real guarantees for the protection of its interests, and, I believe that this will be an important topic of all future talks between the Serbs and Albanians until modern mechanisms of the so-called consociative democracy, in brief, the right of ethnic communities to protect their interests from majorization, are incorporated in political institutions. For Albanian politicians in Kosovo, this issue is today a test of readiness of their will and capacity to build a multiethnic society in Kosovo, which is something readiness of ethnic communities to join Kosovo’s institutions will also depend.

8. What should Albanian political leaders and the majority population in Kosovo do towards a speedier return of the Serbs to Kosovo, and what is Belgrade’s role in this?

In the first place, Kosovo Albanians have to understand that they are in power today and that this power carries responsibility, before all the responsibility for those who live with them, that Slobodan Milošević is no longer in power in Belgrade but democratically elected authority which wants to lead Serbia into European integration, which is ready to assume its part of responsibility for the stability of the region, and which is ready to make agreements and compromises that will lead to that. Turning down invitations for a dialogue coming from Belgrade at the time the authoritarian option, which was not ready to make concessions, was in power in Belgrade was understandable, but it cannot be understood or accepted today, when Belgrade is offering unequivocal guarantees that it wants the European option for itself and for its neighbors. Until that happens, it is difficult to expect that Kosovo Serbs will be ready to take part in the Pristina organs of authority, which, so far, have not convinced the Serbs that they are ready to acknowledge their interests too.

9. Can the Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo, and who should apologize to whom for the crimes committed in the distant and near past?

I already gave an affirmative answer to this question. Kosovo belongs to the Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins and all those who have been living there for centuries. It is not true that there is an “age-long hatred”

between the Serbs and Albanians, because they have been living together for centuries and shared the same fate of the Balkan peoples. The symbol of this is Albanian national hero Gjergj Kastrioti- Skenderbeg, who is the symbol of the struggle for freedom of all Balkan peoples, and who has also found his meritorious place in the Serb history and national tradition. Differences and disputes came later, especially during the setting up of national states in the Balkans and often under the influence of interests of external powers, but I believe that there are many things that refer and will refer the Serbs and Albanians to a common life. There are actually many things in our recent history that we should and we will apologize to each other for, and the sooner that happens the sooner we shall be freed from the heritage of the past and we shall find a way to live together. Whether we admit it or not, all that has happened to us over the past twenty years was the consequence of wrong decisions made by both the Serbs and Albanians during the 1980s and 1990s, because the modern crisis did not start in Kosovo either in 1991 or in 1987, but much earlier, with the 1981 unrests in Kosovo, at the time when both the Serbs and Albanians, like other European peoples, had the opportunity to choose a different future without mutual fear and conflicts. When democratic political processes started in Serbia following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord, Albanian politicians turned a deaf ear to numerous calls by the democratic opposition to unite in the struggle against Milošević’s regime. The Albanians had actually contributed to the survival of the regime until the end of the 1990s. Today, we are again in a position to make long-term decisions and we have the support of Europe and the international community as a whole, which is prepared to offer the Serbs, Albanians and other Balkan peoples the same thing it gained for itself after World War II – life free of fear from wars and ethnic conflicts. But, the decision depends on our capacity to accept the opportunity or not.

10. Is Serbia a hostage of Kosovo today, and why does official Belgrade continue to use Serbs in Kosovo? Why does it continue to pursue the old policy of non-acceptance of Kosovo’s independence?

I would rather say that peace in the region and its European option are, to a large extent, hostages of the resolution of the Kosovo problem. If a solution is reached in the manner that has become a rule in Europe, that is through negotiations, respect of interests of all those living there and those who wish to return, and compromise, the road to European integrations will be open to the Serbs and Albanians alike, and to all of his neighbors. If that does not happen and both side, or only one, maintain their position, how will they justify their requests to join the EU tomorrow, that is if they both share this goal, which is based on the policy of a patient search for compromises?

11. Can “standards for Kosovo” be met, should their realization be a prerequisite for a final solution of Kosovo’s status, and does U.N. Resolution 1244 need to be changed?

An answer to that question has to come from the Albanian majority in Kosovo. It depends on them whether the standards will be met or not, because the standpoints of the Serbs, Montenegrins and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo, Serbia and the international community will depend on that answer, both in short and long terms, and in keeping with a solution for Kosovo's "final status." The policy of the Albanian community in Kosovo will be tested on that very question, and the relations among those living there, as well as the position of their neighbors and of the international community on Kosovo, will depend on the achieved results.

Professor of the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade

**Svetozar Stojanovic:
Kosovo as a third federal unit
does not solve the problem**

1. What is your attitude to Kosovo's past, present and future?

I am a Serb, and it is a well-known fact that Kosovo has a very important place in the Serbian tradition and identity. I have never lived in Kosovo, which does not mean that I have never stayed there. Kosovo is a very serious problem, because the vast majority of the local population wants independence, it is not satisfied with the autonomy of any kind. On the other side, the state of Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro, insists on Kosovo being part of its integrity and sovereignty. I don't believe that there is someone among our statesmen and politicians, and they depend on the electorate (I am an independent intellectual, and I don't depend on anyone), who could sign a decision to give a part of the state's territory up. So, the problem is extremely serious, it is one of the most serious problems today.

2. How do you describe the current situation in Kosovo? Do the Serb political elite and the Serbs from Serbia accept the newly created reality, and how true are the allegations that Serbia had actually lost Kosovo?

I always make a difference between public statements and what people really think when it comes to such sensitive issues in the political, legal and moral sense. I don't use the lost Kosovo formula. I prefer to speak about the serious problem that has to be resolved with an agreed solution, not only between the Serb and Albanian sides, but also by the U.N. Security Council and some other foreign factors. As we all know, this is not only a serious problem, but its seriousness is magnified by its regional context. I hope negotiators have also learned something from the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. According to international law, Kosovo is part of Serbia. However, Kosovo was also part of the Yugo complex as a whole, and we all know how horrible was the tragedy we've been through.

3. There are two opposing views on Kosovo: Albanian and Serb. Do you see a possibility of reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind the historical experiences of other peoples?

Of course I do, I am a born optimist. In the end, even the decades-long problem between the Israelis and Palestinians will be solved. I believe our problem will also be solved. Naturally, it should be clear

to everyone that this is not the problem that can be solved hastily, over night, instantly, but in stages only. I have presented to the public a rather idiosyncratic project of mine: since Serbia is now preparing a new constitution, I proposed something that I described as territorial restructuring of Serbia. I suggest that parts of Kosovo and Metohija that are "bordering" with the rest of Serbia and with Montenegro declare themselves in a democratic way on whether they want to remain parts of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija or they want to be included directly, and not indirectly through the Autonomous Province, in Serbia's jurisdiction. That would lead to a territorial reduction of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, which would solve a part of the problem, leaving the other, equally difficult, part to be negotiated as well. This would be an easier way of solving the problem than "more than autonomy, less than independence" formula. It sounds nice, provided Kosovo and Metohija does not become a third federal or confederal unit, because that would not solve the problem, but we would only deceive ourselves.

4. Does your idea of dividing border-areas of Kosovo correspond with the idea presented by Dobrica Ćosić?

No, it does not. Dobrica Ćosić is rather radical. He proposes a revision of the state borders but, as you already know, it is very difficult, even impossible, without international agreements and an approval of the U.N. Security Council. Such a revision would have consequences on the region as a whole, because others would be able to say: why can't we break away. Let us not examine the Balkans as a whole; let's mention the former SFR of Yugoslavia and the lessons that should be learned from its disintegration. I have organized a series of articles in the Politika daily, and, in the lead article, I listed nine models that are flowing around, but I, naturally, advocated my own model.

5. If you were a member of a delegation negotiating a final status for Kosovo, what solution would you be prepared to agree to: independence, conditioned independence, federation, confederation or a union of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, or some other solution?

Hypothetically speaking (because I would never accept to be a member of a delegation even if I were invited), I would be in favor of my proposal in the first phase, at least. After its realization, perhaps the best thing would be to discuss the status of a reduced Autonomous Province within the European integration process. We shall all become part of the European Union and some kind of resolution phases can be anticipated. If a complete breakaway of a reduced Autonomous Province is chosen as a solution, it should be applied in all areas of the former SFR of Yugoslavia. That would, most likely, lead to a somewhat larger Serbia, somewhat larger Croatia, somewhat larger Albania, a rather smaller Bosnia and Herzegovina and a rather smaller Macedonia, and even to a somewhat smaller Montenegro.

6. But, the authorities in Belgrade keep insisting on Kosovo as part of Serbia's territory, with a degree of autonomy that is rather debatable. However, this leaves us with a logical question about whether Serbia is capable of functioning as a state with two million Albanians, who are unanimously against integration within Serbia, and with Kosovo, which is the most underdeveloped part and has a rather high birth rate?

We are too small a nation and state to be able to bear up with such a burden. Some other solution has to be found. I am not a lawyer and I have not systematically studied other solutions found worldwide, but they should be considered too. Kosovo and Metohija is also a rather poor part, it still has to develop, and a very flexible and original solution has to be found. For example, the way Finland has solved the problem with their Swedes, and then South Tyrol, etc. should be examined.

7. Who should decide about Kosovo's status: Pristina and Belgrade, with international mediation, U.N. Security Council, or some international conference?

I don't believe the U.N. Security Council will agree to brutally impose a solution without either of the two sides taking part in it, if nothing else but to draw their points of view closer together. On the other side, the constituencies are also a problem. Albanian politicians are as much politicians as Serb politicians are, and it is also difficult for them to be flexible in public. That is why, I believe, it would be much better to start off with discreet talks among independent intellectuals. It is being said "standards before status," and since I am a philosopher, I see a metapolitical issue there, an issue of right to life. That issue comes before any other standard.

8. Judging by a number of indicators, Serbia is a hostage of Kosovo and the Kosovo issue, and that is why it cannot develop, adopt a new constitution, recognize its own borders, or join integrations. Would it be brave and human on behalf of Serbia's elite to assume responsibility and solve the issue with one resolute move, that is, as much as it may sound absurd, by recognizing Kosovo's independence under certain conditions relating to the rights of Serbs?

Human or not, just or not, but if we speak about the political elite, I don't believe that will happen. I don't believe anyone among them would sign something that includes the word "independence." Let's make a distinction between a de facto and tacit situation, and de jure and an explicit situation, because I believe that a solution should be searched for in that area. Something may go on for decade as a de facto and tacit situation, without making it legal or explicit. However, our political elite will, in the end, have to go to a referendum, because the question should be posed to the nation as a whole.

9. Is the Kosovo issue a democratic, territorial or ethnic issue?

It includes all of those aspects. It is not only democratic, because democracy exists within the state and it is a phenomenon within the state.

(There is no some global super-state or global democracy, although its embryo may be in the European Union one day, but, for the time being, the EU itself includes national states.) So, there is your previous question: where are the state borders, are they going to stay as they are now; what are the Albanians – are they an ethnic minority in Serbia (according to international law, they are, but they are not a minority in Albania, because that is their national state), and what are they in Macedonia (that is an even more difficult question), for example. So, Kosovo and Metohija is an ethnic issue, and it is also a democratic issue since both peoples have to take part in making a decision.

10. Can you say why Belgrade officials use Serbs in Kosovo and exploit them, in a way, by setting up some parallel structures there, while some similar structures exist here in Serbia? What would be the role of Kosovo Serbs in solving the Kosovo issue – should they be included in Serbia’s delegation during talks or in Kosovo’s delegation?

They should be part of both delegations, some in one, others in the other, so to say. That is why I suggested a territorial restructuring, aiming at making things easier rather than more complicated. Let’s universalize the “status” issue in the whole of the former Yugoslav area: which standards apply to all peoples of the former Yugoslavia and not only to the Albanians and Serbs? I believe that a tragic mistake was made with Yugoslavia. The U.N. Security Council should have organized a conference on Yugoslavia to discuss the rules (which could be explained and fitted into international law) for those leaving the state and those staying in it. I assume that this would have resulted in a series of homogenous national states, but not “clean,” of course. That was not done. Instead, it was insisted on our republics remaining as they are, which left a number of issues unresolved. You know what Bosnia and Herzegovina looks like now and what problems it has, you are aware of the situation in Macedonia, you are familiar with the situation the Serbs from Croatia are in... Not to mention the problem of Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija. I don’t understand those people from Western Europe: when someone mentions national states here, an outcry goes up there. Why do people of Western Europe have the right to national states and others don’t. I don’t have any kind of violence in mind but agreement. One cannot pick out one problem from our region and address it separately. Here, let me be brutally frank: if someone says that Kosovo and Metohija should depart, you will have referendums of the Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And, what shall we do with the Albanians in Macedonia...?

11. But, under the 1974 Constitution, the Kosovo and Vojvodina issues remain unresolved. Kosovo was not part of Serbia, but it was an integral part of Serbia and was an equal member of the SFRY?

First, the 1974 Constitution was both good and bad. It was bad because it was rather confusing, contradicting. When a solution was not possible, Edvard Kardelj put, in agreement with Tito, some ambiguous

and even contradictory phrasing. For example, Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia and a constitutive part of the federation. Another problem with that constitution was that it referred to peoples and republics as if they were the same thing. It did not include self-determination of the republics but the self-determination of the peoples, which, in practice, has turned into national communisms. Yugocommunism existed over a certain period of time, and then we followed the road of national communisms within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, or the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The 1974 Constitution produced a confusing, self-contradictory and self-paralyzing combination of a confederation and a federation. It functioned somehow for as long as the man above the constitution was alive, and that man was the charismarch, as I refer to Tito. But, since he also was a living being, he died and the 1974 constitutional system became the real system that could not function. That is how we wasted some thirty years – the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It is too long even for a huge country, let alone for small Yugoslavia. Milošević deluded himself about what he was going to achieve with the Dayton Accord. He believed the West would let him be and would allow him to treat Kosovo and Metohija as a purely internal state affair.

12. Can the Serbs and Albanians live together in Kosovo, and who should apologize to whom for something that has been done in the distant and near past?

I am a philosopher and I don’t value declarations highly. Politicians like it, but I don’t find it to be serious enough. I would prefer something else – to have independent Albanian and Serb intellectuals sit at a table one day and analyze the origin of the problem and bring some understanding into it. I have no one to apologize to since I have not taken part in anything that is bad. Brant is unmatched, he was an exceptional notable. On the other side, it was the Holocaust. Six million Jews were burnt in crematories. Our own tragedy hurts us mostly, but those things cannot be compared. I prefer rational highlighting and establishment of individual responsibility within the same framework. It goes without saying that criminals on all sides have to be punished. No one can evade responsibility, but it has to be individual and not collective responsibility. There are no accountable collectivities or nations, only individuals, groups and power-wielders within a nation.

I believe the Albanians and Serbs will be able to live together, which they already do in Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. Take, for example, things that happen in individual lives. Neighbors quarrel, they seldom make it up during the same generation, but new generations are coming. In the end, the framework will be completely different – a united Europe, which will move even further from the Union and, one day, perhaps become the United States of Europe...

13. How do you evaluate the conduct of Albanian political representatives over the past five or six years, and could they have contributed more to the return of the displaced Serbs?

In principle, I believe they could have done much more. I believe my proposal could make the problem easier. In one part, there would not be a problem, but the problem of the Serb enclaves, churches, monasteries, and property would remain in the bigger part of Kosovo and Metohija.

14. Do you think it is time to change something in U.N. Security Council resolution 1244, and why does Belgrade insist on its implementation?

Because it says there that Kosovo is part of territory of Serbia, which is obviously a political guarantee. I don't know how to revise it, because a revision implies some sort of solution outlines. One has to get to some outlines. And, as for the standards, let's not discuss their feasibility abstractly. That is why, let us compare the Serbs there and the situation the Albanians at the administrative line between Kosovo and Metohija and the rest of Serbia are in. I am under the impression that the Albanians living in those three municipalities are rather safe.

Sociologist, philosopher and director
of the Serb-American Center in Belgrade

**Cedomir Jovanovic:
Future will win over past**

A new policy searching for a resolution of the Kosovo problem must focus on the citizen. A first step of every democratic process, including Kosovo, is to accept the fact that a political approach that denies human life in the name of an ideology, national mythomania and struggle for territories always comes to its ultimate defeat. That is why each new policy has to start from the everyday interests of all citizens in both Serbia and Kosovo.

What is the interest of the Serbs and Kosovo Albanians? Before all, it is a life without conflicts and tension, and establishment of conditions for a better future, in keeping with European standards.

Fifteen years after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Serbia is still unable to realize the essence of the problem. The reason for this is clear to all. The policy of Slobodan Milošević was abusing national interests for the preservation of the personal power. Serbia was the victim in state terms, and its citizens were victims in social terms. With one million of displaced people, hundreds of thousands of people killed or robbed in the whole of the territory where Milošević's power or its influence could reach, we are back to square one. Yugoslavia had disintegrated, new states were set up, but in the territory where the forces of the past won in 1990, the process still goes on.

It is in the Serbian interest to complete the process as speedy as possible, peacefully and through a democratic procedure, because Europe only accepts independent and sovereign states, whose borders are indisputable and recognized by neighbors. That is why a resolution of the issue is the prerequisite of Serbia's European future. The issue cannot be solved without defining the status of Kosovo, and solutions to those problems will define the state of Serbia. The disintegration of Yugoslavia will be completed the way it started – in Kosovo.

The future status of Kosovo depends, at least formally, not only on the stand of the citizens of Kosovo and the international community but of Belgrade as well. I use the word formally, because Belgrade will not play an essential role in regards to Kosovo's status. This position of Belgrade is the consequence of two facts.

First, it was the wrong way of pursuing policies, which reached its most extreme form during Milošević's rule and, as a result, the international community is now clear in its stand that there is no return to the situation of before 1999. But, even without that stand, it is evident

that there are political, economic, and military and security, and social limits of the Serbian society and state, which rule out even a hypothetical possibility of Kosovo being under Belgrade's administration. Most of Serbia's citizens are aware of this, but very few political parties or their leaders are prepared to say it in public.

The other fact is the undoubted wish of the majority of Kosovo citizens to gain independence. Their aspiration has the support of a vast majority, which makes an essential difference between Vojvodina and Kosovo, regardless of the same constitutional status they had in the Republic of Serbia at the moment of Yugoslavia's disintegration. The Serbs make up the majority population in Vojvodina, which makes their wish to live in Serbia as legitimate as the wish of the majority in Kosovo not to live in Serbia. Their wish came true in 1999, when Milošević signed the Kumanovo Agreement just to stay in power, admitting that Kosovo de facto, that is essentially, is no longer part of Serbia. The United Nations and NATO exercise the supreme authority in Kosovo. Resolution 1244, with which Kosovo de jure, that is formally, remained in Serbia, was only a diplomatic compromise with the man who has already been indicted for war crimes by The Hague in order to put an end to the agony that he had put Serbia and its citizens through.

After all that, the interest of every citizen of Serbia and Kosovo is to make the actual situation legal. What is more important, this awareness prevails among the international community.

During the whole of the 20th century, Belgrade and Pristina were unable to solve the problems between the Serb and Albanian peoples independently and without mediators. That century was a big chance that was missed, and I believe that no more time should be wasted today on looking for something that was lost yesterday. The same goes for the rerun of Dayton or Rambouillet, a new international conference where the world would be addressing something we are unable to solve ourselves. On two occasions during the 1990s, we were in the focus of world events. International priorities are different today. This means that the fate of Kosovo will be addressed in stages, through a process that will be controlled by the Contact Group and, in the end, verified by the Security Council. Kosovo's final status is part of European future of the Balkans as a whole. That is why it is without doubt that the European Union is responsible for that future. Aspirations of the majority of Kosovo's citizens towards independence have to be conditioned with their acceptance of European values.

Serbia's conservative, anti-European, forces of the past use the unresolved state issue in their political struggle against modernists and reformers. The situation in Kosovo is similar. The people of Serbia have to pay the bills made in the past. All successful peoples in Europe, in their own way, have done this. At the moment, the Serbian government does not want to do it. They find it easier to leave the bills and interest rates

to children. It is the policy of maintaining the war option in the future. This situation is unacceptable, and it has to be changed by recognizing authentic representatives of the Serb community in Kosovo, who would define a policy closer to the interests of the Serbs living in Kosovo than to Belgrade's need to manipulate those people.

The Kosovo issue is Europe's issue today, because a common future of Serbia and Kosovo is possible only through their membership in the EU, which is the shared framework of national integrations of all Balkan peoples. The history of the Balkan conflicts needs to be left behind forever. In order for the past not to reoccur, justice must be administered to the past, its architects and executors. In the past century, Serbia failed to integrate Kosovo. Kosovo Serbs are miserable, manipulated and they are living in ghettos. But, the Albanian majority will not become happier if they settle scores with the rest of their Serb neighbors and their historic heritage.

Serbia and Kosovo may reach Brussels through a historic agreement between them. They need to agree on Kosovo that would be free of police and military terror, on Kosovo free of apartheid. Kosovo's freedom is based on freedom of each individual, and on individual and collective rights. The Serbs had failed to create such Kosovo and that is why they lost it. Kosovo Albanians now have the same responsibility and obligation. Not only the Albanian political elite in Kosovo, but ordinary citizens also have to be aware that this responsibility means only one thing: learn from mistakes made by the Serbs. National emancipation, modernization and a better life for all in Kosovo will depend on the treatment of the minority, which is the supreme principle of modern European civilization. When the Serbs in Kosovo start feeling safe and start living like the Albanians in Macedonia, for example, Kosovo will be truly free. By helping them make such Kosovo, Belgrade will help the Serb minority that wants to live in Kosovo in the best possible way. By doing that, Belgrade will show that it is truly ready to accept European values, because Belgrade has to face the fact that the Serbs live better in Timisoara, Ljubljana or Zagreb than in Kruševac or Bor. The Serbs are now waiting in long queues in front of the Croatian Embassy in Belgrade, just like they used to, up until recently, form long queues outside the embassies of Canada, the United States, Australia or New Zealand. Young people are exchanging their Serbian citizenship for Croatia's passport. The same thing will happen in front of the embassies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania or Republic of Kosovo, unless Serbia gets back on its modernization and democratization track. That track means that Serbia has the capacity to learn from Israel, which had realized that it would not be able to get a free and democratic state, unless it enables the Palestinians to have the same. The democratic Israel is aware that by doing so it demonstrates power and not weakness.

Every Gordian knot that Serbia has inherited from the past has to be cut quickly and bravely. We are the generation that has to seize the last chance.

Kosovo Albanians and Serbs will again sit in the same parliament and elect president. That parliament is in Brussels, and a president will be shared by all states of the united Europe.

Former Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, President
of the Center for Modern Politics, Belgrade

Desimir Tosic:
Does Kosovo has any prospects?

From my early childhood I viewed Kosovo problem differently from others in our milieu, who tended to have a generalized view on that issue. In my last grade, in 1934, our Nis secondary school, organized an excursion to Kosovo. Upon my return my father asked me about my impressions. I remember telling him that I saw few Serbs, and only in Pristhina, and that we walked a long part of the journey. The landscape from Pristina to Murat's Turbe was desolate and rare settlements looked poor. My book in Cyrillic "The Serb National Problems," published in 1952, in Paris, also had an ethnographic map of the whole Yugoslavia, and in line with the 1931 census data, I had to mark down all Kosovo municipalities and districts as the majority Albanian ones. But some towns, notably Kosovska Mitrovica, had the Serb majority population. I faced a complex and difficult task, for subconsciously I had in mind not only the ethnic, but also the historical dimension. It would be good if both majorities, the Serb and the Albanian one, in this way perceived the Balkans problem, for Kosovo is the Balkans problem and also of the whole region, and not only of Albanians and Serbs.

Even the present-day Kosovo reality is not simple. Kosovo is not "a southern" Serb province de facto, but it is neither an independent or sovereign territory. Serbs should be aware of the fact that the present-day Kosovo is not the same area that they have ruled for decades, after 1912, barring in some years of Tito's regime. On the other hand, Albanians should be cautioned against the likelihood of ever gaining independence by armed struggle, expulsion of Serbs, international connections, for such solutions would generate new problems in the Balkans, which both EU and the international community would like to avoid at any cost. And I underscore-at any cost.

Reconciliations in the Balkans are possible only in graves. Neither Albanians nor Serbs have reached the necessary political level for reconciliation, hence it shall not come to pass in a foreseeable future. We have not reached the political and cultural standards of Germans and French in the second half of the 20th century! Unfortunately throughout the whole history of the Albanian-Serb relations neither the Serb or Albanian milieu spawned a movement, albeit a weak one, demanding if not reconciliation than a debate and a quest for resolution. That fact indicates the general cultural and political mood among Albanians and Serbs. I dare not say anything about Albanians, but in the last hundred

years, Serbs in Kosovo mostly voted for die-hard extremists, while in their majority settlements in Serbia, that is, in suburbs of Kraljevo, Krusevac and Kragujevac, they also backed the extremely militant forces in Serbia. Instead of showing gratitude to Serbia for its hospitality, those Serbs from Kosovo who vote for extremists, that is, the majority of them, are simply taking vengeance on Serbia for failing to ensure their continued rule over Kosovo. By acting so they help extremists in Serbia and prevent the Serb state from moving forward.

It is very difficult to talk about one aspect of settlement of the Kosovo issue, namely prospective participants in negotiations. The early 90's talks between presidents of the 6 SFRY republics indicated that Serbs and Croats competed in swindles and hoaxes. Perhaps the best political con-man was Slobodan Milosevic. I have a feeling that the incumbent authorities are more interested in continuing Milosevic-style policy than the line pursued by Djindjic and DOS. It would be most logical if representatives of Albanians and Serbs, along with participation of Albania and Serbia, were the key and decisive factors. But it also bears saying that such talks are not useful in the current Balkans conditions. I think that such talks and decisions stemming from them are possible if guaranteed by EU. It became manifest that the US, that is its decision-makers, on the issues of Bosnia and Kosovo took a discriminating stand against Serbs. It would be also good if an agreement between Albanians and Serbs, in presence and with participation of EU representatives, be certified by the UN Security Council.

I personally think that participation of Kosovo Serbs is more important than participation of Serbia proper, though the Serb representatives have twice compromised themselves in the last elections by refusing to vote, and by refusing to act as representatives in talks with Albanians and international factors. They have also compromised themselves as people who belong to Serbia and Kosovo, and even more to Kosovo, in the given circumstances. By their misconduct they unwittingly demonstrated that they were an unimportant political factor and the Serb authorities minions in the intra-national debates.

The claim that Kosovo is "factually independent" is not accurate, for it is "independent" with respect to Serbia or Serbia and Montenegro, but the international community "factually" rules over Kosovo, with full assistance of Kosovo Albanians. But it is not independence, rather an "assistance." Had Serbs in Kosovo been more politically savvy, they could have assisted the international community in its management of Kosovo.

Both the Albanian and Serb society should wonder why their intellectuals and social figures prefer to keep mum about the Kosovo reality. Social workers as early as in the 90's showed a total political immaturity by destroying in a very short span of time the great accomplishments of the Serb people in the 20th century, the Yugoslav community, etc. I think that

most of those social workers find it hard to "sober up." A fast coming of age of ordinary citizens is more likely, than the one of our fashionable poets, militant high clerics, writers with hefty political appetites, but devoid of any political acumen- "many ambitions, scarce ammunition"- insecure politicians mostly without ideological and other beliefs and convictions.

If someone asked me about possibilities for cohabitation between Serbs and Albanians, I would quote the example of the former Yugoslavia. The survival of the Yugoslav community hinged more on Serbs, a relative majority people, than on stands and activities of Slovenians and Croats. Since the Albanians constitute an absolute majority in Kosovo, viability of cohabitation hinges more on them than on Serbs. Recent, March 2004 events in Kosovo showed that repression and so-called ethnic cleansing were not an exclusive privilege of the Serb and Yugoslav authorities and Slobodan Milosevic. By extension I would like to pose the following question: What would have happened to the Serbs in Kosovo since 1999, if they had not been protected by the international community. And let us not forget that Albanians existed in Kosovo, despite all discrimination and repression, before and after 1941 and 1945. And that they have managed to increase their population many times after 1912 and to reach an economic and cultural level superior to the one reached by some areas in Serbia.

Now allow me to make a digression, in historical terms, though the Balkans societies are saturated by their historical mythologies, if not by history proper. Serbs lost power in Kosovo in 1389. Dusan's Code of 1346 reported on Albanian, Greek and Vlach inhabitants in Kosovo, and thus gave a multi-ethnic picture of that country. But both Kosovo Serbs and Albanians don't see anything positive in such a multi-ethnic composition of yesteryear Kosovo, regardless of short life of that state and its non-influence on the Serb medieval state. However both Albanian and Serb representatives should make it public that the Serb rule over Kosovo was not five-centuries long, from 1389-1912. Both ethnic communities, if one can use that term for them, in the Middle Ages were under the Turkish rule. Admittedly some Serbs and Albanians used the Turkish rule to promote their special interests.

The task currently faced only by the Albanian authorities in Kosovo is a difficult one, but they must meet the first condition, that is attain the pluralist, democratic society in Kosovo, at least to a lesser extent. What is required of the Serb social workers is to publicly explain problems of Kosovo, Serbs and Albanians. The same thing is required from the Albanian social workers: to speak and write, to persuade their fellow-nationals that the final status of Kosovo cannot be determined until the Albanian political society shows a minimum of tolerance towards the Serbs living in Kosovo, and to the Serb returnees. It is necessary that the Prishtina government draws up a plan and ensures funds for the accommodation of the Serb returnees, that is, provides for their housing and livelihood until jobs are created for them. With some good-will and

the international community's funds that historical step would be built into a final agreement between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians, and later consented to by the governments of Serbia and Montenegro. However, it should be remembered that Kosovo is the problem not only of Albanians or Serbs, but also of the region and EU.

In Kosovo remained, in any manner and shape, in Serbia or together with Serbia and Montenegro in an union, the majority of Serbs in Serbia would have to accept and grow accustomed to the political and ethnic principles of pluralism. It is difficult to predict whether Serbia in the months and years to come shall pass that exam. After Serbia's failing of the Yugoslav community exam, and in view of the impression that the Serb society in recent years has stagnated instead of moving forward, any realistic observer may view with pessimism and skepticism such a possibility. But in the Balkans miracles happen, though mostly negative ones. Let us hope that the Kosovo-related miracle shall be a positive one.

I think that the UN resolution 1244 shall lose its importance, if some solutions are reached by political men. Had Serbia started the arrests and trials of its criminals, not of soldiers, but of armed people who had killed civilians and imprisoned soldiers, the Hague Tribunal would not have been put in place. Hence we are at the very beginning, the nucleus of the evil, we, the existing Balkans societies and ethnic communities and our so-called elites. That was the case with the SFRY, that is the case with Kosovo.

I don't dare say that I see solution of the Kosovo issue. Prior to any real and realistic answer to that question it is necessary to complete activities which I have previously mentioned. Kosovo problem is the problem of time, and not only of people, program and methods. Only when "standards" take root in the Kosovo society, among Albanians and Serbs, it shall be possible to propose solutions.

But if it is possible at all to say something about the final settlement of the Kosovo status, I'd say that in that regard I see as a key player, European Union, as the community of states and regions. I don't know to which extent the UN resolution 1244 would impact the final status of Kosovo, but I know that Europe shall help Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo along with them, to accede to European Union. It is important, or at least desirable, to make them accede to EU together, for in that case "standards" of EU shall help make the borders between Kosovo and Serbia, and Montenegro, superfluous. Then the free trade, free movement of people, and free circulation of ideas shall set in. People shall move freely between Nis and Prishtina, or Podgorica and Kosovska Mitrovica, like they do now between Budapest and Belgrade. In such an ambience I probably see some future for this whole Balkans region.

Publicist from Belgrade

Mileta Prodanovic:

There will be an external solution

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Perhaps we'd better start off with the list of things which Kosovo does not represent for me. For me it is not "the heart" of Serbia, or a mythical centre, a condition for the survival of the state. But, on the other hand, I am professionally linked to the arts and have personal interests in the national, regional, territorial and pan-European heritage, which cannot be the subject-matter of political and other disputes, and must be preserved regardless of the "identity of the owner of the land." That pan-European heritage, is protected on paper, under all international laws. Therefore for me Kosovo was a place with a wealth of monuments of all kinds, and later a place in which that heritage was systematically destroyed in the face of total indifference of those who took on themselves the responsibility to guard it. My family is not from that area, but, by a set of circumstances, my father after majoring from university, applied for the job in the then-founded Artistic School in Pec and spent several years there. In Pec he perfected his artistic skills, and later frequently painted Metohija-themes on his canvasses. During my childhood our frequent house guests were his former pupils from Pec and later his students at the Belgrade Arts Academy. In early grades of primary school I joined the excursions to and tours of monasteries, which he guided in the capacity of lecturer of fresco-painting. I remember that during our strolls through the Pec centre, many people used to greet him warmly. I remember vividly the smells and atmosphere of the Theological Faculty in Prizren, which was destroyed in the Kosovo conflict. I remember our visits to his friend, a prominent Albanian, whose ancestors owned one of the famous Pec towers with their last floor made of wood. By the way those towers were also damaged. I hope that they have reconstructed them. That Albanian man, a friend of my father, in his very old age and his wife were killed in 1999, in the yard of that tower by the Serb paramilitary soldiers, while his neighbor, faced with the death threat, opted out of burying them. The news reached us during the bombardment and my father was visibly shaken. I must have been an exception, for my generation in Belgrade knew nothing about Kosovo, or rather considered an uncharted territory....When politicians and notably the media stepped up their instrumentalization of emigration of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija, suddenly all and sundry began taking very radical stands. It is obvious that the demographic picture has been radically changed, but I have never allowed myself to resort to simplified interpretations thereof. Reasons thereof were diverse. In the central Balkans there have always been those gradual

movements towards north... Cvijic wrote about them in his books. So I can say that I grew up in a house in which ugly words about Albanians have never been uttered. Maybe such houses are rare here, I don't know...

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality? How true are assertions of some circles that Serbia has factually lost Kosovo?

Situation is not good, but it was not good five and ten years ago, and even fifteen years ago. As viewed from Belgrade the "newly-emerged" situation looks very provisional and volatile and everyone has his or her personal reading of it, and interconnected expectations. I don't have an answer to the second question. It depends on how you interpret the presence of Serbia. If you are referring to Serbia's long tradition of repressive policy in Kosovo (and consequently, the tradition of using Kosovo as a pretext for repression in the whole state), it is clear that such practice cannot be repeated. If someone in Serbia cannot see Kosovo and Metohija without that element, then the answer is yes-in those terms Serbia has lost Kosovo.

3. There are still the two opposed stands: the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see a possibility of a compromise and historical reconciliation between the two peoples?

Perhaps we could say that there is also the third stand, the one of the state of Albania, which contrary to what is widely thought in Belgrade, is not totally and always identical to the one dominantly espoused by Kosovo Albanians. The same situation is in Serbia, for the views of people in Serbia differ from the views of Bosniak Serbs, despite the official efforts to present them as identical. Historical reconciliation requires a good knowledge of history. However, nationalists on both sides tend to stick to very distorted, caricature-like views of history, they are people marked down by their simplifications and ignorance. In a distant future, under the European umbrella, after civilized coming of age of both peoples, those tensions would be most surely eased. I would truly love to live long enough to witness the time in which my fellow-nationals shall start studying history and traditions of Albanians, and consequently discover that Albanians are great- small people, just like Serbs, and that our histories and historical troubles are much more similar than anyone would currently dare admit.

4. Are you, as a person whose opinion is appreciated in Serbia, ready to make an apology to Albanians for all that Albanians have experienced in the last 100 years at the hands of different Serb regimes?

I am not so convinced that my opinion is valued in Serbia, notably because it is at odds with the extreme views which are much cherished by our milieu. I have always thought that I as a Christian have an obligation to observe and to fight against the evil in myself, and if I stoop to identify myself with a group or nation, then to fight also against the evil among that group or nation, instead of covering it up, hiding and glossing over it. I have taught myself to resist the immediate, automatic reciprocal question: "And what about the evil

that those, others have done to me and my family?" For those, others, should think about their misdeeds. It is a matter of their conscience. If they don't want to do that, so much the worse for them. If those who consider themselves Christians, stuck more to that principle, there would be less evil. I have always maintained that in the Balkans three groups of pagans waged their wars under three different religious flags. In those terms I deem an apology my personal obligation. But that would be an individual apology of not-so-important person. Apology of active participants in those events and notably apology of a collective body, like the recent one made by the government of Republika Srpska, would carry much more weight. I must admit that as an Orthodox Christian I took pride in the actions of the brotherhood of monastery Decani, that is, in their rendering of shelter to Albanians, at the height of Milosevic delirium. People in Serbia don't understand that the drivers of refrigerating vans who transported corpses of Albanians, if they had another chance-and judging by many appearances they are likely to have it- would be ready for money or other gains, or for the benefit of the caste which they serve, to transfer the bodies of your neighbors, or your brothers, parents, children. Unfortunately people fail to see how things tie in... During the 1996-1997 protests, when Milosevic Praetorian guard beat up students and people in the streets of Belgrade, many shouted "Go to Kosovo!" For me that was the only ugly aspect of those protests... but many failed to see it, or to be bothered by such messages.

5. How do you see the solution of Kosovo problem?

Solutions in the past also presupposed many bitter pills for both sides. In even less complicated situations settlement of that issue was not tackled. I fear that also this time around the solution would be an external one, as it has often happened in the Balkans in the past centuries. That external solution shall not please either side in the dispute, but shall be probably the only possible solution.

6. Do Kosovo Albanians have a concept for the Serb community within the independent Kosovo?

I believe that they do, or to put it more precisely, that some circles close to the Kosovo authorities have that concept, which, under some circumstances, could be a good framework for the Serb community. But though I and some other people may have faith in that concept, it is not likely that it would ever be trusted by those for whom it is intended. And therein lies the problem, despite it being the best possible concept with incredibly high guarantees of all possible, international instances.

7. Is decentralization envisaged by the Government of Serbia for Kosovo applicable to the rest of Serbia?

If we think logically, than it seems to be applicable. But if at the level of the country a satisfactory framework for the minorities rights is reached, perhaps the minorities themselves would not insist too much on decentralization. It seems to me that the incumbent authorities in Serbia fail to grasp that an accelerated navigation towards the inclusion in the

European community, could put these and other issues on a different, possibly less fragmenting, and more interconnecting plane.

8. If Kosovo remained within Serbia what kind of participation of Albanians could be expected in the central authorities in Belgrade in case of independent Serbia, or in case of survival of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro?

That participation shall hinge on the will of the Albanian structures to take part in that project. If that least likely scenario unfolds the offer should be in line with European standards. Degree of acceptance of that proposal would be identical to the degree of attachment of the Kosovo-Metohija entity to Serbia. But that solution is most resented by extremists on both sides. I believe that the hillbilly Serbs start sweating at the mere thought of the Foreign Secretary of Serbia of Albanian descent. On that plane even in relations with Montenegro there is a certain mix of mythical elements... even in people who are not necessarily nationalists. In independent Serbia even today an Albanian from Presevo or even Kosovo and Metohija has better right in terms of citizenship, scholarships, etc. than a Serb from Montenegro, a Montenegrin citizen, even if he were, in his mind, or in minds of others, a direct offspring of Milos Obilic.

9. Are you ready to recognize independence of Kosovo? If not, please state your "no" reasons. And in your opinion how should the status of Kosovo be resolved?

I could give you a long and winding answer to that question, but I hope to ultimately make clear my stand. I frequently remember a scene from Antonioni's film "Blow Up" in which the main character played by David Hemmings in a London club listens to the "Yardbirds" concert. At the end of the concert the lead guitarist Jeff Back smashes his guitar "Fender-Stratocaster" and the fans rush onto the stage and start fighting over the guitar's pieces. David Hemmings throws himself into the fighting lot, manages to grab the trophy, the guitar neck, and rushes out with it into the London night. Far from the club's maddening crowd, in a deserted street, after having closely scrutinized his trophy, he finally throws it into a garbage can. Thus if independent Kosovo were a happy community respectful of the rights of all citizens, in which the minority people heritage would be protected and nationalism suppressed, in which no-one speaking a Slavic language would risk being beaten up, in which no-one in a car with the Serb license-plates would run a risk of having his windshield stoned, in which children would not be taught -as it is written in recently published guide of a Tirana NGO, - that "Albanians, spearheaded by Lazar, together with the neighboring peoples, in 1389, were defeated by the Turks in the Kosovo battle" ...then it would be very enjoyable to have such a neighbor. But if independent Kosovo were a Bantustan in which the foreign oppressor is supplanted by the domestic one, if the whole country were owned by several people or clans, then it would not be particularly gainful even for Albanians proper, and such a country would become a big regional problem. A man need not be the denizen of Leskovac,

Podgorica, Kumanovo, Kostur, Janjina, let alone of Ohrid, Bar, and Skopje, to feel unpleasantly upon finding in a tourist guide of a serious foreign publisher the map titled "Ethnical territories of Albanians."

10. What kind of relations should be established between Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade in case of independence of Kosovo?

Perhaps I am wrong, but I feel, that unless something is essentially changed, there will be no Serbs in independent Kosovo. Serbs have already left their original places of residence, the less known part of heritage made up of the village medieval churches has been destroyed, around the most renowned ones, hypocritical games are being played- some say that they are not in fact Serb churches, and call them neutrally "Byzantine," or even "originally Albanian Catholic ones on which Serbs have painted some frescoes"- therefore there is a gradual movement towards the stand that in Kosovo there have never been the people called Serbs. Those situations are then arbitrated by international experts hailing from countries having no connections whatsoever with the European heritage, and ready to sign anything. And that bring painful memories of the destroyed mosques in East Bosnia and revives stories about Muslims who have never lived there... Thus, I think that with an independent Kosovo as dreamed by Kosovo nationalists there would be no chance of establishing any kind of relations as implied by your question.

11. How to effect repatriation of Serbs? Should the Serb army and police return to Kosovo too and under which conditions?

After all these years I am really no fan of any army. But I have nothing against that idea, if we talk about a professional army integrated into international alliances and the police with high standards, and if the pertinent agreement presupposes its presence in determined places. But in terms of a kind of reconquista, of which many dream, I am definitely against the army and police return.

12. Does the world want to resolve the Kosovo issue and why it has not been resolved before, when it was much easier than today?

I am sure that there were more propitious moments. If my memory serves me well, after signing of the Dayton Accord, there were attempts to reach a comprehensive solution for the whole Balkans. At the end even both sides made major concessions, but then the whole process was mysteriously halted. A man living at the end of the 20th century in the Balkans was exposed to an incredible quantity of conspiratorial theories, and hence I don't want to think too much in that direction for it would lead me to making some indeed incredible conclusions, for example that some favored a bloody denouement rather than an earlier agreement, that at play was a scenario intended to undermine the whole European project, that the crisis hotbeds are intentionally stirred up, etc.

University professor, writer and painter

Zoran Djindjic: Belgrade can no longer govern Kosovo

1. Mr. President, recently you have been very much engaged in some Kosovo -related initiatives: Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro treating Kosovo as part of Serbia was adopted without Albanian participation, and you have begun tackling the resolution of the Kosovo issue. Can you tell me the purpose of all those initiatives and your interpretations of the stands of the international community and Kosovo Albanians, or how do you see the resolution of Kosovo issue?

It is nearly four years since the international community took on all powers in Kosovo and Metohija, and the time is up to start tackling a more lasting solution, or perhaps to take into consideration all options and consequences thereof. In my opinion a lasting solution may be the one respectful of interests of all the sides, notably of Prishtina and Belgrade. For many years we had a faulty solution respectful only of Belgrade's interests, and all judicious people were talking about its short life, about its negative consequences, and that has exactly happened. And now, if we inversely respect only interests of Prishtina, I fear, that by analogy, we shall see consequences not good for our region, for our neighbors.

Therefore my first demand is to raise that issue, and no-one should be afraid of that. The international community representatives have instilled fear in me, for all of my interlocutors treated it as an indecent topic. To be honest I have tested for months my interlocutors in London, Brussels and Paris. I would suddenly tell them: "OK, the time is not ripe to talk about the final status, to define it, in view of a volatile situation on the ground, but tell me briefly how do you imagine the situation in five or six years time, if you think that now is not the time to tackle that issue...And my impression was that people did not want to think about that and that they hoped that a mere set of circumstances would lead them to a good settlement. And now let us see which is that development and set of circumstances and what is in fact happening?

What is happening is that the international community in 1999 took on all attributes of sovereignty, that is, the executive, judicial and security components with the idea of discharging them until normalization of relations. It planned to subsequently stage talks on the final resolution, which, as it was promised, would meet all legitimate interests. What is happening now is a gradual transfer of those prerogatives on the local structures. That means that the international community not only discharges the executive, judicial and legislative powers but also gradually

transfers them on the local structures, with the idea of capacitating them for their, future, full exercise thereof. That means that sovereignty of Kosovo would one day be rounded by recognition of de facto sovereign state. And then the issue of co-existence of such an independent Kosovo and independent Serbia and implementation of their own reforms and definition of their own legislative, executive and judicial powers, would be posed.

We shall have two independent systems facing demands to fine-tune themselves. And for Serbia and for me, as a man who swore to defend the state interests, it is unacceptable on two grounds: firstly, because such situation de facto prejudices the final status, bypasses the resolution 1244 would be given, and secondly, because, at one moment of time, we would face fait accompli, by which Serbia would become a hostage to such a Kosovo. And thirdly I don't see how then we would be able to fine-tune the two systems in order to meet the EU demand, similar to the one regarding Montenegro: harmonize your two systems, if you want us to talk with you. That implies that the process of harmonization would last 10 years, and during that long period of time, both Kosovo, we and our neighboring countries, would be put on a side-track. That means that such a solution would not be good either for Kosovo Albanians, for they would be our hostages and vice versa, and together we would be pushed in a situation in which every element would embark upon his own path. And then we would face the following request: and now you when you have reached your final destination, please harmonize your systems.

Therefore my initiative aims at asking the international community to treat us more creatively, to think about a shape of the region in ten years time, and to gradually embark on the Kosovo-related talks. I have my ideas as to what should be put in place and the turn of developments, but for starters, I ask them to open their eyes and not to hush up our problem, because I don't see how such hushing up can be productive.

2. You have said that the present-day Serbia is a hostage to Kosovo, and that in parallel Serbs from Kosovo are hostages to Belgrade and the Serb policy. Why then part of the incumbent authorities in Belgrade does not try to make a clean break with the policy of the former regime, in view of the fact that 99% of Albanians demand independence of Kosovo?

-OK. Let us then talk about other states. If we pose the question about a genuine wish of 99% of Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of 99% of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and of 99% of Albanians in Macedonia, than if that wish is turned not a principle, then we shall face major perturbations...I think that we should ask both Serbs in Serbia and Albanians in Kosovo what they want and then if 99% of both favor one-sided, but from their standpoint also a legitimate solution, then we should try to reach a compromise. Let us take for example Bosnia and Herzegovina: during the search for a solution there were 18% of Croats

there...Incidentally, two years ago when the OSCE was drawing up a list of voters for the parliamentary elections in Kosovo, it established that there were 18% of Serb voters in Kosovo and Metohija. Then it was also thought that Serbs were a national minority which could only participate in some institutions, but not be vested in any collective rights. On the other hand, for Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina some collective rights were defined, but not the right to secession. We don't seek for the Serbs the right to secession, but we demand that they be respected as a national community with a certain constituent importance, and not only as a community with the right to participation. If we talk about compromise, then surely that compromise must be sought both by Belgrade and Prishtina. And indeed I am against our closing of eyes before the general public and saying: Kosovo is a province in Serbia. No. What is written is only a description of a legal state, obviously in keeping with the resolution 1244. In other words that document spells out that Kosovo was arranged in a certain way and thus opens the way for definition of a new relationship, which must have new elements and not constitute going back to square one.

I am against one-sided solution of Belgrade, for that would be tantamount to closing our eyes before the reality. But I also don't favor much yielding in terms of our saying: OK, now part of population organized themselves in part of territory, and as 100% of them favor a certain solution therefore all the others must accept it. I don't think such a solution would be conducive to anything good. First of all such a compromise would not lead to stability. That, under certain circumstances, may be done by force, but then the question of effects thereof, on the order we should establish in South East Europe or in the so-called Balkans, remains.

I am of idea that we should provisionally settle the issue of sovereignty or status in line with our quest to join the EU integration. All sides could renounce their one-sided interests if they had a higher goal, notably, our qualifications for the EU integration, for within that EU we shall be a region and then the issue of sovereignty would be formulated differently. If we now, because of the issue of sovereignty defined in a classical way, miss out on our chance to join the EU integration process, we shall pay a high price, that is, be left behind together with Albania and Macedonia. In other words our accession to EU would be considered in a second phase, in 20 or 30 years time. By then the best representatives of some nations would have left for greener pastures, due to lack of developmental prospects in countries isolated from Europe. And by then we shall have only old households, some territories, shall live in a kind of state but without our children. I don't think that it is good solution either for Serbs or Albanians.

3. If the international community handed you over Kosovo to govern it, how would you organize life there?

I think that it would be a too big bite, I mean if representatives of Albanians, and not the international community, came to me and stated:

We would like Belgrade to govern Prishtina, I would tell them: Thank you, but, -no. In other words I would like us to reach an agreement, to divide some powers, to make a compromise. In my mind the Kosovo and Metohija compromise should be similar to the one reached by the Muslim-Croat Federation. Namely the Serb and Albanian community should have their statuses and try jointly to define the order in Kosovo, accepted by the rest of Serbia as an asymmetrical status, superior to the provincial one, but inferior to the status of an independent state. And then after a while we could see whether it is workable with assistance of Belgrade and the international community, notably in economic terms.

When I raise the issue of status of Kosovo, I in fact raise the issue of status of Serbia. How can I define sovereignty of Serbia in its territory, when I don't know which territories belong to Serbia? How can I define the electorate, when I don't know its size and nature? If we say: it is not your electorate, someone can say, Wait a second, sorry, but what about Serbs who have lived there, don't they constitute the electorate too? But they are not the electorate. And that means that Kosovo is an independent state. And if Serbs make up electorate, how come that the others don't make it? We must find a solution in order to be able to deal with the vital issues, notably the one of economy.

4. Is there an idea of division of Kosovo within the new strategy? Who are the Albanian politicians that you could now discuss those issues with?

If ultimately the Albanian politicians admitted that they were not interested in any co-existence, but only in independence, then it would be impossible to oppose their resolve. We would say: OK, an international conference shall effect a certain delineation, a certain division, for the majority of Serbs, 99% of them, don't want to live in such a state, and we must respect their will, and let us see which their interests are. That is the last-resort solution which the world does not like, and which we don't like. But if there is no other solution, that solution is better than a continual, open, energy-sapping threat. We should talk about that with those politicians able to implement what we agree upon. Currently with Mr. Tachi and the majority parties and the parties willing to engage in such talks. For us it would not be useful to talk with the cosmopolitan-minded Albanians, as much as it would not be useful for them to talk with some local Serbs who want to stay and therefore say: We shall stay even if we have Martians for our neighbors. No. We must reach a deal in Belgrade with those who can stand by a decision, and with those politicians in Prishtina who can also stand by a certain decision, bear the brunt of public criticism, for public opinion is always more ambitious than the reality permits it...

I fear the susceptibility of both sides to the influence of our own public opinion. For the easiest thing to say in Serbia is: Kosovo is the heart of Serbia, We shall never give up Kosovo, Kosovo shall remain ours at any cost, Kosovo is only provisionally occupied, and thus gain the majority of

votes. But that would be a false majority. The easiest way for the Albanian politicians to win over the support is to say: We are independent, we are not interested in Belgrade, we shall negotiate with Washington. But I think that such reasoning is not good for the future development. What we need in Kosovo are politicians who think strategically, who shall understand that agreement with Belgrade is an element legitimizing them too. The fact that the international community leaves the issue open, is not conducive to a lasting settlement. For if something is not de facto accepted, then the international community de jure shall never be able to legalize the one-sided solution. I think that the international community shall not be able to find anyone in Belgrade ready to legalize a situation totally unfavorable for Belgrade. And thus the unresolved situation shall remain. Therefore it is better to make a compromise conducive to a treaty and legalization of situation, even with some concessions, then desire the maximum, and fail to reach an agreement. If we, in the next 10 years, that is by 2010, don't latch on the process of integration into EU, then I think that it would be the biggest rout for all the active politicians in these territories...

5. Are you, as a modern politician, ready to apologize to Albanians for the crimes committed against them in the distant and recent past, and which are the chances for the Albanian and Serb reconciliation in the future?

I think that there are chances for that reconciliation in the future. Of course that I am ready to express my regret for the suffering of many people. I don't find it difficult, for me and my family truly regret that past. We have experienced many attacks and shocks, and were branded as traitors during a decade-long regime of Slobodan Milosevic. I was on a hit list drawn up by Milosevic regime, and many such scenarios were at play. I know what it means to be the second-rank citizen in my own country. I truly regret the fact that we have lived in the state which pursued such a policy and had such authorities. But that is the past, let us draw the line, for we are the generation unburdened by that guilt. Therefore we, as politicians always striving towards a compromise, we should become a factor of compromise and accordingly search for a compromise satisfying both sides. But I reiterate: compromise for the sake of a higher goal, that is modernization of our society, promotion of our economy, promotion of life of ordinary people. And I am sure that could be a uniting motive. For mutual affections cannot be a uniting motive. I am aware of that. Therefore if you ask me whether Serbs and Albanians can reach an agreement, my reply is: no. But they stand the chance of making an agreement for the sake of reaching together a goal. For both peoples, are in fact, practical peoples. We are not fundamentalists, we are not ready to die because of our hatred of others. No we are not. It is the historical circumstances which led to such a set of mind. In principle we are Europeans who care about their families, and not about big ideologies. But those ideologies sometimes contaminate our lands, but then communism and nationalism

wane, heads cool down, and the participants in those campaigns feel sorry for what they have done. Therefore our post-war cohabitation with Croats and Muslims is not accidental. When earlier I spoke in Bosnia against the existence of hatred, people viewed me with resentment. Today they say: "Such were the times." I think that we can cohabitate. And whatever happens between Belgrade and Prishtina, we should bear in mind the fact that they are geographically quite close, and that no policy can change it. In ten years time Belgrade and Prishtina shall remain where they are now. We cannot separate the continent and then say, let us forget, think no more about it. That is the road from Prishtina to Brussels goes via Belgrade, geographically speaking. If that road is closed, then the bypass is much more difficult, more complicated. And that is a reality. History has thus arranged everything several centuries ago, and we are here not to obstruct history, but to try to draw from that reality something good for the citizens living here. Therefore I am convinced that a compromise is possible. I am also convinced that extremism only temporarily brings benefits, but that it in the long-run brings losses to all sides. And I am convinced that we are the generation which could bring about a compromise, for we have witnessed terrible events, without participating in them, without having any responsibility for them. And that is my hope. If we don't do that I think that we then shall shoulder the burden of a failed historical chance.

Interview of 7 February 2003, was broadcast in the "News Program" of the Albanian section of "Voice of America" on 14 February 2003.

Rada Trajkovic: Errors and illusions about Kosmet

Today in Serbia it is difficult to talk about Kosovo from the standpoint of Kant's "disinterested observer." Objectivity is something that always eludes us when pondering possible solutions to the traumatic Kosmet reality, notably its every day aspect.

In this regard the Serb political thought is currently reduced to the quest for an ideal, but also realistic solution finally bringing stability and peace to the region. Defeatism, disenchantment and pessimism of our political elite, unfortunately reduce our ability to reach such a solution. Serbia still shuns a proactive engagement in this area, and justifies its passivity by the young age of its democracy. But a four-year old democracy, like a four-year old child, should be at least able to rightly articulate its basic ideas. But, unfortunately that has not happened yet.

In actual fact the Kosmet issue is far from being resolved and it makes not sense presenting it as resolved. We face the fact of a major reduction of manoeuvring room for the actions of our state, but it nonetheless exists. Openness to new ideas and interpretations of that issue is necessary for the sake of revival of our tack to the resolution of Kosmet issue.

Determinism which we face today in presenting the problem of Kosovo and Metohija is a black-and-white one. In the Serb political perception Kosmet Albanians feature only as seditious citizens whose loyalty to the central state has been lost forever.

On the other hand, Kosmet Serbs are depicted as a revisionist-epic group which with bloodied hands hold tight on the formal Serb sovereignty over Kosovo and Metohija and dream of the return of Milosevic. Both perceptions are totally wrong.

Contrary to the popular belief, many Kosmet Albanians, are not any happier with their reality, then they were with the 90's one. Social and economic insecurity, the highest unemployment rate in Europe, and a troubling lack of productivity of the Kosovo society are today considered indirect threats to the existence of Kosmet Albanians. Such a social picture of an European region would be alarming even if it were not a result of such delicate political circumstances.

Today the anti-Serb sentiments are manipulated. A group of Kosmet-Albanian- political-economic oligarchs fuel those sentiments in order to capitalize on them, thus preventing the healing of the Kosmet society.

The reality is that the European Kosmet has to gravitate towards Belgrade as the only real regional and economic partner. An ideologically

and ethnically more compatible partner, Albania, would be a risky choice, since its weak and non-workable economic-social structure could not carry the weight of needs of numerous Kosmet inhabitants.

On the other hand, Serbia though still weak, has the potential to become such a partner. Economic oligarchy of Kosmet and Metohija is aware of that reality and therefore persistently fuels instability in the region. Legalization and normalization of economic interactions in the region is contrary to their interests based on instability and illegality. Combating organized crime is contrary to their interests. But Kosmet Albanians, though aware of harmful actions of their fellow-nationals, nonetheless continue to harbor the illusion that Belgrade is the principal danger, the illusion which is fuelled by an open propaganda of oligarchs of violence and crime.

On the other hand Kosmet Serbs are depicted as those who resist any change in the province and as loyalists of Belgrade.

That is another illusion of ours and international political elite. Kosmet Serbs are equally devoted to the idea of stable Serbia and the idea of stable Kosmet. The fact is that they see the stable Kosmet only within Serbia, and that is determinism which they perpetuate.

European Kosmet is a regional ideal, and we jointly aspire to a civil cohabitation of Kosmet Albanians and Serbs. We must change the perception of Kosmet Serbs as subversive and destructive elements of society and finally understand their political motivations.

Yes, Kosmet Serbs are disgruntled, but not because they miss Milosevic. Their political motives are not geared towards revisionism, but towards progress, because they no longer want to mask the bleak Kosmet reality with their participation in the work of local self-rule structures, but on the contrary, to see fundamental changes effected in the Kosmet society.

Kosmet Serbs are today searching for the optimal modus vivendi between Serbs and Albanians, the one which would prevent their ethnic assimilation and finally stop the cruel cycle of terror in which Serbs are the most frequent victims.

And finally Kosmet Serbs must be defined as a bridge between Belgrade and Prishtina, currently the only existing bridge between the two now so distant towns. Kosmet Serbs today have a historical task, the success of which shall have a crucial importance for the region. Resolution of Kosmet status in this moment of maximal tensions and frustrations of both communities, is very risky and non-recommendable.

Final resolution of status would be at this moment of time unjust towards at least of one of the two ethnic communities, for it would legalize ethnic-cleansing and thwart the return of displaced persons, or, inversely, ignore the wishes of the majority Albanian community.

Middling solution is possible, but it exacts time. Though expediency is desirable, stability is even more desirable. But to believe that Kosmet

Serbs favor interests of Belgrade, at the expense of Pristhina, is a big illusion.

Kosmet Serbs are the only community in Serbia which is affected in equal measure by problems of both Belgrade and Pristhina, for political, economic, security and social realities of both governments are directly proportionate to the quality of every day, difficult life of Serbs in enclaves.

Performance of Kosmet institutions would have been much better, had they interpreted in a well-intentioned way the Serb complaints. Let us take for example privatization of Kosmet companies: non-participation of Belgrade as a legal owner of companies, despite possible political connotations, destabilizes economy and foils regional development. Reason for such an instability is not an undefined status of Kosovo and Metohija (as the leaders of Kosovo Albanians would like us to believe), but their inability to grasp the reality and accept their functional and historical dependence on Belgrade. Though memories of the former Belgrade authorities still cloud their perception, it should not be permitted that a myth poisons the future of the whole region.

Hence recommendations of some international factors that Belgrade takes on only the role of adviser in the resolution of both practical and essential problems of Kosmet, are not judicious. Such a conduct of international factors prevents key changes in the Balkans, for they, alike the protagonists of the Balkans conflicts, adhere to the obsolete historical blueprints, which instead of resolving in fact mire the local problems in abstract and non-workable cliches.

It is not possible to resolve the issue of Kosmet without an active participation of Belgrade as the seat of the central government, to which, despite voices to the contrary, Kosmet and Metohija, still belong. Our state must understand that it has a lot to offer to Kosmet Albanians, who are massively and increasingly becoming aware of how much they stand to gain from Belgrade. The time is up for all sides, both governments and a very conservative international community to pragmatically view all options, joint interests and aspirations.

To date the Kosmet issue has been always presented as the political issue. The time is ripe to perceive its other, much stronger dimension: a human or inhuman one. Kosmet is essentially a democratic question, and the one of level of civilization, and not a political one, and it should be finally understood as such.

Even in Belgrade one can hear frequently that "Kosovo Serbs have deserved their current suffering" because of their backing of Milosevic regime. It is forgotten that those people have lived for years in extremely abnormal conditions and that about 200,000 Kosmet Serbs could not numerically sustain Milosevic's regime in the millions –strong Serbia. It is a shame that a society with an enormous democratic potential for changes, the society which effected a peaceful revolution in October 2000, today

keeps mum before a drastic deformation of democratic practice in Kosmet. It is a shame that justifications for such a silence are still found, and that our impotence to cure ourselves from the political virus of a repressive society is still rationalized.

Medieval thinkers have once thought up the idea to isolate a newborn baby from any linguistic communication. That experiment was to show in which language would an isolated baby finally speak: Greek or Latin, considered to be natural languages of the human race. Today we are aware of their error and the cruelty of their experiment. But it is obvious that we are subjecting Kosmet in some aspects to a similar experiment.

We say that Kosmet is "the cradle of the Serb culture" and understand such stance as natural, something which comes with our birth and belonging to the Serb nation. But things are not that simple. Our nominal devotion to Kosmet is just an empty mask. Through our educational system we in fact don't cultivate such a feeling, but only a declarative faith in a historical paradigm. Education of our citizens about the importance of Kosmet is necessary with respect to the issue which we have been discussing, as much as education of citizens of other states is necessary in our international contacts.

International engagement of the Serb state in the resolution of Kosmet issue to date has unfolded through formal, inter-state political channels. Obviously that kind of engagement is of crucial importance. We must maintain good relations with the US, notably in the context of the US "war on terror" and their obvious interest in this region, amply manifested by their efforts and actions.

We should not forget our indispensable partnership with European nations and moreover prioritize it in view of a growing role or EU in the Balkans peace missions.

But political initiative of our state mustn't be the only international activity. We must launch other initiatives, that is appeals to international humanity. It is forgotten that the international public opinion has more potential for humanity than it is usually thought.

Ghandi-led movement appealed to a spiritual communication with its opponents, communication which transforms instead of confronting. Until the emergence of Ghandi the British Empire was absolutely sure in the correctness of Kipling's "white man's burden."

Thus our state must take into account an every day appeal to the world humanity and public opinion of states who play a crucial role in the resolution of status of Kosmet. Recent formation of the Serb caucus in the US Congress is the first step in that direction. But aside from appealing to the political elites of important international factors we must appeal also to the sense of justice of their citizens. Our success in recruiting such internal backing of Western states was to date negligible. The majority of inhabitants of those Western states have no idea of the current situation in Kosmet.

The problem of Kosovo is the problem of a serious deficit of democracy, the most drastic violations of human rights and victimization of an ethnic group based on prejudices. That is not only "our" and "theirs" problem, but also the problem of life and death, freedom and repression, humanity and totalitarianism. Our society and societies of many other countries should cure themselves of the prejudices related to the Milosevic era, for they affect the perception of justice in the present-day Balkans.

Formation of an office tasked with appealing to the international public opinion through cultural and media interaction is a necessity. That office should focus on interaction between the young people, as generators of changes, and overcoming of prejudice that the issue of Kosmet is a traditional-epic issue, and not the salient issue of drastic violations of human rights and freedoms.

There is no clear answer to the frequent question: "And what now?" But we must finally accept and use the advantages offered by the globalized world. Our tack to the Kosmet issue to date was a traditionalist one, that is, prone to emulate customary patterns of international politics. By such tack we only managed to place the Kosmet issue in the international quarantine. But we cannot allow that quarantine to continue. Moreover we have for years pompously ignored cultural and sociological roots of Kosmet affecting our society and the international community, and considered them negligible.

Defeatism and our alleged impotence have weakened our efforts to fundamentally transform Kosmet, and to finally pinpoint the conflict-generating elements. Such an identification is necessary and must be backed by an extensive plan of our state indicating our faith in a peaceful future of the region, our courage to call injustice injustice and courage to build new bridges.

Prejudices on both sides distance us from the problem, while manipulations present in the present-day Kosovo society continue to fuel in fact unfounded ethnic tensions.

We must strongly urge a necessary and functional co-operation of the two opposed sides, for through such a co-operation mutual confidence based on the European principles shall be built again. Violence cannot dictate the final resolution of the Kosmet problem. The related dictate should produce only a visionary bold, sincere and tolerant Kosmet.

Official of the Christian –Democratic Party of Serbia
Vice president of the Serb National Council for North Kosovo

Dusan Mihajlovic: Plebiscite of Serbs and Albanians

An international conference on arrangement of the West Balkans and the issue of state borders should be organized under auspices of the UN, EU, the US and Russia. A plebiscite (a referendum for Serbs and Albanians in Kosmet) on the kind of state desired by Kosovo Serbs and Albanians-Serbia or Albania!-should be staged too.

In analyzing the position of Serbs and the final status of Kosovo we mustn't forget their history which began with the Prizren League's belated-with respect to other Balkans nations- engendering and formulation of the national goal of all Albanians-"The Greater Albania."

All generations of the Serb politicians managed to find tolerable solutions for cohabitation of Serbs and Albanians in the territory shared by them for centuries. And those solutions always enjoyed a tacit or open backing of international factors, the then big powers.

In the late 80's of the past century the ruling Serb elite neglected the problems and refused co-operation with the West, and an unprecedented bellicose version of the Serb nationalism –reared its ugly head. Thus we found ourselves on the losing side, even in the spheres in which we were in the right.

Despite Stambolic-Vlasi agreement with the West on overcoming the constitutional status-related problems of the province, Milosevic rose to power on the crest of nationalistic wave and "resolved" the issue of Kosovo Serbs by the arrest of Vlasi, amendment of the Serb Constitution without participation and consent of ethnic Albanians and introduction of the military-police rule in the province.

Under the pretext of preventing the Albanian take-over of municipal powers, local self-rule in the whole Serbia was suspended. Serbs took on all power in the province, and Albanians built parallel institutions. By rejecting a dialogue and any idea of compromise Milosevic-led regime fuelled conflicts and terrorist acts of Albanians evolved into a pan-national resistance. Milosevic fell into his own trap by not being able to resolve the problems by whose "resolution" he had got power in the first place.

Thus my 1993 metaphorical warning was transformed into reality. Namely: "If Serbs and Albanians fail to agree on cohabitation in the territory which they had inhabited for centuries, then "Uncle Sam" shall come and put both in crazy people's long shirts! And the question now is how both peoples can liberate themselves from much-disliked international community's tutorship?"

Serb nationalists, in the line with the folk proverb "Who owns the pasture, owns sheep too" have proposed "amputation" of Albanians and division of Kosovo. That proposal was justified by a cruel, but hard fact that in a few years time Albanians would constitute the majority people in Serbia. Those with economic knowledge kept explaining that the Serb tax-payers would not be able to bear the high cost of emancipation of poor and illiterate masses of Albanians.

Serb intellectuals re-hashed the myth of the Kosovo battle and Tzar Lazar's difficult choice between the Empire of Earth and Empire of Heaven, and lamented about Kosmet being the Serb Jerusalem and a holy Serb land.

Quasi patriots maintained that they would rather die than give away Kosmet, an inalienable part of the Serbs state!

We mustn't forget all the foregoing if we want to tackle in a rational and responsible way the resolution of this burning national and state issue weighing down our present and our European future.

Therefore we need to separate the issue of the current position of Serbs in Kosmet, from the issue of the final status of the province, over which the UN, and not Serbia, have the sovereignty. The current decentralization plan of the government of Serbia is a good basis for talks with representatives of international community, UNMIK administration and Albanian institutions in Kosmet, in presence and participation of representatives of Belgrade and Kosovo Serbs. To concentrate anew that concern only in one body, as we had done with the Coordinating centre, would not be wise. If the current position of Serbs in Kosmet is wholly equalized or identified with the problem of the final status of Kosmet, we are likely to meet the denouement similar to the one in the Western Slavonia, Knin and parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Stately courage and intelligence are needed for the resolution of the status issue, for such elements could provide for a durability of the reached compromise. The starting point of discussion should be our common future, and not the past of Serbs and Albanians. Which rules should be binding for both peoples, and which are their distinct, separate and which common interests? Rules binding for the whole region and EU, are also binding for Serbs and Albanians. Thus the West Balkans must be uniformly arranged. If Serbs are not allowed to form several national states, then the same applies to Albanians. And vice versa.

The fact is that Serbs don't want to live in Albanian Kosmet and that Albanians don't want to live in Serbia. The only common denominator of Serbs and Albanians in Kosmet is their orientation towards the European future.

What is offered as a solution?

We have the following options:

The Albanian majority-Kosmet, an independent state.

The Serb majority-Serbia with Kosovo and Metohija as a province with a varying degrees of autonomy until Kosmet becomes and European

province, as currently suggested by B.Karic and Momcilo Trajkovic. It is forgotten that it is an age-old idea of my party relating to Vojvodina and Kosovo as European regions.

The Albanian minority- Union of independent states of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo and Metohija, similar to the idea of Confederation "Balkania" espoused by the Albanian dissident A. Demachi.

The Serb minority- division of Kosovo, an idea ascribed to the late Prime Minister Djinjdjic, currently espoused by Democratic Party member Z. Zivkovic, and rejected by President Boris Tadic.

The abandoned idea of the Dutch Foreign Secretary

- Confederation of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo and Metohija.

It goes without saying that any final choice should satisfy common interests of both Balkans peoples, and their European future. In our talks we must be rid of hypocrisy for which Xavier Solana, the public mentor of "Solania" or the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, criticized us: "Serb politicians in talks with representatives of international institutions and in the official part thereof firmly adhere to the stand that Kosovo and Metohija is an inalienable part of Serbia, but in unofficial part they admit that they don't know what to do with Kosovo and Metohija and ask to be swiftly separated from Albanians."

If we start with the right of people to self-determination and the stand that every Balkans people can have only one national state, then the following variant should be taken into consideration: under auspices of the UN, EU, the US and Russia staging of an international conference possibly on arrangement of the whole West Balkans and the issue of state borders, and if not, then of a conference on "the Serb-Albanian relations and their state-legal demarcation." As the variant of Albanians having the two internationally recognized states via independent Kosovo must be discarded, a plebiscite (a referendum for Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija) on which state they want to live in-Serbia or Albania, should be organized! In line with results of that plebiscite relations should be arranged and a state border between Serbia and Albanian drawn.

Thus we would definitely take off the agenda problems in the Serb-Albanian relations and both nations and states would be able to channel their time and their limited resources and capacities towards modernization of their backwards societies.

Independence of Kosovo would be tantamount to violations of all norms of international law, and represent a constant source of tensions and a danger to peace and stability in the region. That kind of solution would make both Albanians and Serbs expend their precious energy and time on maintaining in an unproductive way a fragile peace.

Serbia and Albania are old European states whose relations varied throughout history, but they have never waged a war, nor their relations are poisoned by mistrust, hatred or burdened by conflicts, mass graves and the Hague justice.

In this way both Serbs and Albanians remaining outside the national borders would be liberated from fear of retribution and could become a uniting factor and not the factor dividing the two nations and their states. Thus those two European states instead of representing an additional burden for EU, would in fact meet the necessary requirements for the EU membership.

President of Liberal Party of Serbia
Former Interior Secretary of Serbia

Bosko Mijatovic: Division as an option merits to be seriously pondered

Before this forum organized by "Politika" I would like to put forward a reserve option: a hard game focused on division of the province. I don't assert that it is the best proposal, or even a good one—analyses and time shall show its qualities or lack thereof—but I deem it an option worthy of consideration.

By paraphrasing words of many important foreigners that they share the Foreign Secretary's opinion of a foreign affairs issue, I shall say that that I share the Serb Prime Minister's opinion of the state policy on Kosmet. And the foregoing is important when important state affairs are on the agenda, and when the existing state policy may be considered sensible. Then we should not easily call into question that policy, or in a finicky way look for its weak points, for it is not good to give to opponents arguments and help them at least until that policy proves to be unsuccessful. Time flies and things related to Kosovo and Metohija are accelerating. It is sensible to ponder also the reserve policy proposals, to discuss them and use them if the basic policy turns out to be a failure.

The idea of division of Kosovo into the Serb and Albanian part is an old idea and apparently prevalent among Serbs. And indeed if there is dispute about rights, based on interests, it is only natural to look for a compromise.

What is the current strategy of government of Serbia? It is to persuade the international factors to ensure protection of Serbs in Kosmet through territorial autonomy, and to back in principle a civil concept of arrangement of the province.

The procedure that I am pondering would be radically different, but a very simple one: since Serbia is not likely to consent to independence of Kosmet, the only acceptable option is division of the province into the Serb and Albanian part. Arguments for that solution are well known, so I would not like to repeat them. After dying off of the first, stormy, negative responses we would possibly face the genuine negotiations.

The idea of Serbia's new strategy of division of the province is based, in my mind, on a convincing assumption that the voice of Serbia during the resolution of the final status, shall be very important. For without that voice, major complications would emerge during proclamation of independence, both in the Security Council and elsewhere. Amputation of a part of territory of a country, without the consent of that country would

upset the good customs on which the world stability hinges, and that would be resented by many countries.

Russia and China would have a hard time agreeing to independence of Kosmet unapproved by Serbia, in the first place because of their problems with their own separatism-minded regions (Chechenia, Tibet, etc.) Of course one can say that those issues are not likely to be ever debated by the Security Council in view of China's and Russia's right to veto. That is correct too, but why any country would emulate those proposing the independence of Kosmet. They would not do it out of whim, but it is true that they can be bribed by those, who hypothetically, urge, independence. But the price of those backhanders to the two countries with relatively little interests in the issue, in principle and morally, should be a high one, or at least superior to meeting the justified and sensible interests of small Serbia.

What would Albanians say? They also favor the idea of demarcation. Thus a deal could be made. For Albanians are not sure that they would get what they want-independence of Kosovo-in view of many options in the game. Moreover it is difficult to grasp why the West would favor the Albanian interests in the final stage of resolution of Kosmet issue, unless because of inertia and influence of some smaller lobbies (which is not a strong argument!).

Hence Albanians could be interested in serious talks (and I hear that they are). Of course the ideas how and where to effect demarcation are at odds, but it is important that the basic tacks coincide.

The main hurdle to the final solution satisfying both Serbs and Albanians is, paradoxically, the West. As Carl Bildt has put it: "Barring the border change, any solution agreed upon by Pristhina and Belgrade is acceptable for the international community." Embroiled in a very complicated situation, burdened by the history of its own superficial tack to this and other issues, essentially disinterested, thwarted by its own PR campaign, the West would rather delay the solution or find a partial, all-promising, conditional one.

In order to keep the strong trump cards in its hands, I believe that the West shall continue to weaken the position of Serbia in several ways.

Firstly by maintaining Serbia's bad image in the international public opinion, and through the Hague Tribunal.

Secondly, through its influence on domestic politics, either directly on political prime movers, or indirectly on public opinion by gearing it towards the feeling that Serbia has lost Kosmet and that it should reconcile with that fact (a lobby is already working on that last part of the PR campaign).

Such gestures should not anger us: that is a natural strategy of a pressure on a small and unimportant country with a view to making easier the attainment of goal, regardless of its nature. In such games neither love or hatred are involved.

And Serbia: the basic prerequisite of strategy channeled towards the division of province is at least a minimal consensus of the most important state factors on the fundamental state issues, or strategies. When that consensus is reached the said strategy could be put in place and pursued intelligently and energetically, without debilitating conflicts. But consensus seems to be lacking. Is it something so demanding?

I believe that the aforementioned strategy makes sense, though I could not swear in its success. The first obstacle is an obvious and sorry lack of resistance of Serbia. The second one is lack of interest of the West to pass a sensible judgment. And the third is a possible error in the basic requirements of the proposal. It is doubtless difficult to find a proper solution.

Centre for Liberal-Democratic Studies, Belgrade

Aleksandar Lojpur: Independence- a sensible solution

President of Serbia Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica have a historical chance to pull Serbia, Kosmet and the wider region out of the quicksand by their wise state policy and bold political moves.

They could launch an initiative and tell Rugova: Serbia is proposing Kosmet's independence but as a member of the two-member federation, that is with an Albanian and a Serb entity. Let the Serb Orthodox monasteries, churches and other monuments in the Albanian entity have an extraterritorial status, and citizens in both entities enjoy equal rights, let the joint bodies be duty-bound to encourage repatriation of refugees and displaced persons and to protect the highest standards human rights.

Then they should jointly tell the West: We have resolved the most difficult crisis in Europe, now give us the state guarantees that your largest companies shall make investments to the tune of 500 billion Euro in the region! If the West Germany invested so much in the overhaul of East Germany in a decade-long period, your 25 states can invest as much in the whole region of the West Balkans.

It shall be possible to use the above mentioned chance until spring 2005, so we still have several months. Unfortunately, in all likelihood, Kostunica and Tadic shall not avail themselves of that opportunity. In that case, the only hope is that the West shall take the matter entirely into its hands and impose a sensible solution. But then, instead of 500 billion Euro worth investments we shall have an "industry of aid," with a series of conferences on various topics and with "advisory teams" and thus remain a good training and employment ground for many, second-rank Western experts.

Nearly two years ago I espoused my views on the topic of status of Kosmet. Just after publishing of several texts of mine, the late Prime Minister Djindjic launched an initiative geared towards the resolution of status of Kosmet. Unfortunately Milosevic forces assassinated Prime Minister Djindjic and since March 2003 the trend of slowing down reforms, and in some segments even of revival of the old regime, continued.

Silence reigned over the issue of status of Kosmet until recently. The issue suddenly re-emerged as the deadline for holding referendum under Resolution 1244 approached. I shall give you one simple reason for the independence of Kosmet. Survival of Kosmet within Serbia is today factually impossible. I would like to ask all those who keep saying that independence of Kosmet is unacceptable, to present their constitutional

model of Serbia with 2 million bellicose Kosmet Albanians in the country. If we want to exclude a possibility of having an Albanian political leaders as our Prime Minister, President of Parliament or ambassador to the United Nations, with the policy and national interests totally opposed to the interests of Serbia, then Kosmet cannot remain within Serbia, if Serbia wants to be a democracy. And if Serbia does not want to be a democracy, Kosmet shall be even less willing to remain within its framework, for then the West shall doubtless back secession of Kosovo from undemocratic Serbia.

Some figures in the West urge a three-member State Union, composed of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosmet. They say that from the European angle is it a sensible solution which does not touch on the issue of the existing borders. And I say: that is not good, we have already had such an arrangement.

Firstly, it does not prevent ethnic-cleansing of Serbs in Kosmet.

Secondly, it opens the way for taking the wrong and non-judicious decisions on ethnic, and not economic and useful grounds, at the level of the state union through political representations which shall remain ethnically homogenized for long.

Aspiration of Kosmet Albanians to secede from Serbia shall persist until its realization. Political leaders of Kosmet Albanians are even ready to wage a war against Serbia in order to effect that secession. That is understandable from the 19th century viewpoint shared by the majority of Albanian (and unfortunately) Serb politicians. Has not Karadjordje's Serbia in the same way effected its secession from the Ottoman Empire?

Moreover leaders of Kosmet Albanians have to date showed that the war option is closer to their hearts and minds than a peaceful resolution of the dispute. And they favor that option because through it they could get the whole Kosmet cleansed of Serbs.

Striving of leaders of Kosmet Albanians to provoke a war with Serbia and their readiness for war, makes that war very probable, unless a peaceful solution leading to a formal secession of Kosmet from Serbia is swiftly found.

The 17 March events are indicative of the foregoing. Scenario was obvious, it has been already enacted in Croatia, when that country through its campaign "Storm" expelled nearly all local Serbs in August 1995. Albanian leaders who had orchestrated the 17 March violence expected the West to calmly watch a massive exodus of Serbs, like it had done during the "Storm." And that would have happened, if the then Defense Secretary Tadic, had not reacted swiftly and managed, after lengthy discussions, to convince General Johnson that at play was ethnic-cleansing. Only when General Johnson in his statement condemned the Albanian violence, other Western leaders followed up, by issuing serious threats to Albanians. And Albanians stopped the violence.

The reform standstill in Serbia, revival of Milosevic's forces and their political comeback, and the possibility of electoral victory of some anti-Western and anti-European forces, suited some leaders of Kosmet Albanians. They are guided by the following idea: the worse the situation in Serbia, the sooner an independent Kosmet cleansed of Serbs.

If the Serb political representatives fail to grasp that that an independent Kosmet, with the Serb entity as an equal member of the state of Kosmet, organized as a two-member federation, is in the Serb interest, and if they continue to spitefully resist the West, it is most sure that the Albanian political leaders shall anew opt for the war. The 17 March events have been quickly forgotten and Serbs are again portrayed as the bad guys in the Western media, for having boycotted provincial elections in the face of Western efforts and recommendations. It is easy to stage a new provocation and spark off the war. In that case the West would calmly watch the expulsion of the remaining Serbs and accept independence of Kosmet as a fact.

Because of the Russian or Chinese veto in the Security Council perhaps a forcibly seceded and ethnically cleansed Albanian Kosmet would not be universally recognized as an independent state, but that would not prevent a complete erasure of the Serb presence there.

Taiwan has never been universally recognized as an independent state, but it does not prevent it from acting as such. Therefore a stubborn Serb stand "We shall never accept independent Kosmet" is the shortest route for Serbia to lose Kosmet for ever and totally.

I think that President Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica should urgently propose to Kosmet President Rugova and other political representatives of Kosmet Albanians that the province be arranged as an independent, two-entity state, composed of the Albanian and of the Serb entity.

We don't need any international conference for the foregoing. At an international conference, instead of Albanians and Serbs reaching the most favorable solution, everything would be watered down, and every side would try to win over Western politicians for their "cause" and Western politicians, guided by policy of non-interference, would then opt for preservation of status quo, and continuation of the "industry of aid", before jump-starting development of industry in Serbia and in Kosmet.

Would not it be wiser if we maintained our influence in the province through the Serb entity in an independent Kosmet, than to lose the whole Kosmet because of the paper-style sovereignty similar to the sovereignty of the Queen Elisabeth over Canada?

Lawyer from Belgrade

Ivan Ahel:

Serbia should renounce its southern province

Talks on building Serbia's strategy of resolution of Kosovo final status are underway. Most politicians espouse the following stand: "Kosovo is a Serb province and it can attain only a high level of autonomy within the framework of Serbia." On the other hand the international community says: "Kosovo is an independent part of the new state community and it is to be built into this state as a republic (and that status has already been achieved.)" The shape of a complex community may be confederation, union or federation. This raises the issue of Serbia's gain or damage for such complex connections. A summary of basic indicators of a possible new state community built by Serbia and Montenegro with Kosovo shows the following picture: Albanians would make up 20% of population and would have as many MPs in the federal parliament. They would be the second-largest people in the state and Albanian language would be the second most important language in the official use. Due to predominantly young age of their population, Albanians conscripts would constitute 30% of the army composition, and in the same percentage the army command structures. A large number of ministerial positions would be occupied by Albanians.

Under such conditions the name of the state would be controversial. Albanians would demand their name to be included in the name of the state, and that means that the state would be called Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo and Metohija. In that case Serbia as a state would disappear from the European political stage. It would be doubtless a high price for the satisfaction brought about by cohabitation with the Albanian community. Every three or six years an Albanian would become President of the state, Foreign Secretary, etc.

If such a situation is acceptable for the Serbs (and that is questionable), it is important to glean possible benefits of such a costly cohabitation. Kosovo does not have important resources, coal exploitation is hardly commercially profitable, and exploitation of the lead-zinc ore is profitable only in mines Ajvalija and Belo brdo (a Serb enclave) and would be short-lived (we are talking about easily exhausted resources). Agriculture is primitive, and barely meets the needs of densely populated Kosovo. Demographic boom of Albanians threatens to spill over into the empty places of Central Serbia within a decade or two. After such a development demographic picture of central Serbia would be totally altered.

Statistical data from the former SFRY could help us solve the aforementioned dilemma. The standard, generally accepted criterion for comparing the economic levels of some regions is GNP per capita.

According to the available literature (Petar Bjelica, "The Serb Village and its Prospects", Belgrade Economic Institute, 2000) Yugoslavia belonged to the group of medium-developed countries with the 1988 GNP per capita ranging between \$ 761 and \$ 3,030. According to the publication "System of National Accounting," in 1998 GNP per capita was \$ 1,742, while in late 2004 the Serb GNP per capita was \$2,000. But, for example, GNP per capita in Slovenia was \$18,000, while in Croatia it was \$6,000. Thus Serbia's lagging behind those countries is enormous.

In the former Yugoslavia GNP per capita was \$3,000, while Serbia's was \$ 2,560, Vojvodina's \$ 3,666 and Kosovo's \$ 732. If the industrial output of Serbia in 1990 was marked by 100% index, in 1993 it fell to the level of 40%. Only in 1997 it reached the level of 50%. After the Kosovo war it fell again, but to an even lower level of 37%. If Serbia's GNP is marked by 100% index, then we see that in 1993 it fell to the level of 43%. The GNP growth was very slow: in 1998 it rose to 54.9%, but after the Kosovo war in 2000 it fell to the level of 47.4%. After the October coup in October 2000, GNP slowly grew, and in 2003 it reached the level of 52.5%. Serbia's economy was very sluggish the war and post-war circumstances. At the same time the society was contaminated by a destructive conflict with Albanians.

There is much hatred between the Serb and Albanian community, their systems are totally different and incomparable, instability shall always follow the life of the new community. Consequence thereof shall be a reduced efficiency of Serbia and its possible slide into a catastrophe.

Comparable analysis of level of development of some parts of Serbia, gauged by the GNP per capita in 1980-1990 period, indicated that the GNP per capita in Central Serbia was 112.1% with respect to the republican average, in Vojvodina-144.1%, and in Kosovo -28.3%. Ratio is 4 or 5: 1 to the benefit of Serbia. War created even less favorable conditions in Kosovo. In the common state Vojvodina and Central Serbia would have to sustain 2 million poor and unproductive Albanians, and such outflows of money would generate many problems in Serbia. Four or five times poorer Kosovo would totally brake Serbia's development.

In this case at play are parameter-type different features of systems of Serbia and Kosovo, which are constant and resist changes.

In the war years agriculture, power-generation systems, mining and metallurgy of Serbia and Kosovo were badly damaged. S. Petrovic maintains that in the first three years of embargo, agricultural losses amounted to \$ 4 billion, and mining and power-generation ones were even greater. That caused a near-bankruptcy of those industrial branches. Bor and Trepca mines are totally devastated and chances for their recovery are slim. Power-generation systems are being repaired at a very high price, notably in Kosovo, and that slows down the whole process of development.

It is still not known who shall finance the recovery of those systems in Kosovo.

It is estimated that the total loss amounts to \$150 billion. In all those segments Kosovo is in a much worse position than Serbia. Non-focus on agriculture and uncontrolled, or rather wild industrialization are unsynchronized. The foregoing generated a high unemployment. 1 million jobless are not likely to find any means of subsistence in the near future.

Demographic data are even more alarming. Statistical data indicate that Kosovo is in the midst of a veritable demographic boom. In Albanian municipalities rural population in 1948-1991 period increased by 85%, and currently grows at a 100% rate. Urban population has increased tenfold, and it seeks space for its existence. Contrary to that trend, the Serb villages in Kosovo are swiftly emptying out. Central Serbia also experiences an accelerated depopulation. As Kosovo is adjacent to Central Serbia, in case of formation of a common state, either an union or confederation, southern part of Central Serbia would be flooded by Albanians. The worst solution is the one in which Kosovo becomes part of Serbia in a complex state formation, for that would enable a massive, swift and unhindered occupation of Central Serbia by Albanians. Thus Kosovo would be emptied out and Central Serbia would be populated by new, Albanian settlers. Had Central Serbia and Vojvodina experienced a similar demographic boom in the 1948-1991 period, in 1991 they would have had a 20,885,000-strong population, while today their population would be as high as 26 million people. If similar trends continued in a common state, in 40 years time, 8 million Albanians would live in Central Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo. That would be an Albanian-Serb or Serb-Albanian unproductive and extremely backwards state. And that is obviously not in the interest of the Serb state and people.

Central Serbia experiences an intense depopulation. Only people over 60 still cultivate the land in Serb villages.

The young are rapidly leaving villages. Active agricultural population in Serbia in the 1948-1991 period fell from 2,563,000 people to 1,040,699. There are no accurate data for 2004, but evaluations are nonetheless depressing. Central Serbia has a fast-aging population with low educational level, hence less ambitious, less practical and unable to engage in highly-productive agricultural activities. The Serb authorities are not doing anything to prevent that demographic catastrophe. The empty space of Central Serbia waits for a stampede-like conquest by Albanians. That issue or rather concern should be foremost in the minds of those dealing with the final status of Kosovo.

Contrary to the Serb trend, Kosovo is experiencing a fast swelling of the ranks of its population. In 1948 the number of village settlements with over 1,000 inhabitants was 99, while in 1991 there were 443 such settlements. In 1948 only seven village settlements had over 2,000 inhabitants, while in 1991 their number rose to 115. In 1948 only 2 village

settlements had over 3,000 inhabitants, while in 1991 their number rose to 39. Contrary to that villages with less than 1000 inhabitants are located in the Kosovska Mitrovica area, and are inhabited by non-Albanians, mostly Serbs.

Despite the lack of infra-structure and utilities services urban population of Kosovo is rapidly growing. It is estimated that the present-day Pristina has over 500,000 inhabitants, while population of many cities has doubled. In those urban agglomerations the chaos reigns supreme. Rural areas are also densely populated despite poor living conditions (Kosovo is the most densely populated area of Europe). The most suitable solution for Albanians would be a union with Serbia, for it would enable their subsequent settling in empty spaces of Central Serbia. But blinded by nationalism they are missing out on their best chance to remain within the framework of Serbia. From the standpoint of Serbia such a solution would be perilous for its vital interests, but in deliberating the resolution of the final status of Kosovo the Serb politicians and the Serb people totally disregard that fact. If it were to fight for territories with the invading Albanian population, Serbia would not be able to channel itself towards development and transformation required by the transition process. In consequence Serbia would continue to lag behind other regional countries, and to lose momentum for the accession to EU. These are just information snippets from the study "A systematic tack to the Kosovo problem" being elaborated by the Forum for Ethnic Relations. That study shows another, much uglier picture of Serbia's possibility to keep Kosovo. With this in mind, I would like in resolution of the final status of Kosovo we should be guided by common sense, and not mythology and emotions.

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Nebojsa Covic: Decentralization is the solution

I would like to remind you that the turn-out of Kosmet Serbs was just over 0,3% in the last parliamentary elections. After the elections Belgrade and the Serb Orthodox Church were criticized for undermining a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo and Metohija. That criticism was out of place in view of the fact that the Serb staying away from the October elections resulted from the failure to build a truly democratic society in the province, and not from Belgrade's public declaration that there were no elementary democratic conditions for Serbs' participation in those elections. To put it simply the position of the Serb community is such that they don't have a minimum confidence in the provisional institutions or a hope that their interests could be realized through those institutions.

Human rights of members of the Serb and other non-Albanian communities are still violated in Kosovo and Metohija and they still don't enjoy the freedom of movement and full security. They are still under the threat of persecution. Their property is still torched and appropriated. The only pre-election message of the Albanian political leaders was that Kosovo and Metohija would be independent, and that it was up to Serbs to decide whether they would stay or go. Is that the way to build confidence?

Is not one of the basic principles of a multi-ethnic, democratic society to protect big national communities or at least no to threaten the small ones? Unfortunately that is not the case in Kosovo and Metohija.

In November 2001 Belgrade in the spirit of good-will and in firm belief that all the participants in the process should do their utmost to create conditions for an equitable multi-ethnic society, called on Kosmet Serbs to take part in the elections.

Special guarantees were given through the 5 November 2001 Joint Document of UNMIK and the FRY, and Serbs entered the provisional institutions of local self-rule.

But it turned out that the Serb representatives were just decoration in those institutions and every new Special Representative tended to ignore more the UNMIK obligations envisaged by all signed documents. Belgrade was practically eliminated from that process, and the position of Serbs rapidly deteriorated.

UNMIK reports for months ignored the worsening position of Serbs. And then murders of Serbs in Obilic and Gorazde, and 17 March happened. During all that time Serbs stoically participated in the

provisional institutions, hoping that something would change for the better. But their situation failed to improve.

Events of 17 and 18 March crashed all those hopes and also the minimum credibility of the story about progress made in the building of inter-ethnic society in Kosovo and Metohija. These and subsequent events have stripped us in Belgrade of all arguments to anew call on the Serb community to take part in the elections. Despite all sharp condemnations and declarative resolve to ease the tensions, the mood of 17 March still persists.

Eight months have passed since 17 March violence. It is late November, it is winter, and more than 2,100 people are still not in their homes. Nearly 500 Serbs and other non-Albanians internally displaced on 17 March are still living in collective centers. Half of destroyed houses are yet to be re-built. Reconstruction of churches and monasteries is still pending. In the meantime all the efforts were focused on recovery of the houses and facilities destroyed during the March unrest.

Program of repatriation of over 200,000 persons internally displaced before 17 March was totally neglected, partly because UNMIK was not able to work in parallel on implementation of the two programs, partly because the funds earmarked for the regular repatriation were lent to provisional institutions to implement the program of recovery of houses destroyed on 17th March. Was it necessary to use those funds earmarked for repatriation? I don't have answer to that question, but I know that instead of 1,500 families planned for repatriation before 17 March, only 120 families since then returned.

Years, even decades shall be needed to build a truly multi-ethnic society.

The foregoing is best indicated by the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which the conflict was of lesser scale than in Kosmet. Many years had to pass before people grew again accustomed to cohabitation. Is the international community again ready to remain engaged in resolution of the problem of that part of the Balkans as long as it is necessary? Ten years, 15 or even 20?

That leads us to the following question: Do we want to resolve the issue in an essential, sustainable and lasting way, or just for the sake of form? Does international community need Serb representatives in the Kosmet parliament as a proof that provisional institutions of local self-rule have a multi-ethnic character?

Over the past three years those institutions showed that actively engaged Serb MPs could not bring about betterment of elementary living conditions of their fellow-nationals in Kosovo. Shall Kosmet Serbs manage to attract attention of the world to their position if they boycott elections and stay away from the provisional institutions? Shall they thus prevent a positive mark for democratization achieved so far, or that positive mark shall be given because Serbs shall be again blamed for undermining a multi-ethnic society.

In view of the fact that elementary rights of Serbs and other non-Albanians are grossly violated, the government of Serbia is firmly convinced that decentralization of powers in Kosovo and Metohija is the best way for ensuring survival, security and return of Serbs and other non-Albanians. Only a better and additional institutionalization of the position of the Serb community could guarantee the survival of a multi-ethnic character of Kosovo and Metohija. If Serbs were autonomously to decide on some of their vital interests their entry into all other self-rule institutions would be much easier and more certain.

With a proactive engagement of Belgrade in the process of fine-tuning between the UNMIK Decentralization Plan and the Plan of government of Serbia, the foregoing could be the only solution leading to normalization and stabilization of general conditions in the province. But since decentralization is not a local issue, direct participation of representatives of Belgrade in those talks represents the best guarantee of success, which we see in a solution stemming from harmonization of the two plans.

We are very much concerned about the rumors of an early countdown, and of the process being continued with or without Belgrade, with or without Serbs. Kosovo-related recommendations submitted by the UN Secretary General Anan on 17 March to the Security Council, in which a commitment to the Resolution 1244 was underscored, and his stand that the talks on status of the province could begin only when the set standards are completely met, give us hope, but they greatly differ from the situation on the ground. That is also the right way to accelerate the processes of key importance for finding a sustainable solution.

The Belgrade authorities have to date shown on many occasions that they sincerely back the idea of establishing a modern, multi-ethnic society in the province and that they are ready to co-operate with the international community and provisional institutions. I repeat that the international community has a sincere and reliable partner in Belgrade. However co-operation is a two-way process in which both sides respect undertaken commitments and a given word has a specific weight. One-sided change of the rules of the game and non-implementation of the agreed matters, and one-sided tack don't lead to an exemplary co-operation.

Of course any solution may be imposed by force and I don't deny that possibility. But any solution reached without active participation of Belgrade shall not be a sustainable solution, for it would marginalize only temporarily the issue of security and stability in the region. Therefore I must return to my early question: Do we want to resolve the problem in an essential, sustainable and lasting way, or only for the sake of form?

Head of Coordinating Body for Kosovo and Metohija
and member of the Social-Democratic Party

ALBANIAN SIDE

Bajram Kosumi:
Belgrade cannot decide on the fate of Kosovo

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

It is the only place in this world in which my father, my grand-father, and my grand-grand-father were born, the country I which they grew up, in which they lived and for which they lived. We have always had a house and arable land in Kosovo. For me Kosovo is a place in which I can live and prosper, from which I can watch the world, and from which I can go on a journey around the world. Kosovo is a home which we have built for us and our offspring. All others who entered our house were either guests (who could stay for two or three days, but then eventually departed and bid us farewell) or enemies who tried to occupy our house, to evict us from our house. But together with its enemies and friends Kosovo is my home, it has remained my home and home of its people. Kosovo shall never again be torn between Belgrade and Pristhina. Kosovo shall remain where it is, with its capital Pristhina, and continue to be a good place for Albanians, Serbs and others who inhabit it, while Belgrade can establish good relations with a neighboring capital, with a neighboring country, and try to help this capital and this country, at least through a positive backing of its fellow-nationals, Kosovo Serbs. This is a somewhat poetic reply, but at the same time it is the most simple answer which any Albanian can give you. The strongest proof of Kosovo being the only homeland of Albanians is their survival and existence here, in the face of systematic, century-long violence of Belgrade authorities, which sporadically acquired dimensions of genocide and escalated into expulsion of 80% of Albanians from Kosovo in 1999.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

We have a new reality in Kosovo. Kosovo in 2004 is very different from Kosovo in 1998. The main feature of that new reality, regardless of its many drawbacks, is a general, big progress. In that process are engaged all the Kosovo people and the international community. That process leads to creation of a democratic, free, and economically developed Kosovo, and it shall naturally end with the creation of the state of Kosovo.

Every day we see the birth of new houses, new roads, new buildings, more sumptuous and more beautiful than the previous ones. New generations don't know anything about the Serb administration,

army, and police. Hundreds of thousands people are getting a new hope, there are new life-improving projects, new jobs are being created, and new ambitions for political career, business, culture are being born. These hundreds of thousands people see Kosovo and its prosperity as their chance and their vital interests, and every minute of their life they are making efforts to do something good for Kosovo, for only in that way they could realize their life-long interests. They have begun to feel the taste of freedom, to realize what a value their own country is, to understand what it means in practice to have one's own government, economy, banks, police, administration, etc. And finally those hundreds of thousands people who project their life and life of their families through Kosovo, shall consider any foreign intervention as denial of their projects, and any friendly or hostile interference as a trend to deny their basic, vital interest. Those people shall be the strongest shield of the future state of Kosovo. Future defenders of Kosovo shall not be idealists, but rather practical people with a great opportunity to create new projects and new interests for themselves, and for the new Kosovo society. I would like to add something about the role of the international community in Kosovo. It is and shall big a major role. International community together with the people of Kosovo invested much in realization of peace and freedom. It shall not allow Serbia's political stands to block processes in Kosovo. International community shall play a major role in correcting the policy of Serbia towards Kosovo. And finally the international community has not invested so much in Kosovo in order to follow fantastic constructions of the Serb policy, but rather to ensure peace, prosperity, freedom and democracy of the people of Kosovo.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is, the two opposed projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and a historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind experiences of other peoples?

If we want to be accurate there are more Serb projects for Kosovo. The Serb policy during one century drew up several "national" projects for Kosovo. Some are more and some are less radical, but they are all essentially anti-Albanian, barring few exceptions. Many Serb parties, governments, various academies and the Serb church played a negative role in that issue. One of those projects was put in place by Slobodan Milosevic in 1998-1999. It was called "The Shoehorn." The US Institute for Peace mentioned the existence of eight options for resolution of the final status of Kosovo. They are all based on different projects. But there is a key difference between all those projects and the Kosovo reality, namely they were all elaborated in Belgrade offices by academicians, clerics, bureaucrats, generals...while Albanian people continued to live in Kosovo! Those projects reflected wishes, viewpoints, or interests of individuals and political groups, while people in Kosovo had only one vital interest: their life. Those projects were rootless, while people in Kosovo were deeply rooted in Kosovo reality.

There were and there shall be many Kosovo-related projects, but all those projects are marginal, provisional, unimportant, fabricated. The true and the right project is the one of Kosovo people, of all those who live in Kosovo, or have land and other property there. There can be no alternative to that project. It is a project of people who want to project their future in accordance with their will, and no-one has the right, barring by force, to impose to them other projects. Can there be a compromise between the Serb projects and projects of people of Kosovo? I hope that it is clear to all and sundry that such a compromise is impossible. For there can be no compromise between the Serb project to keep Kosovo within the framework of Serbia and the project of free Kosovo. Those are the two essentially opposed stands. Resolution should be sought in the right of people of Kosovo to decide on their own fate. No people, let alone people of Kosovo, are ready to make a compromise with their own destiny. It is a question apart whether policies of Belgrade and Prishtina should make a compromise for the sake of resolution of many common problems. But no other people or government can ask us to make compromise regarding our own fate.

And can there be a historical compromise between people of Kosovo and people of Serbia? I believe that such a compromise is possible. It is in the interest of the two peoples and the two countries to create good neighborly relations, to help and prop one another, to overcome bitter experiences of the past and as regional states accelerate their recovery and compensate their losses created during a long conflict, in order to latch on the European processes. If that does not happen, then both states shall become poorer, more confronted, insecure and unstable.

4. How do you perceive the resolution of Kosovo problem?

A Cesarean operation would be much easier. And it would amount to placing the Belgrade policy before fait accompli situation by creation of the state of Kosovo. Initially Belgrade would protest and fly in the face of its existence, but later things would calm down and good neighborly relations between Belgrade and Serbia would be built. In fact that process has been quietly unfolding in the five, post-war years. The other strategy, the one of creation of the state of Kosovo, with Serbia's partial participation, is an ideal, but not workable solution. The Serb policy throughout the second half of the 20th century was not inventive enough to cleverly resolve problems. It ultimately always opted for one solution. That policy towards the Kosovo issue shall continue. Serbs acted unwisely at the Rambouille Conference in 1999 by refusing to accept the then documents, and now they urge going back to the square one. It is a rigid policy, without ideas, vision and will-power. Such a policy is doomed to failure. Because of this policy the Serb people shall continue to suffer, for a whole century was invested in its making. That policy lacks an adequate tack to Kosovo. It has never had it. Regardless of an unsatisfactory level of the political elite in Prishtina, the policy of Prishtina always had a clear vision of

Kosovo, contrary to Belgrade. Belgrade political elite has always tried to brake the process of Kosovo's independence-gaining, and dared even commit a genocide in order to stop it. Majority of diverse political groups, institutions and individuals in Serbia, who are slightly more progressive than Milosevic, put forward various projects on Kosovo with only one goal in mind: a more moderate form of enslavement of Kosovo. Majority of those people, and institutes, regardless of their democratic proclamations, are in fact derivatives of the traditional Belgrade policy on Kosovo. Of course all those projects shall fail, and after Kosovo's independence, other people and institutions shall emerge. Then they will maintain that the old Kosovo policy was wrong and that better co-operation with Albanians was needed, etc. That is a century-long logic of Belgrade's policy on Kosovo.

Perhaps there shall be no Cesarean cut. Perhaps Belgrade's opinion shall be taken into consideration. But Belgrade shall not be able to decide on Kosovo, to veto any decision, to block the process of independence-gaining of Kosovo. Perhaps it would be different if Belgrade perceived an economic interest from independent Kosovo, notably Belgrade access to Europe via port of Drac. But Belgrade's policy is one a short-fuse type, and without capacity to think soberly and in the interest of Serbia and the region.

5. Are you ready to accept any solution other than independence: conditional independence, federation-confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro or other solutions?

Federations, confederations and unions proved to be unsustainable, unworkable, and unstable in the Balkans. People create political and constitutional systems for themselves, but those solutions are not good for the people of this part of Europe. Federations and confederations always ended badly: after their collapse either unitary states were formed or a total separation was effected. In both case they were preceded by wars. Added to that it is not in the interest of Kosovo people, who make up 90% of population in Kosovo, to form any kind of federation, confederation or union with Serbia. It would have made sense in 1998, as a war-shunning measure, but not now. Therefore none of these formulae has a democratic legitimacy, and status of Kosovo cannot be decided without a full democratic legitimacy, for a new war would be then generated.

There are no sufficient arguments favoring a total rejection of the concept of conditional independence. I perceive that adjective "conditional" as a short time-frame sufficing to fully capacitate democratic institutions in Kosovo to govern Kosovo, sufficing to totally democratize Kosovo, sufficing to make the Albanian majority more open towards minorities, without any fear of their background political activities, and sufficing to make Kosovo Serbs accommodate to the new Kosovo and stop uttering naïve statements like the following: "If Kosovo becomes a state, I shall take the first train for Belgrade."

That conditioning would not be the one desired by any Serb traditionalist. It would not aim at preventing Kosovo's independence

(conditions are related to the sovereignty of Serbia, etc.). It would in fact aim at an accelerated progress of the state of Kosovo, of priming it to become a stable state and a factor of peace and stability.

6. Who should decide on the final status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Prishtina, under international auspices, the UN Security Council, or an international conference?

I would like to ask you in advance to take a different tack to Kosovo from the ones we have already heard. Kosovo is not a border between the two plots of land. And people of Kosovo are not disputed by Belgrade and Prishtina. Such a manner of posing this question results from the traditional Serb political angle of perceiving the Kosovo problem. People of Kosovo should have the sovereign right to decide on their fate. Contact Group shall be the international mechanism entrusted with kicking off determination of the final status of Kosovo. That fact is somewhat logical, for the international community, represented by the Contact Group, has its share in creation of free Kosovo. Contact Group should take into consideration the political will of people of Kosovo, as well as a continuing and many-sided progress in the post-war Kosovo.

7. It is necessary that the Albanian and Serb side remain hostages to the 19th century national aspirations, or they should conform to the new European and international conditions and trends?

As regards Kosovo, Albanian and Serb side cannot be equalized. Albanians want to have their state, to have their freedom, to create a political, legal and economic system in keeping with their and European standards. The Serb side represented by the official Belgrade wants to rule over one people and territory, like in the past century, and to live at the expense of that nation and territory. One could present graphically those circumstances as the two segments moving in opposite directions. Albanian position is a visionary one, and turned towards the future, while, the position of Belgrade is a retrograde one. Albanians don't want to be rid of their vision of freedom, while the official Belgrade shall eventually have to be rid of ghosts and echoes of the old policy.

8. Have conditions for reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs been created and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past?

Until the final status is defined it is very difficult for the Serb politicians to sit at the table, as equitable partners and friends, with politicians from Prishtina.

I don't want to say that all Serb politicians are enemies of Kosovo. On the contrary, Kosovo has friends among the Serb politicians. But it is very difficult for the government in Belgrade to make such an apology. Making an apology is just a human gesture which should be done, but building of friendly relations between the two policies is something different. And the latter is not feasible without a prior definition of the final status of Kosovo.

9. Do Albanian political structure have a concept for the return of displaced Serbs and which role should the Albanian majority play in this regard?

I think that they have such a concept, though they could not be overly efficient in that regard due to some circumstances. Parliament and government of Kosovo have been urging repatriation of all those displaced Serbs who have property in Kosovo, notably of those willing to return. Much was done and is still being done to “free” their property (mostly flats) usurped by Albanians. Albanians whose houses were destroyed during the war had been accommodated in those flats, though some of them were illegally appropriated. Authorities shall resolve those problems and Serbs shall return to their property. Hurdle to that process is interference of the government of Belgrade and its false claim that 250,000 Serbs had been displaced. That claim instills fear in Albanians. Namely it makes them think that the repatriation project would be tantamount to revival of the old Serb policy of colonization of Kosovo. But I believe that Kosovo institutions would have success in the repatriation project.

10. If decentralization were ethnically grounded, which data should be taken into consideration: the 1981 census figures or those pertaining to other documents?

Decentralization shall not be based on ethnic grounds for it would have a domino effect in Serbia: similar decentralization would be demanded for Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. Decentralization shall be effected for the sake of welfare of citizens of Kosovo and faster and better exercise of their rights.

11. Are “standards for Kosovo” feasible and is it necessary to change the UN Security Council Resolution 1244?

Larger part of standards can and should be met and implemented. Few standards can be attained only if Kosovo gets the status of state, implementation of few requires a longer political process, and they cannot condition the final status. But the larger part of standards has been met. We are yet to fully resolve some minorities-related issues, the issue of property restitution, the problem of repatriation of displaced persons, and partially the problem of free movement of all citizens in all areas or Kosovo-wide, elimination of parallel, para- political structures, etc. I deeply believe that in May 2005 the UN Security Council shall positively assess implementation of standards in Kosovo. Standards for Kosovo are not in fact a strategy aiming at protraction of the process of independence-gaining, but are an exit strategy for UNMIK and proof of political, democratic and economic stability of Kosovo.

Prime Minister of Kosovo
Vice President of the Alliance for Future Kosovo-AAK

Hashim Thaqi :

Independence of Kosovo does not threaten anyone, in fact it stabilizes the region

1. In your opinion what is the past, present and future Kosovo?

Kosovo was and is an immutable symbolic homeland for its citizenry, but the tack to that homeland varied and varies. However it has always represented the place which we all, including myself, have perceived as the essence of our beings, the place in which our nation and families have been threatened, the place in which we have experienced much suffering, but also joy, and ultimately as the place in which the hope for our future lays. Kosovo of yesteryear needed more free life, liberty and quest for happiness for its citizens. That yester-year Kosovo was seen by its citizenry as the place of hope, though still a far-away one. Downfall of communism created conditions for many peoples, including us, to get what they have aspired to: free, equitable and democratic life.

Kosovo of yesteryear was rather the place of shattered hopes, while today it is the place offering realistically bright prospects. The present-day Kosovo is now dedicated to advocacy for a better life, security, identity, control, inter-dependence, and integration into the Western world. Kosovo of yesteryear was marked by a bad track record, the one riddled with conflicts, exploitation and violence; the present-day Kosovo is building economic, political and social peace and new life, and respect for all its citizens, and in parallel, like many other societies, is going through a phase of national and social liberation and emancipation. In the future, under the new, global conditions, Kosovo shall be independent, democratic and sovereign. Kosovo society is a society experiencing a swift evolution.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is a new reality on the ground? How true are assertions by some circles that Kosovo has embarked upon the road of independence and that Serbia, consequently, has lost it?

Kosovo has never been the Serbian holding. So consequently Serbia cannot lose what it has never owned. On legal and factual grounds it is necessary to establish a state, precisely because there are vast difference between the legal and factual situation. In the case of Kosovo, like in many other countries, effective power hinges on the UN and on the interim self-rule institutions, and not in the least on the state which strives to formally preserve its sovereignty over the territory of Kosovo. Such a treatment is enforced, because the international community frequently demands

that realization of the legal status and rights be implemented through materialization of claims.

Kosovo is experiencing an all-round social development. Democratic institutions have created a solid foundation for stability and functioning, the process of privatization continues smoothly and the legal framework is being built to provide for the necessary investments generating a good economic growth, while democratic standards are becoming part of life of every citizen of Kosovo. These and similar arguments strengthen and back our stand that Kosovo can and should be an independent state. The process of Kosovo's growing independence is visible at every step. There's no going back to the past, and Serbia should grasp the new reality. It should be beneficial for the Serb society to get rid of the myths from the past.

3. There are still two opposed Kosovo-related nationalistic projects: the Serb and the Albanian one. Having in mind experiences of other nations, do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between those two peoples?

We should distinguish between the project aimed at building and preserving a national and democratic subjectivity and the "project" bent on ruling over other peoples. The Serb policy and the Serb society should be rid of the doctrine of "superiority" over the others. In the Balkans there is enough democratic space for all, for peace and co-operation. It is true that we cannot change the history, so heavily dominated by conflicts in the past century, but we can choose a different future. We, the peoples who live in these lands, need a different future. The demand to embrace and build it is also placed before us by those who want us to become part of them, that is, by the West. That is the key of success, instead of compromising with the others, we should strive to reach compromises between our opposed stands. The conflict in Kosovo was not the conflict between the peoples, but rather the conflict between the majority people, that is, Albanians, and the Serb regime, as a self-styled "defender" of the Serb people. That regime exploited the Serb nationalistic mythology to justify its arbitrary rule over Kosovo and blatant mistreatment of Albanians. The time is ripe to separate politics from the dictate of mythology and to place the former on the solid ground of values and democratic principles.

4. In your mind which the solution of the Kosovo issue?

The key to a just and lasting solution is the respect of will of citizens of Kosovo through a democratic procedure. That means that there is a just, democratic solution, and that there are other solutions which are not in fact solutions, but rather attempts to generate new problems. Independence of Kosovo does not threaten anyone, on the contrary, it represent an important step in the process of stabilization and Europeization of the region.

5. Should the issue of final status of Kosovo be resolved through negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina, under the auspices of the international community, in the UN Security Council or at an international conference?

Kosovo shall co-operate with all its neighbors. Dialogue with Serbia should be conducted on the basis of the common, regional interests. And in the aftermath of war, there should be no status-related talks with Serbia. Now such talks don't make sense, for we are not equitable sides. Serbia cannot remain a factor on which the future of Kosovo hinges. Factors with a bearing on the present and future of Kosovo are citizens, legitimate representatives of Kosovo and international community. We should negotiate with the international community, we should try to persuade them that stability and functioning of the state of Kosovo must be built in conformity with the international standards. The most suitable solution would be the one reached through a referendum, like in East Timor.

6. Are you ready to accept other solution for Kosovo, notably the one which excludes independence, for example: independence with strings attached to it, federation, confederation, or union with Serbia and Montenegro, or another solution?

Past years were marked by failed federal, confederal or union-style ties. If you bring them up as possible solutions that means that you have not fully learnt the historical lesson.

Many federations in the world lack a cohesive force of stability and in this area I do not see any cohesive power which could motivate us to stay together in a state. Disintegration of former Yugoslavia should be completed. Our recent past indicates the impossibility of cohabitation in a single state, and even that such a cohabitation is a hurdle for a normal democratic development. To make the things worse, it also demonstrates that Serbia is able only to rule over the others, and not to treat them as equitable partners. That became also manifest in Serbia's relations with other peoples in former Yugoslavia, which were far more akin to Serbs than ethnic Albanians. We want to become an EU member, and it seems that Serbia wants the same thing. Hence there is no need for replicating the federation. I believe that we shall meet in Brussels.

Independence-with-strings-attached-to-it is an interesting concept, but it does not offer a final solution. Idea of a limited international status without a defined status of Kosovo has lost any sense. Implementation of the project of cantonization, under the guise of decentralization on ethnic grounds, would be also very perilous, for it would pave the way for emergence of strong ethnic divisions in the country and in the region. Independence alongside the division of Kosovo is not a realistic solution. All those solutions could not be durable ones.

The only just solution is full independence of Kosovo.

7. What justifies the status-related solution advocated by you, or, in other words, what vests it in legitimacy?

Kosovo has a central position in the Balkans. Albeit a small territory, its geographic position gives it a key geopolitical and geostrategic importance. Kosovo has a homogenous ethnic set-up. Albanians make the majority population-over 90%, while Serbs, Turks, Montenegrins,

Romany, etc, make up the rest of population. History of relations between Albanians and Serb states is the one marked by ethnic conflicts. At the time of disintegration of former Yugoslavia, Kosovo tried to use the then developments to realize its historical aspiration-that is, freedom, self-determination and independence.

During the cold war, Kosovo was part of a communist state. The will of people of Kosovo for self-determination was therefore subjected to the Communist standards. Kosovo could not realize its right to self-determination in the situation when it was toothless to establish an efficient control of its borders.

Legal, political, strategic and security arguments favor independence of Kosovars. The right to self-determination fully coincides with the free will of the majority people, is in conformity with democratic principles, and is beneficial for the peace and stability in the region.

Self-determination for the people of Kosovo would be tantamount to realization of natural, historical, demographic, legal and democratic rights and would, above all, represent both a great compensation for a century-long suffering of this country and its people, and justification for engagement of the international community, for it would enable it to end its mission with a clear political goal and guaranteed stability in the future.

The only legitimate solution is the one based on democratic will of citizens.

8. Should both the Albanian and Serb side remain hostages to nationalistic, 19th century aspirations, or should they adjust to the new European and global circumstances and trends?

Aspirations were different, due to different positions, and the aforementioned developments set the course of future trends. Albanians strove to build their national identity by separation from others, and unification of their ethnic territories, while others aspired to hold sway over them or expand their territories at the expense of others. Political concepts of the 19th century cannot determine developments of the 21st century. All peoples and countries in the regions should work on making the Balkans a dignified part of European Union in the near future. National romanticism is obviously not the way for attaining that goal. Some are trying to perceive independence of Kosovo as a national-romantic project. Independence of Kosovo is above all a democratic project.

9. Have the conditions for reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians been created? Who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past of Kosovo?

A series of preconditions is required for reconciliation. One of them is de-Milosevicization of the Serb society, that is, facing up of that society to the truth. Serb people should know that that on their behalf heinous crimes have been committed against other peoples. If that truth is made public and acknowledged, then repentance is possible, as well as paying

tribute to a very large number of victims. But reconciliation should not be understood only as a moral act, as a rehabilitation trend or the one leading to acquiring immediate benefits because of compliance with the international community's demands. Reconciliation should be built on the basis of new concepts, of new, clearly defined relations and on the basis of respect for the will of people. Throughout history reconciliation between people happened when they resolved problems from which misunderstandings arose. Before reconciliation Serbia should renounce its ambition to regain sovereignty over Kosovo, and it should recognize the will of Kosovars, instead of cruelly reminding us of recent past. When that happens, then the factual, genuine reconciliation shall happen, and fear between the two peoples shall disappear. Reconciliation should not be a formal declaration. Reconciliation should include an encouraging strategy of mutual relations.

10. Do you as a young and modern politician, have a concept for the Serb community in Kosovo? To which extent do you advocate repatriation of displaced Serbs, their security and inclusion into the Kosovo institutions?

Legal acts in Kosovo, in their entirety, indicate the existence of the positive discrimination, and that minorities, alike the majority people, are recognized all the rights, including language, culture, education, and manifestation of their identity. All the laws approved by Kosovo institutions recognize the said rights, in compliance with the international community's demands which also spell out that the minority issues rights be monitored by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General. Into the Constitutional Framework were built many international conventions, including those related to the minorities rights.

The right to repatriation is a fundamental civil and human right. According to that right Kosovar Serbs are citizens of Kosovo and should consequently enjoy full rights. Displaced Serbs should return to their legitimate places of residence and to their farms. Kosovo institutions are in charge of that process and there are early signs of the future success of that process. I fully back that process. In parallel with that repatriation process, social and institutional reintegration of Serbs should be realized. But the latter is feasible only if Kosovar Serbs take part in the decision-making process in the civil society and institutions. Only if they take part in that process, they can realize their interests. Boycott and divisions are not productive. We cannot guarantee them a social standing superior to the one of the majority people, but we guarantee them understanding, good-neighborly relations and cohabitation. Conditions for the return of displaced persons to their homes and farms should be created. My vision is independent Kosovo with civil democracy, Kosovo in which all citizens shall enjoy equal rights.

11. Which should be the future stance of Kosovar Serbs and Belgrade on Kosovo in case of its independence?

Relations between Belgrade and Prishtina shall be those of the two capitals of the two independent states, and Kosovar Serbs shall have all the civil rights typical of a civil state, in which civil rights prevail over ethnicity.

Serb representatives in Serbia, when speaking about Kosovar Serbs, should prioritize interests of that minority in Kosovo, and not their political positions in Serbia. And the Serb minority in Kosovo should understand that the current status of minority differs from the one they had enjoyed in the Communist era, in other words, that they would not be treated as second-class citizens. The Albanian majority perception of the Serb minority should evolve in the sense of becoming more positive.

12. Are there preconditions for the start of negotiations on the final status of Kosovo? Who should be the Serb and Albanian negotiators?

Status of Kosovo shall be defined within the political triangle Prishtina, Washington and Brussels. The key recommendation of that process would be that the free will of citizens of Kosovo must be respected. Solutions are not possible outside the rule of democracy.

Issue of status is the most sensitive one for our country and our future. Those negotiations should be conducted by a unified Kosovar representative delegation, composed of people with moral, legal and political authority, and also with acumen and enough stamina and consistence for negotiations.

13. Are “standards for Kosovo” feasible, and should the UN SC Resolution 1244 be amended?

Standards for Kosovo are standards for building-up democracy. They are vital projects for the future of the country, that is why we are wholly devoted to their implementation. As regards the aforementioned resolution, it should be amended. And it is also clear that it should be replaced by a constitution of a sovereign and independent state. The “standards before status” concept psychologically encompasses an asymmetrical interaction between the key prime movers/protagonists, Albanians, Serbs and international community, for political goals differ in contents and forms when an issue is the legal and political status of Kosovo.

I am convinced that developments in the post-war Kosovo would not have taken the course they have taken, if the contents of “standards and status” had been in advance defined. Currently standards seem to remain hostage to the concept “standards before status” and every side is trying to understand them within their limitations, and to float its arguments when interpreting the manner of their implementation.

Those standards and their implementation cannot be observed in isolation from the neighboring countries. There are substantive and formal differences between decisions-makers in Kosovo and neighboring countries as regards the degree of security, the degree of integration, the manner of economic development, quality and work of public institutions, organized crime, privatization problem, etc.

Although in the neighboring countries- which are in one way or another under international surveillance despite their independence- there are some common elements in contents of standards, the international community is of opinion, that only in Kosovo those standards have not been met. And because of that it conditions Kosovo’s independence. However, the international community does not call into question the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and of other countries, though in them the status of human rights lags behind the one characteristic of Kosovo.

Resolution 1244 represents a good basis for building, in co-operation with the international community, a democratic and institutional life after the war in Kosovo. It is rather a result of compromise between the relevant international mechanisms than a result of the will of citizens of Kosovo. Circumstances of the Kosovo society have changed swiftly both in terms of quality and quantity. The legal practice of states indicates clearly how the changes of social circumstances entail the changes in the legal ones. Kosovo society is well ahead of Resolution 1244, and we are moving towards the future. That Resolution should follow that change within our society. The resolution should not only formally change. In fact it should wholly remain as a memento of an era and history to be remembered by us and the democratic world. Time is ripe to pass another resolution, recognizing the right to Kosovo to be an independent and sovereign state, an UN member. And that shall happen in the near future.

President of Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK)
and MP in Kosovo Parliament

Ramush Haradinaj:
**No-one can take decisions contrary
to the will of people of Kosovo!**

1. In your opinion what is the past, present and future Kosovo?

I shall single out a few aspects of what is for me the past, present and future Kosovo. First of all it is development of life, of governance, of exercise of human rights, from the most fundamental ones, to the political ones. As regards Kosovo of yesteryear I think that the rights of Kosovars, notably in the period preceding the last war, in that decade, were trampled upon, if not systematically then at a varying pace which brought about first an eruption of popular anger, and later a veritable uprising of masses who felt repressed and disenfranchised. I think that the present-day conditions are quite different, for development of life and social system has become a reality in Kosovo. Though that development is yet to gain momentum, it is nonetheless growing. Added to that progress was achieved in exercise of many rights of ours in the face of difficulties and challenges. Though the perception of the level of progress achieved varies among citizens of Kosovo, I could also say that there are changes in stands of citizens of Kosovo as regards ethnicity and other issues. The present –day life in Kosovo is marked by unified, concerted efforts of citizens of Kosovo, by efforts made by outfits of international institutions and by concerted efforts made by many domestic, regional and international factors with a view to attaining progress.

As regards the future of Kosovo, I think it in fact begins by realization of idea that Kosovo should become one of the regional countries, of the idea of effecting the comeback of Kosovo to the region, of investing it anew with values, of making its resources competitive, of morphing it into the country ready to assume responsibility and join Euro-Atlantic integrations, to which the whole region aspires. How distant the future is from us, and how swiftly development of Kosovo shall be effected in my mind depends on our ability to properly co-ordinate our strivings, and to properly channel not only our potential and energy, but also those of other countries in the region. I am convinced that on the swiftness of our actions hinges our progress. By extension that progress would create a situation in Kosovo in which our identity would be confirmed. And that means ushering in a new beginning for the region, notably of a good, mutual co-operation.

2. How do you assess situation in Kosovo in view of some opinions that less was achieved than the Kosovo general public initially expected and hoped for?

I think that there were some accomplishments, notably those related to acceptance and implementation of democracy, of a plural system, institution-building on the basis of elections, and assumption of responsibility. I think that it is difficult to draw a clear line between successes and failures in Kosovo. But I can say that foundations were laid for a society able to function in a democracy as a democratic one. I know that we have yet to cover many spheres, to devote our attention to them in a creative way, in order to achieve better results in Kosovo. But I shall repeat something: in Kosovo there is a good basis for its functioning as a democratic society and as the one able to make progress. Economy is in dire straits, and in implementation of general rights of citizens we have had mixed success. I think that we should focus on the spheres which have ground to a standstill, and after assessment of our success and failures, proceed by making concrete steps.

3. There are still two opposed stands on Kosovo: the Albanian and the Serb one. How can they be reconciled?

Despite the existence of the two opposed stands, I have always been against the lines of division and I think that borders shall not divide the regional countries, but rather, that those borders shall be relativized. I am thinking about flowers growing on both sides of those borders as a remembrance of those who have perished, and of past developments. And I think that the mutual apology is necessary. Now we can debate the modalities of achieving those apologies, but I think that they must happen one day. Namely it is necessary that people from Kosovo who have lost their nearest and dearest come one day to the border line in order to join their flowers with flowers brought by Serbs from Serbia, or from any other country which has suffered because of Kosovo conflict. Engagement to that end and similar stands on such an action are necessary. We, who represent Kosovo, are ready to recognize and co-operate with our big neighbor Serbia. To deepen the existing co-operation, to forget what we have lost while geographically united in the common life, by expressing our mutual condolences. Since you cannot choose your neighbor, you must co-operate with him. My firm conviction is that such a co-operation must be achieved. There is still that question: who is having a harder time? I think that there are and that there shall be difficulties, many arguments prove that thesis of mine. Serb policy has its arguments, and we have ours. But I would like to reiterate that if the two, neighboring states moved towards the closing of the recent past chapter, it would be a sufficient reward for both peoples.

4. In that context, are you, as a politician whose opinions are very much valued, ready to apologize to the Serb side for all the crimes which befell it?

I think that we are ready to do something similar, and I, personally, shall be with flowers at the border.

Mutual forgiveness, not only with Serbs, and apologies for our history and conflicts could serve to what we can build as neighbors in the

future. But does it mean that we should apologize personally or on behalf of people of Kosovo? Making an apology is in fact a mandatory action of breaking up with the past and heralding the new beginning. We shall have that kind of courage and shall do that.

5. In your opinion which is final solution of the Kosovo issue, having in mind that both talks and negotiations represent a compromise? But is there a point at which you are ready yield?

I think that at play is a process approaching its high-definition level. We are talking about Kosovo and its people, who on the basis of international law and as the oppressed people, have the right to resort to the struggle for freedom. That struggle results from pressures, trampling upon and denial of human and political rights. Oppressed peoples who had fought and who had been ruled by the international community, at a certain moment of time had been allowed to resort to self-determination. I am firmly convinced that such a path is the right one for Kosovo to embark upon, the most just path in keeping with principles successfully applied by the UN in other crises situations. As regards the best solution for us, I think it was defined by people of Kosovo: self-determination, Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state. We strive towards Kosovo as a fully independent state. We act and think in that direction. We are duty-bound to act in that way, not only because of the international community's past and present actions, but also because of our integration-minded aspirations. On our independence day we shall pledge our allegiance to sharing responsibility with the international community in Kosovo, and to our continuing intention to participate in Kosovo's life and governance in the way it was organized by the international community and under the NATO security forces. At the same time we shall ask the international community to assume responsibility for the security of Kosovo, and in parallel ask NATO to back our training for our participation in security tasks in Kosovo and our priming for the NATO membership. We shall guarantee our commitment towards ensuring stability not only in Kosovo, but also in a broader area. We shall demand civilian presence in Kosovo, in the shape of a mission, possibly an EU mission, which would back us and monitor our efforts to resolve some sensitive issues in Kosovo. We shall also take into account the interests of neighboring countries, therefore of Belgrade too, in the issues which in one way or another merit their attention. That means that we shall give assurances to Serbia, to regional countries, to the international community that we shall take care, in keeping with international standards and responsibilities, of Kosovo and the region. Those guarantees and assurances shall be given unconditionally. We shall also continue to share some responsibilities with the international community in Kosovo.

6. The option of independence remains; but, is there a point a which you are ready to yield?

I wish we had an alternative, but unfortunately we don't have it. But we prioritize the political will of people, which was articulated, defined and expressed, and built to a certain level. Hence there is very little room for yielding. I'd like to reiterate that at play is the solution, the will stemming from the very being people of Kosovo, the political will built historically in a historical period, with its level of definition and development, and which as, shall be realized. Hence we are in the situation in which we can choose or in which we have three choices. Therefore everything is different, and accordingly any explanation must be seen in a different light, for we are faced with the political will articulated and defined in a specific way by the people, the will which has reached a certain level. And the will shall emerge triumphant.

7. Which are your limits at internationally-brokered negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina?

You see, we are thinking about those negotiations, we are interested in having those negotiations on the final status. We are pondering negotiations on responsibility for Kosovo in which both domestic and international sides would take part. We are also thinking about talks, negotiations with Serbia, on modalities and issues of mutual concern which should be urgently resolved. We are interested in taking into consideration Kosovo-related concerns of Belgrade, and Belgrade's modalities for resolution of some issues. However, I would like to reiterate, I am convinced that neither the international community nor Serbia are interested in negotiations on the future shape of Kosovo, for that future Kosovo is being built on the basis of the political will its people, in conformity with the right of the people to self-determination. Furthermore, we all know, that the people of Kosovo have opted for an independent state. But in order to attain that status and translate into practice the aforementioned popular will, we must conduct negotiations and discussions on modalities enabling us to fine-tune the above goal.

8. The Serb side has of late talked much about division of Kosovo, as proposed by Dobrica Cosic. Furthermore an Albanian political prime mover in Kosovo has also proposed a confederation of Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. How feasible are those projects and are they acceptable for you?

I shall talk about other instances. As it is widely known, in the period of existence of former Yugoslavia, before its disintegration, Albanians felt like Albanians, regardless of the administrative unit in which they lived: the Republic of Serbia, Presevo, Macedonia, Kosovo, as the then province, or Montenegro, as the then Republic. The post-1999 developments contributed, after much discussion, to the birth of an Albanian rational project, its definition and modalities of its attainment. Some of the said developments which helped engender that project, were very painful. Some represented the price for blossoming or development of Albanians as a nation and people. The current situation within the Kosovo

administrative borders is the most realistic one, and as such precludes the re-opening of the old Kosovo issue. That formula in one way or another gives arguments to all against the return to the past, and for the removal, I would say, of an undefined situation in South or in the centre of the Balkans. We back Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state-as Kosovo with administrative borders, with the people of Kosovo, with its Albanian citizens as the majority, with Serbs as the largest minority, and Turks, Bosniaks, Askhalis, Romany, Goranci, Egyptians, as other minorities-for that solution would be the most rational one, and the one preventing our going back to the past. I think that other ideas are very irrational and whenever they are espoused they are harmful and prevent any inching forward, or introduction of a new reality into the region.

9. There are assessments that Albanian political structures to date have not shown the necessary resolve to allow repatriation of displaced Serbs to their homes. To which extent you personally and other Albanian political structures should be committed to repatriation of displaced persons as one of the key standards for Kosovo?

Perhaps it is important to give an explanation of what is really repatriation and the whys and wherefores of the issue we know as “the return of Serbs to Kosovo.” Initially that was the key issue for Belgrade both as a political issue and as a principal argument in criticism of the processes unfolding in Kosovo. But that issue was not raised as the issue of the right to property, to repatriation, as a civil right. In fact it acquired other dimensions. That issue was treated differently by all sides: the international community, Kosovar Serbs, Belgrade, and Kosovo institutions. Now, in my opinion, stands on the issue or definition of repatriation, have been more or less fine-tuned. For us, repatriation is not a hurdle. Now the goal is integration, realization of the right to be granted to the Serb minority in Kosovo, and repatriation of Serbs is also our right. Last summer domestic leaders, the Serb minority and Head of the US office in Kosovo reached an agreement on taking some concrete actions with respect to that issue. In my mind the important step was establishment of the Ministry for the Return of Minorities, which enables us to take concrete steps with respect to the process of return. I think that results of those steps shall be soon seen. My optimism in that regard is not based on wishes or on some political interests, but rather on the fact that we are a vast majority in Kosovo, and on the fact that all citizens, every single citizen, deem that repatriation as our goals, and shall accordingly work on its realization.

10. Whom do you see as the Serb interlocutors in the talks? Should during the talks Kosovar Serbs be represented by a Kosovo delegation or by a Belgrade delegation?

My personal opinion is that we shall not make mistakes. Any Serb chosen to take part in those talks shall be respected as an official interlocutor. Of course it would be easier for us to co-operate and to contact those who are readier to take rational stands on issues of mutual concern.

I personally am encouraged by some stands of President Tadic, notably his urging of Serbs to take part in the elections. I think there is a good basis for an increased co-operation with him. I think that Kosovar Serbs should be represented in Kosovo delegation, for that would enable them to attain more easily their genuine goals in Kosovo, through the Kosovo side. Meeting of their claims, which are dictated by Belgrade, would be much more complicated. I am convinced that for them it is much more rational to be part of the Kosovo delegation, and I think that they know it. That would enable them to capitalize on their claims and their goals in Kosovo.

11. How feasible are standards set by the international community, and in that context how do you envisage decentralization of power in Kosovo?

First I want to touch on the background of the plan on standards for Kosovo. The initial goal of the international community in Kosovo was to implement goals of Resolution 1244. But the international community failed to envisage the post-resolution steps, or anything outside the guidelines of the said Resolution. In order to create the work agenda and results to be achieved in Kosovo, and subsequently tackle the issue of status of Kosovo, an ambitious project “Standards for Kosovo” was elaborated. We understood it as our own path and accepted it as such. And not only as the path for a short-term accomplishment, but also as a permanent obligation and the way to reach membership of EU and NATO. Therefore we are all committed to the steps taken by the international community. Some standards are prioritized and we understood them as such, notably the position and representation of governing bodies at all levels of the decision-making process. To ensure the foregoing we made certain steps even before implementation of standards, notably by introducing some amendments to the Constitutional Framework of Kosovo and continuing to work on meeting those standards.

Decentralization plan helped fine-tune views of Council of Europe and of European experts on an adequate decentralization of Kosovo and specific features of Kosovo, and also those of domestic and regional experts. We shall continue implementation of that plan. Soon we shall have pilot projects on decentralization and consequently, within 3-6 months, it shall be possible to gauge their success.

12. How tenable is currently UN SC Resolution 1244? On the one hand Belgrade invokes it constantly and insists on its implementation, while on the other hand, the Albanian side assesses that resolution as a hurdle on the path of development of democratic processes in Kosovo. Do you favor an amendment to or modification of that resolution, or passing of the new one?

I think that Resolution 1244 initially made possible engendering of a new Kosovo, of a Kosovo different from the old one. As such it represented a solid basis which made room for actions of the people of Kosovo and international community. Its implementation was contested by debates,

interpretations and disagreements among domestic and international structures, but also among representatives of international community in Kosovo. Issue of interpretation was very delicate, for interpretations were also at the service of some aspirations. I think that Resolution 1244, as it is, yielded its results in Kosovo. Its principal result is the present-day Kosovo. But at this moment of time we should assess the results of the joint investment of international and domestic structures, that is recognize what has stemmed from that joint work, which in our mind, is an independent state of Kosovo. Now we are not interested in any amendment to the Resolution or passing of the new one. However we are interested in certification of success of the international community, in the shape of admission that in Kosovo a self-functioning and responsible society was built and consequently in establishment of Kosovo as an independent state.

President of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo-AAK,
Former Prime Minister of Kosovo

Enver Hoxhaj: Full independence enabling a functional state

1. In your opinion what is the past, present and future Kosovo?

I think that opinions in that regard, not only of citizens of Kosovo, but also of citizens of other countries, divided. Such diverse opinions result from the fact that politics and society during the entire modern age with respect to Kosovo and in Kosovo proper were opposed. For a large number of people Kosovo represents a history of one nation, of one country, ethnicity, religion and culture. As if all the aforementioned elements were subsumed within that very term or name. But I am of opinion that all that is only one part of the answer, for none of those elements represents an adequate reality, for they don't fit into what Kosovo is for me.

Kosovo is not the history of a single nation, for in its territory continually various peoples lived together. Until 1999 it was under a classical occupation, hence its past is not only the past of the people who traditionally lived there, but also the history of expansion- or conquest-minded states who for a shorter or longer periods of time had their presence in this country. Kosovo is not the history of one country, nor its borders were created in post-1945 period. The territory called Kosovo in a geographic and administrative terms, during the Ottoman era, and later, had different borders. It was not ethnically homogenous for it in it continually settled diverse ethnic groups with different origins and identities. It does not represent the history of one culture, for all those groups produced their own cultural values. Hence their cultures also made part of or represented the culture of Kosovo. Languages currently spoken by Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Romany, Muslims and Slavs of Kosovo are spread and are spreading across other Balkans areas and even beyond the Balkans borders. Religions which those peoples embraced in the past and which they still profess, are shared by millions of other peoples in the world.

Hence Kosovo is nothing else but embodiment of an idea. That is, of the idea of freedom. In the past the idea of self-determination and a sovereign state was in one shape or form, a response to the Serb discrimination and hegemony. Currently statehood is understood in a more pragmatic way. A functioning state shall without dilemma create greater political and economic freedom for a more dignified life. What motivated Kosovars in the most cruel times to survive, and what makes Kosovars Albanians different from citizens of neighboring and other states, is their sense of freedom and respect for the principle of freedom. And I am

referring to moral, economic and social freedom and at the same time to the collective and individual freedom. Like in cases of other peoples, for us the idea of freedom was a starter of emancipation and progress.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are claims made by some circles that Kosovo has embarked upon the path of independence and that it is factually lost for Serbia?

The current political reality may be characterized as the one of incomplete freedom, for we, in June 1999, gained freedom, but not the right to future. We were robbed of our vision of the future since the international community in the post-1999 period was not ready to recognize independence of Kosovo. Today we are at political, economic and social crossroads. Domestic political prime movers are partly to be blamed for that situation for they lacked the acumen to formulate a genuine vision of a functional state, of its reform, and were not able to create an ambience propitious for economic progress and social transformation. As an UN-administered territory, we have currently three governments. The first one is UNMIK, which is essentially a peace-keeping mission, but the one vested in decision-making and executive powers of a government.

Since its inception, UNMIK did not have a clear mandate for its activities, or a precise time-frame for unfolding them. It also lacked a clear vision of institution-building and economic development. One could almost say that the mission has an absolute power, similarly to absolutist monarchies, but is not accountable to citizens of Kosovo. It is accountable only to the UN Security Council. The second "government" is composed of interim institutions of Kosovo, elected in a democratic way, but with very limited prerogatives and responsibilities, and without genuine professional competence. That particularly applies to the new government set up in November 2004, through an agreement between DSK, ABK and a group of minorities "G 6 plus." We now have a government without any program and priorities, offering no political and ethnic stability and, with an unpredictable duration. The third "government" are parallel Serb state structures, which tend to promote their traditional tack to Kosovo, instead of advocating the demands of Kosovo Serbs. To put it briefly we are in an absurd situation, similar to the one of Hungary between the two World Wars, when that country was a monarchy without a monarch, and when it had an admiral, but not the fleet.

We assess that Kosovo is lost for Serbia, in terms of traditional politics of the Serb elite towards Kosovo. Serb hegemony over Kosovo and us belongs to the past and cannot be restored. Since Kosovo issue could not be resolved within the Serb or Yugoslav political system, the third side (NATO/UN) had to intervene with a view to creating conditions for resolution of that issue. The post-intervention political reality confirmed that we were in the middle of the state-forming process. The foregoing was also confirmed by the September 2004 communiqué of the Contact Group,

plainly stating that Kosovo would not be returned to Serbia. At the same time I think that the Serb society should not think that Kosovo is lost, for Serbs shall co-operate with Kosovo and have access to its resources. On the other hand, the Serb state, which ruled Kosovo only by dint of state terror, has lost this territory for ever. But in view of the fact that the final status of Kosovo is yet to be resolved, and that the official Belgrade still has genuine power in Northern Kosovo, the question how much has Serbia lost and which are its losses remains open.

3. There are still two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is the two national projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind experiences of other peoples?

Project of a sovereign state is not an Albanian national project. On the contrary, a compromise was crystallized during disintegration of the former Yugoslav federation, as the most realistic project for meeting aspirations of citizens of Kosovo. In my mind Albanians and Serbs, as the most numerous peoples living in the Balkans, have never been in a real conflict, and I also think that the Kosovo conflict was in fact, since its beginning, the campaign for territories and struggle for hegemony between the Serb state and the majority Albanian population of Kosovo. Although Kosovo was the centre of Albanian national movement in the 19th and 20th century, and its conquest during the Balkans wars (1912-1913) was considered by contemporaries as division of their homeland, Albania has never had any aspiration towards the territory of Kosovo. That was due to the fact that Serbia was much more powerful state than Albania. Hence the fear of the latter that laying claim to any "outside" territory could threaten its very survival. Moreover Albania was almost totally both politically and economically dependant on various Big Powers of that era, or on the international community as a whole. It is evident that nationalistic projects of Albanians were geographically formulated at the periphery of the Albanian space in the Balkans and that their prime movers were weak political structures or illegal movements.

It was proved in many countries that societies in conflicts may be reconciled only if they meet one precondition: if the agenda which generated those conflicts, set the pace thereof, and fostered its spill-over is –changed. The best example of the foregoing are Germany and France, or Germany and Poland. Those peoples reconciled when Germany in the post-WW2 period, under the international dictate renounced its territorial pretensions, a constant source of conflicts and wars in the past. In the case of Kosovo reconciliation is also feasible if the Serb state renounces its pretensions to that territory and recognizes it as a state with its state borders. In a symbolic form a document may be signed, as a historical and peace treaty, certifying peaceful cohabitation between Kosovo and Serbia. Symbolic gestures of assuming responsibility for the past actions and re-appraisal of historical textbooks should follow at a later stage.

4. How do you perceive the resolution of Kosovo issue? (Please explain your stand in detail.)

Since representatives of the 6 most powerful countries making up the Contact Group, set mid-2005 as the time for commencing definition of the final status, as of late principal political protagonists, various defense groups and the Balkans analysts speedily started cranking out possible scenarios. For example, several weeks ago, Belgrade-based tabloid "Vecernje Novosti" ran a report produced by an international Geneva-based international institute. That report gave 8 options of resolution of the Kosovo status. In fact that report is of a very general nature, and it moreover failed to discuss both a full, instantaneous independence and return of Kosovo to Serbia. Deeming them "extreme" solutions, the report instead offered only the "middling" ones. It also bears saying that this is not the first time that an international institute proposes something which is neither a fish, nor a girl. As a matter of fact the Serb public life has been recently awash with a host of proposals and options: from de-centralization, as the first stage of cantonization, and subsequent legalization of division of Kosovo territory on ethnic grounds, to the last proposal that Kosovo with its special status be an "European region" within EU. One thing is very conspicuous, namely that the Serb political elite to date has not been able to offer a single concept for the reform of local authorities in Serbia proper, while they managed to draw up several plans for decentralization of Kosovo. And secondly, as of late EU is more interested in integration of Kosovo in its fold than Serbia is interested in its accession to the Union, barring a strong, pan-European rhetoric by several Serb political parties.

In my mind such proposals could be interesting only on an academic plane, and within the framework of creative analysis, but they don't offer a lasting and democratic solution for Kosovo, for in conformity with the international law, a country is either sovereign or not. We are facing a factual or existential situation: to be or not to be. History of states and international relations knows only sovereign states, and does not recognize other hybrid forms of statehood, that is so-called "conditional independence," proposed by the International Commission for Kosovo or by the International Crisis Group. During its five- year mandate, the UN administration Kosovo, realistically speaking, could not put in place stable institutions or establish an efficient governance. But the blame for the foregoing should not be shouldered only by domestic politicians. People cannot act responsibly if they are not vested in responsibility and cannot exercise power, if they don't have it. There is also the following question: who was able to put in place stable institutions and efficient governance in the area of West Balkans? Even countries which have had their own state for a long time were not able to do that. However the last 5 years of international administration have proved that status quo cannot last for ever! A large number of options can be drawn up and proposed but, ultimately, our fate is uncertain unless a full sovereignty of

Kosovo is crystallized. Otherwise, in case of non-resolution of its status, or enforcement of an interim solution, Kosovo could turn into a country without authorities.

Therefore I think that the international community must profile a political framework enabling full independence and subsequently a functional state, reform of the country, and its priming for the processes of EU integration. And that should happen after mid-2005, when, according to expectations of citizens of Kosovo, the political appraisal of the process "standards before status" would be effected. The Contact Group, which regularly visits Kosovo, should name two special representatives, one from the US and the other from EU, to monitor the political process with a view to ultimately defining the final status. After frequent meetings and regular consultations with political leaderships of Kosovo and Serbia, and with relevant foreign factors, those two special representatives would present a political framework for the resolution of the final status of Kosovo at an international conference.

A historical agreement between Kosovo and Serbia could be signed at that conference. It could then be adopted, in the second half of 2005, by the Security Council, in the shape of a new resolution. But before staging such a conference, the Contact Group should certify the non-return of Kosovo to Serbia and guarantee that Belgrade and Security Council shall transfer sovereignty to institutions stemming from that agreement, institutions tasked with governing the whole Kosovo. Part of that agreement would be devoted to building of genuine state institutions, creation of a necessary institutional space for Serbs and other ethnic groups, reform of local authorities, issue of high education, etc. And all that should be regulated by a constitution unanimously adopted in Kosovo parliament. International presence in the shape of observers, like in Bosnia, would continue as a strong mainstay.

Such a process would be much easier for Belgrade than it is sometimes thought. The period after ouster of Milosevic in October 2000, indicated that preservation of status quo, did not benefit any side. The Serb political elite was interested in such a status quo, for it was the lowest price it was ready to pay.

However that elite was aware that inclusion of Kosovo into Serbia presupposed guarantees for the rights of Albanians which could not be provided by the Serb political market, and also that such a move would destabilize the country. Today part of the Serb political elite is aware that integration of Serbia and Montenegro, independently or jointly, can be realized only when a decision on the final status of Kosovo is reached, and that such a decision would also channel the whole West Balkans towards reforms and modernization. If the final status of Kosovo is defined at a conference, then the nationalistic part of the political elite can justify their actions and rhetoric by telling their voters that the solution was imposed. EU offer relating to a swift membership of Serbia would have

the symbolism of a trophy. The Serb public is ready to consume such developments: let us not forget that the pull out of the Serb troops from Kosovo in June 1999 was presented as a –victory.

5. If you took part in talks on status of Kosovo would you be ready to accept any solution which precludes independence? If not, please clarify your stand?

I don't think that any political protagonist in Kosovo would be ready to accept anything else except independence, for it would be against the will of citizens of Kosovo, and if he signed anything precluding independence, his political career would be doomed. His fate would be even worse if he signed any document linking Kosovo to Serbia or placing Kosovo in a symbolic or direct dependence. History of the Kosovo conflict showed that that any other solution would be a short-term one or enabling the conflict to be passed down on the next generation. In the past and even now all strategies, proved efficient in other cases, were applied in efforts to resolve or transform that conflict: "ethnic-cleansings," forcible re-settlement of population, integration and assimilation, hegemony-style state control, federalization or division of power in line with the ethnic set-up of population. All those strategies were applied by the Serb state elite until 1999, and they all failed. Only secession, on the basis of self-determination, can ensure stability and a long-term solution.

6. What do you read into stances of some intellectual and political circles in Belgrade that cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo is impossible and that Kosovo should be divided along the ethnic lines?

I think that in essence such a stance is tinged with racism. It stems from the school of the Serb political thinking, entrenched in the highest educational, scientific and religious institutions, which, 30 years ago, had criticized the then Yugoslav leadership for integration and political emancipation of Albanians in a multi-national Yugoslav state, and whose key advocates, after Tito's death, talked about an alleged "genocide" against local Serbs committed by Kosovo Albanians. At the time much pressure was piled on the Serb community. But texts and documents of that school were steeped in hate speech, while its political mythology has well in advance legitimized violence, apartheid and "ethnic cleansing", which, after 1989, took place first in Kosovo and then in former Yugoslavia. For all their negative advocacy they should now assume political responsibility. But in fact an inverse process is at work: they are still allowed to promote themselves as "intellectual elite" representing "the Serb national interest," although the "Serb nationalistic project" which they masterminded failed because of their legitimization of the forcible disintegration of Yugoslavia.

I am convinced that cohabitation in Kosovo is possible. Albanians and Serbs in the past co-existed, and they are likely to co-exist in the future, because the policy of antagonism in Kosovo society was imposed by Serbia, and in fact there were no conflicts between Serbs and Albanians in

Kosovo. The logic of disseminating stories about impossible cohabitation and resolution of problems only in line with the territorial principle is just a continuation of a racist spirit and racist political way of thinking.

I assess that division of Kosovo along the ethnic lines between the Serb and Albanian majority is unacceptable on several grounds. Firstly because of the ethnic structure of Kosovo and the way the local Serbs are geographically located and spread that division would not meet their political, economic and social interests. They are dispersed in settlements south of river Ibar and in their traditional settlements in central Kosovo, while a relative Serb majority lives only in Northern Kosovo. Secondly, part of Kosovar Albanians would back political extremism in the political life thus widely promoting the idea of unification with Albania. Then the general assessment would be the following: if statehood is compromise between all Kosovo citizens, and Kosovo Serbs opt for Serbia, then Kosovo Albanians have every right to strive to unite with Albania. Thirdly, an ethnic division would have a snowball effect in other areas of West Balkans: Croats and Serbs in Bosnia, and Albanians in Serbia and Macedonia would strive to realize their agendas. Fourthly, such a division would raise the issue of morality of the international politics in the Balkans, after disintegration of former Yugoslavia and humanitarian intervention, whose goal was to ensure the respect of human rights and normal life of a multi-ethnic society. Such a division would also call into question sustainability and efficiency of the international politics in Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia. And finally, ethnic divisions in different countries in the course of de-colonization of the world, and downfall of the communist empire, were accompanied by a systematic violence, forcible re-settlements and displacement of ethnic groups. In fact conflicts have not been resolved in any country, but rather conditions for their recycling have been created.

7. Is it necessary that both Albanian and Serb side remain hostages to national aspirations dating back to the 19th century or they should adjust to the new European and international circumstances and trends?

Albanians in the Balkans have long renounced their national aspirations. We in Kosovo set on a specific course, since our occupation by the Serb state, during the Balkans wars, and notably in the socialist Yugoslavia, by building an institutional reality which was violently dismantled by Milosevic regime. Today Albanians in Kosovo don't have national aspirations. On the contrary, national unification would top the agenda of all Albanians living everywhere in the Balkans. But I am not at all perceiving statehood from the angle of nation-states of the 19th century. because in today's world no-one is completely independent, in the classical sense of the word. In a globalized world and in the world of European integrations, every country is living in a kind of interdependence. The foregoing implies that independence of Kosovo would not mean a victory

for Albanians, and a loss for Serbs.

I expect a definitive victory of the three basic ideas which have altered the world since the beginning of the modern age and which dominate the mind-set of progressive countries: peace, as a preferred basis of different countries and peoples, democracy, as an optimal mode of organization of political life and finally free market, as the starter of a future welfare. Citizens are familiar with that rhetoric, but I think that the sideshows of those processes are only a sheer adornment. Only a swift and just solution of Kosovo issue can create preconditions for attaining those values and their genuine honoring in the entire region of West Balkans.

Proposals that Kosovo be morphed into an "European region" with a special status, in line with the process of European regionalization, are wrongly termed as "innovative." They are in fact absurd and tend to spawn futile illusions. Such rhetoric has its attraction for some, for it creates an impression of an alleged "integration of Kosovo into EU" and makes citizens believe that the future holds for them an incredible welfare. Unfortunately such a rhetoric is identical to the one used on the eve of disintegration of former Yugoslavia, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when violence began substituting the political philosophy and raw emotions prevailed over common sense. At the time the prevailing rhetoric was awash with stories about Europe composed of regions, pluralism, democracy, human rights, etc. Moreover according to such a proposal Kosovo would be back to square one, that is, to the pre-June 1999 situation. EU is nothing else but a community of states, and Kosovo can integrate into EU only as a sovereign state. If Kosovo acceded to EU as a region with a special status, it would become a Serb region and could therefore become an EU members only through Serbia. And if I, as a member of the Kosovo elite, am not ready to share my privileges with my colleagues in Tirana, why would I be ready to do that with my counterparts in Belgrade?

8. Have conditions for reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians been created? Who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past?

I have already noted that due to non-alteration of the political agenda between Kosovo and Serbia in post-June 1999 period, and after downfall of Milosevic regime, conditions for reconciliation of the Serb and Kosovo society unfortunately have not been created. After the ouster of the old regime, new emulators faced a huge dilemma, and the manner of resolution of that dilemma shall determine the future of the West Balkans. Which state do they inherit in institutional terms, is it still Yugoslavia and Serbia, and where are its borders? And since the new elite has old replies, then the following question remains: what should happen with Kosovo, Republika Srpska and Bosnia, and finally Montenegro? Reconciliation of peoples, after cruel wars and mass killings in former Yugoslav territories, is not part of the political agendas of Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb and Prishtina. Last year the new Serb and Croat leaders made some symbolic

gestures of apology, and undoubtedly those moves somewhat eased tense relations between those peoples.

In the case of Kosovo it is not important who makes the first apology, but it is important to create preconditions for such a social process. Guarantee given by Serbia in terms of its lack of territorial and political aspirations to Kosovo, could be followed by such a symbolic gesture. However such a process still cannot have the desired effect, and not only because of the unresolved, final status of Kosovo. In Kosovo the dead are still talking and dictating our future. Over 4,000 people of various ethnic descent are still registered as missing. We still don't know where the remains of the majority of our casualties are. Dignity of those war victims was trampled upon, for mass killings were followed by their burial in mass graves and subsequent transfer of their bodies to Serbia.

In the spirit of reconciliation Serbia and Prishtina should jointly discuss many issues which belong to the past, notably suspension of autonomy of Kosovo, introduction of apartheid, gross and massive violations of human rights, attempted and effected genocide, incurring of material damage, etc. Part of that reconciliation process should be establishment of a genuine dialogue between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo at all levels of society. Commissions for Appraisal of Truth and Reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians should be able to prepare and put in place the process of re-arrangement of relations. Members of those commissions should be civilians and local experts and as such approved by Prishtina and Belgrade parliaments. Those commissions should not be composed of government experts, for it would imply their instrumentalization for the sake of day-to-day political goals and agendas.

9. What should Albanian political structures do in order to effect the return of Serbs to Kosovo and make them forge links with local institutions, and not with Belgrade?

Unfortunately Kosovo political elite to date has not come up with a serious offer for integration of Serbs living in Kosovo or repatriation of those who have fled to Serbia. Hashim Tachi, president of Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), was a notable exception to that rule, for he was personally engaged in formulating the document calling on the Serbs to return to Kosovo. He also suggested our familiarization with some parts of the Ohrid Agreement for Macedonia, with a view to implementing them in Kosovo and thus creating an institutional space for Kosovar Serbs. But that initiative of his was not backed by other populist leaders. Nonetheless I think that we should follow the course which he has set. Kosovo needs to supplant the policy of antagonism between the Serb minority and the Albanian majority with the policy of accommodation. And I am not referring to property and housing issues. Policy of accommodation or adjustment presupposes the tack by dint of which some societies built a stable democratic order despite inherently deep ethnic and religious

divisions. I think that we can emulate them through “a civil contract” between the majority and other ethnic groups. Such a contract would create an institutional room for the latter and its very form would enable them to protect and promote their interests. That could be achieved through a new constitution, that is, its clear definition of their rights and responsibilities, overhaul of local authorities, the issue of use of language, and consequently the issue of education at all levels, and preservation of their identity.

That could be another attractive offer for the process of repatriation, for it would guarantee the exercise of rights and responsibilities of ethnic groups in an independent Kosovo. The issue of return should not be evaluated statistically, for politics and social phenomena cannot be evaluated by quantitative methods. Kosovo needs qualitative changes, and they can be ensured by definition of a safe future, establishment of peaceful relations with our neighbors, notably with Serbia, and creation of good economy and social justice for all. Only under such conditions repatriation could be successful, but the above process exacts a pragmatic approach. However we are currently able only to “export” people, and emigration from Kosovo is not only our concern, but also the one of many Western countries. Furthermore the issue of return should be perceived from the angle of Kosovo Serbs. Unfortunately leadership of Kosovo Serbs has no vision of their future nor a pragmatic tack to that and many other problems which that community faces. Leaders of Kosovo Serbs don’t know what should be changed in life of their community, either in case of Kosovo’s independence, its re-joining with Serbia, ethnic division, decentralization, or in case of a continuing, time-wise undefined UN-administration.

10. Are “standards for Kosovo” implementable, and is there a need for alteration of the UN SC Resolution 1244?

Those standards in their current form are not implementable by mid-2005. If those standards were set as a precondition for many states of South East Europe they would not be able to meet them. But I think that the international community would appreciate dedication of our whole political leadership and society to their implementation. Since the November 2003 visit of the US Deputy Secretary of State, Mark Grossman, to Kosovo our political and institutional representatives fully devoted themselves to that problem. Violent developments in March 2004 clearly represented the lowest point in history of the post-war Kosovo and they affected the process of implementation of standards and tainted our image in the region and in the world. I believe that by mid-2005 we shall have a normal development, that evaluation of implementation of standards shall be positive and that definition of the final status shall begin. After 2005 we shall strive to meet and reach the same standards, or perhaps try to define them by new terms as a reform or a process of European integrations. I have early on grasped the fact that standards would engender another

problem. International community should have dealt with a key issue of Kosovo, notably building of a functional state.

In principle standards are values which we should embrace and cherish in our society, and for me, as a reform- and modernization-minded man, both reform and modernization should be accepted as our guiding compass. But contrary to the foregoing, the goal of the aforementioned policy was simply a time-buying exercise, and that time was bought until mid-2005. Before and after that time, in my opinion, there is no need to overhaul UNMIK in a bureaucratic-revolutionary fashion, or to amend the resolution 1244. Kosovo stagnated in all aspects because that resolution failed to determine a clear mandate and the length of stay of the UN mission in Kosovo. That resolution should have been amended in that sense much earlier. Now the UN Security Council should adopt only a new resolution confirming Kosovo’s sovereignty and thus end its mission. Such a political process would set Kosovo on a new course, or on the new path which we have never taken before.

Professor of university, official of Democratic Party of Kosovo,
and MP in Kosovo parliament

Ilber Hisa:

Issue of Kosovo is a process requiring a tenable solution

1. In your opinion what is the past, present and future Kosovo?

This question is a throwback to the Communist era written tests. Hence I shall, in line with my profession of a historian, though I have always tried to perceive the problem of Kosovo independently from history, and historicism, try to give you an answer. On the other hand a kind of historical analysis marks all my Kosovo-related ponderings. In yesteryear Kosovo featured many dilemmas and question marks, and the tack to them was mired in myths, from which thereafter emerged the last-wave of the Serb nationalism peaking with the political ascent of Milosevic in Kosovo proper.

In that very Kosovo Polje, once the venue of mass rallies, and a harbinger of “yoghurt and logs” revolutions, the number of local Serbs has dwindled significantly. And their number shall perhaps continue to dwindle in the near future. Ills of belated Balkans nationalisms are most clearly seen in Kosovo. If something can link the past and present, and perhaps even the future, it is violence, intolerance and lack of vision not to exclude or deny others from common life. The price of the past wrongdoing has been already paid in Kosovo: over 10,000 killed people, many raped women, 120,000 destroyed houses, a large number of Serb expellees from Kosovo. If the lesson has been properly learnt, at least by Belgrade, which politically instigated all those conflicts, and by Kosovo proper, then there shall be readiness to build a future in which victors shall be both sides once they decide to renounce ideologies which have contributed to the current terrible state in which Kosovo finds itself.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo, and what is the new reality? How true are claims by some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that it is factually lost for Serbia?

Well, it is no big secret that Kosovo may become independent. But the question is, when and at which price. Those who think that the new Kosovo reality could be changed in an attempt to go back to square one have excluded themselves from the process being created on the ground.

In that regard the question is not whether Kosovo is “lost” for Serbia and “found” by Kosovars, but the answer lies in an inventive use of the solution. It seems that only the “win-win” schemes in which all are winners, represent a realistic stand built on the principle of future inside an expanded Europe, along with the acceptance of the European system of

values. Understandably the road to that Europe goes through Brussels and not via Mitrovica. And the foregoing presupposes both independent Serbia and Kosovo in EU...

3. The two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is the two national projects, notably the Albanian and the Serb one, still persist. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation of the two peoples, having in mind experiences of other peoples?

I have just elaborated that. Albanians and Serbs should forget traditional Balkans solutions based on mentality, notably then one wins only when the other loses, like in a joke about a Balkans man, who upon being told by a golden fish that if his wish were to be fulfilled, his enemy would get as much, or even double, then cynically decided to have his one eye lost! I think that Kosovo and Serbia, Albanians and Serbs, have legitimate interests and that they all should be striving towards progress and an accelerated accession to Euro-Atlantic integrations. The question remains whether we are not vegetarians because carrots don't grow in our backyards. In fact carrots are in Brussels, and if all sides want a comprehensive tack enabling us all to emerge as winners, then it means then in the forthcoming process we all, Prishtina, Belgrade, Brussels, and initially even Washington, must take part in it. If Albanians and Serbs decide to resolve the issue by dint of an ethnically and territorially obsolete concept, then they shall open the Pandora's box, because Serbs and Albanians live in Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia...I don't think that much wisdom is needed to realize which *deja-vu* solutions that concept can engender. There is no peaceful exchange of population and territories...

4. In your opinion what is the solution of Kosovo issue?

Issue of Kosovo should be above all seen as a process; secondly, solution to that issue must be a lasting and tenable one, and thirdly, things cannot go back to square one. If the matter is viewed in this way, then we should proceed by pondering possibilities for creating a functional state respectful of rights of all citizens of Kosovo, including the rights of all ethnic groups (even a package of special rights should be taken into consideration), and at the same time we should devise the mode of gradual inclusion of that state entity into Euro-Atlantic integrations. Kosovo is a problem which includes the past, present and future aspects. I believe that the past is sometimes even more problematic than the future. I think that the Serb side should muster up courage in discussions on the past, that is, admit that what had had happened in the past was a tragedy which cost very much Albanians and Kosovo. And as regards the present, Albanian side should muster up enough courage not to engage in retribution, but rather find the way to include the problems into a broader framework of rights which should not prevent the functioning of Kosovo as a state. The Serb side in Kosovo should muster up courage to recognize the new reality, but neither side is currently accommodating to the new reality. Serbs don't seem to be able to accept that they can be a minority somewhere, while Albanians don't

act as a majority, for acting as a majority entails partnership and above all guarantees and responsibility.

As regards the future, I believe that both sides, Prishtina and Belgrade should pluck up the courage and muster invention to ponder an all-winning form which can be provided by Brussels. Independent Kosovo and Serbia should offer assistance to all in a joint striving to accede to the Euro-Atlantic structures.

5. What justifies the status resolution which you advocate, that is, what gives it legitimacy?

It explains what has happened, and what should not be repeated. The whole humanitarian intervention was effected with a view to preventing the past course of developments. It is clear that the past is past, and that it cannot return even in a very modern variant. Legitimacy stems from this stand which is justified and positive in the sense that it attempts to provide a realistic space for all by respecting an inevitable reality indicating that it is not possible to go back and that the future must be in keeping with the only possible vision. Any other choice would be a déjà vu one and as such obsolete.

6. Are you ready to accept any other solution other than independence for Kosovo: conditional independence, federation, confederation, or union with Serbia and Montenegro, or perhaps something else?

Yes, my choice is a different one, it is called independence plus. I have elaborated it in my previous replies: I am for Kosovo as a state which in its future independence should be part of the process of Euro-Atlantic integrations...

7. Who should decide on the final status of Kosovo: Prishtina and Belgrade in internationally-brokered negotiations, United Nations Security Council or an international conference?

I simply said that solutions for Kosovo should be sought in a process. I also believe that an international conference does not provide for durable solutions. Security Council may ratify an agreement suspending the UN mission in Kosovo, and thus ending its role there. Prishtina and Belgrade should discuss various matters concerning the past, present and future. That means that Belgrade may be included in the process to the extent it has legitimate interest in status and state of Serbs in Kosovo and in their future. Likewise Belgrade should recognize the same rights to Albanians in the Presevo Valley. Also those talks should cover the most concrete matters, notably: debts, damages, reparations, various international commitments stemming from the previous common life in a common state etc. But those talks should be also the post-status ones, in the sense of the future, that is, they should result in concrete agreements benefiting both sides, and the joint striving of the region to be included into the Euro-Atlantic integrations. Belgrade has its legitimate interests in that logic for resolution of status of Kosovo, and it should also have its rights, barring the one on veto. The role of international factors, not

only as brokers, is nearly irreplaceable, notably the role of Brussels and Washington. And finally, Kosovars and Serb don't have anything more to offer to each other. Carrots grow in Brussels and inclusion of Brussels and Washington, not only as intermediaries, is necessary. Even if in Belgrade the logic of compensation for the lost Kosovo prevails, presence of Brussels and Washington at the negotiating table is necessary. But their presence is also necessary for Prishtina which shall persistently seek guarantees for any agreement...

8. Is it necessary that both the Albanian and the Serb side remain hostages to national aspirations dating back to the 19th century, or they should conform to the new European circumstances and trends?

I think that it is too late, historically speaking for both sides, Albanians and Serbs, to realize their comprehensive national states. If 19th century happened today at the threshold of the 21st century, it would be more a consequence of belated aspiration, than of a real political striving. In other words if Kosovo were divided, such a development would produce a real possibility for creation of mono-ethnic states, and consequently generate new Balkans dramas with terrible consequences for Albanians, Serbs and other peoples. In contrast to the foregoing, my previously exposed solution, is a real and progressive one allowing for realization of part of aspirations, by making possible a free national development, but at the same time, a cosmopolitan one. Hence those aspirations may be realized within a contemporary valid option.

9. Which should be the role of Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade in resolution of status of Kosovo and in which delegation Kosovo Serbs should be represented?

Serbs from Kosovo are, alas, losing the opportunity to be the factor per se. If they admitted: "Yes, we recognize the aspiration of the majority, but here are our claims...", they would have a key role in definition of the future of Kosovo. However, Kosovo Serbs in the last decades were more a social infrastructure of the colonial policy of Belgrade, then a factor able to impose a solution. Even after the war they failed to form an authentic political force able to reflect and protect their own interests, both as a group or as citizens of Kosovo. If view of that standing of theirs, in any talks with Belgrade, there is no place for them in any future Kosovo delegation. In fact it would be similar to the situation in the football league, if you took over players of your rival and forced them to don shirts of your own team. But that does not mean that Kosovo Serbs should be totally excluded from talks. In fact they should take part in the internal dialogue of Kosovars on a package of special rights. In that case, they can even have an adviser from Serbia or from any other side.

10. Do you have any concept relating to the Serb community within the framework of independent Kosovo, and how do you perceive repatriation of expelled Serbs, that is, in that sense what should be role of Albanian politicians and majority?

Yes, I think that Kosovo Serbs should have special right with respect to some principles. They should be guaranteed the right to a special package which would made them participate in a local dialogue with the international community assistance and counseling from Serbia. Those rights would be also guaranteed by constitution. They should be divided into the two groups, the general ones stemming from a positive action (representation in state institutions, parliament, government, and in courts of law) and special rights covered by the curriculum of education and schools, recognition of the Serb Orthodox Church in the territory of Kosovo, and other rights exercisable in local authorities. Hence, the general rights should be recognized and guaranteed in the whole territory on the basis of positive actions and other rights valid in the territory and in the community in which Serbs and Kosovars cohabitate.

11. Are there prerequisites for the start of negotiations on the final status of Kosovo and what is their nature? Who should be the Albanian and Serb participants in those negotiations?

First of all we must impose as a prerequisite a way guaranteeing the end result, that is, the attainment of goal. Use of political means for attainment of goals or imposition of a fait accompli situation should be ruled out by the international community's decision to impose some obligations to main protagonists. Precondition or principle stemming from those obligations would put in place the logic of process and political means for reaching an agreement. Sides in negotiations should elect their representatives.

12. Are "standards for Kosovo" implementable? Is it necessary to amend the UN SC Resolution 1244?

Design of those standards makes them, initially, difficult to attain even by many Western countries. For example, elimination of organized crime would be terribly problematic for Italy, the state of New York, etc. Privatization would be problematic for France. As regards the Balkans, impossibility to meet those standards would result in the loss of statehood of many independent states, including Serbia and Albania. However, standards with priorities, set as principles and aspiration to realize a regular life in keeping with valid principles of the system of Western countries values, in my mind, are the subject-matter of a long-term aspiration and as a principle of aspiration have their place in the ongoing process in Kosovo. I tend to think that those principles should be even more linked to a post-status stage and turned into principles opening the door of accession to EU.

There is no need to change Resolution 1244. It should be suspended, as I have already mentioned, with the end of UNMIK mission in Kosovo, within an agreed and guaranteed political solution.

President of "ORA" Party and MP deputy in Kosovo Parliament

**Gjergj Dedaj:
The right to free self-determination
of the majority people in Kosovo must be respected**

1. In your opinion what is the past, present and future Kosovo?

In the historical, ethnic, geographic and cultural respect Kosovo represents a territory in South East Europe and in the Balkans peninsula, which due to its geo-strategic and geo-political position, had a bloody history. The ancient Dardania, or later Kosovo province, as an occupied part of the Ottoman Empire, was the juncture at which interests various peoples and powers clashed. Therefore they all aspired to either occupy or annex it. But its territory from the time immemorial has always been inhabited by the Albanian majority. After capitulation of the Ottoman Empire, Serbia increasingly made clear its aspirations towards domination over Kosovo, and serbization of that territory by dint of various measures mostly resulting in a tragic outcome and bloodbath of the Albanian population. In those Serbia's campaigns, during the Balkans wars, period of the agrarian reform and during the WW1 and WW2, the Albanians were either forcibly expelled or compelled to emigrate to Turkey and elsewhere. The aforementioned terror campaigns made impossible a just solution of the issue of Kosovo and status of the Albanian people in the Balkans peninsula.

In spite of the post-WW2 period agreements with Yugoslavia on self-determination of Kosovars, instead of implementation thereof, an anti-Albanian campaign was started in 1945 and 1946. It resulted in dismantling of liberation forces and thwarting of all attempts of Kosovo people to effect their self-determination. However those attempts continued in the face of formally institutionalized repression by the Yugoslav state. 1968 demonstrations, the 1974 Constitution, the 1981 unrests, the 1989-1990 demonstrations and finally the open conflict between the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serb forces, were all actions aimed at attaining freedom, justice, equality and independence of people of Kosovo. When the Serb paramilitary, military and police forces were compelled to beat retreat in the wake of the 1999 NATO intervention, key preconditions were created for a just solution of the issue of Kosovo, in keeping with the will of citizens of Kosovo, and their right to free expression and self-determination on the final political status and on the process of Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Kosovo is currently in a very favorable political position and in the stage of a favorable democratic process leading to independence

and integration, which is a precondition for its easing of tensions with its neighbors and stability in the whole Balkans. Balkans should stop being the hotbed of crises and bloody multi-ethnic conflicts and the black hole of Europe. Not only Albanians but all other peoples in the Balkans should understand that only peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and reciprocal respect between neighboring peoples are a guarantee for full security, free movement, West European integrations, and a stable future of this region. But it is clear that the foregoing cannot be realized by relying on history and invoking the graves of the innocent dead, but rather by mustering strength and courage to focus on the future which could be bright and safe only if those independent countries, peoples and nations achieved good-neighborly relations and strove towards the EU and other international integrations and if they guaranteed equality to and legal protection of the rights of diverse ethnic groups. The same applies to Kosovo and Serbia.

An independent Kosovo of tomorrow, once it achieves good-neighborly relations with Serbia, Montenegro and Albania, and proper integration into EU, NATO, UN, OSCE, etc, Kosovo of open borders, freedom of movement, the rule of law, the legal state built in keeping with Western democratic standards, shall be a necessary link between all the Balkans regional countries and EU. The Serb entity in Kosovo and the Albanian one in Serbia should serve as a good example of the respect for the minorities and their rights. The approach to the rights of those ethnicities in our countries should be seen as Belgrade's and Prishtina's qualifying exam for a subsequent admission to EU and other Western European structures.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are claims of some circles that Kosovo has embarked upon the road to independence and that Serbia has factually lost Kosovo?

Kosovo is currently facing many problems and difficulties, resulting from the last war and economic devastation. A special problem are missing person, majority of whom are still buried in mass graves in Serbia. Their bodies should be returned to their families and their murderers should be either handed over to the Hague Tribunal or tried by the domestic courts. Building of a democratic, institutional, legal and judicial infrastructure in Kosovo is an optimal precondition for embarking upon the path of statehood and for the start of dialogue with our neighbors on various issues, and also for realizing freedom of movement and mutual opening up process. Kosovo which was at war, and on whose behalf NATO intervened to save innocent civilians, cannot go back to square one, for such a development would be conducive to a new war. Kosovo does not want conflicts with its neighbors in the future, and Kosovo undoubtedly should proceed along the path chosen by its citizens, without intervention of its neighbors or any other factor. Hence Kosovars should alone decide

on their final political status and their vision of the state of Kosovo. Any hurdle on that path is a possible starter of new conflicts and destabilization of the region.

One cannot say that Kosovo is lost for Serbia, for it has never belonged to Serbia except under blackmailing provisions of one-sided and arbitrary constitutions. In fact independence of Kosovo would benefit Serbia, would help ease tense Albanian-Serb relations, and would be beneficial for democratic and integrating processes of our two countries and the future of the two peoples.

3. There are still two opposed stands, or rather, two national projects on Kosovo: the Serb and the Albanian one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind historical experiences of other peoples?

If the proverb "The one who owns the sheep, owns the pasture too", is correct, then as regards Kosovo there is only one sovereign and only one valid view, notably citizens of Kosovo and their view. Therefore citizens of Kosovo are the only factor entitled to decide on the status of Kosovo, for the inverse and extreme views have to date led only to bloodbath and many graves in this territory. Those views have been already relegated to an infamous past. Possibilities for reconciliation and historical compromise always exist, but the two peoples should be also willing to embark upon the reconciliation process. That willingness should be moreover based on principles of reciprocity and above all on equality and the right to self-determination of every side. Any violation of those principles eliminates a historical compromise and deepens contradictions between Kosovo and Serbia.

I believe that the last conflict in former Yugoslavia and in Kosovo has been a good lesson for all its passive and active participants, and that we all have learnt that after the tragic period we should muster strength to overcome inter-ethnic hatreds and to apply national strategies morphing former enemies into tomorrow's friends, and removing extremism, militancy, chauvinism, retribution, and all kinds of ethnic hatreds. Reconciliation should happen, and the circles of the political class should be compelled to effect it, since peoples are more noble, conscientious, and forgiveness-prone.

4. Which is in your mind the solution to Kosovo problems?

Issue of Kosovo should be resolved in conformity with the will of its citizens, in full respect of the right to self-determination of the majority people of Kosovo, while implementation of a democratic process, human and minority rights, building of a legal state, processes of Euro-Atlantic integration and co-operation with neighbors should be internationally monitored. Any other option contrary to the will of citizens of Kosovo would generate tensions and create a fertile soil for new multi-ethnic conflicts. The official Belgrade should fully understand the implication

of the foregoing, instead of remaining hostage to the issue of Kosovo and thus making more difficult opening up of Serbia and its integration into the world. And Kosovo cannot remain a hostage to Serbia's undemocratic stands, for such a development would make the two countries prone to new conflicts with grave consequences for both sides and even the whole region.

5. Are you ready to accept any solution for Kosovo other than independence: independence with strings attached to it, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro or another solution? If not, please explain your stance.

Final political status of Kosovo is neither a party, nor a personal issue. It is in fact a complex problem meriting a just and lasting solution. Experimental measures deepen the crisis and delay the resolution of Kosovo issue. As a person who upholds the principles of liberal democracy, president of the Liberal party of Kosovo, and enforcer of those values in our society, I think that the fundamental rights of every legal and democratic society should be respected. And I am referring to the full respect of the right to life, the right to property, the right to freedom and the right to free choice of one's destiny. Those natural and elementary rights can no longer be denied in Kosovo, and because of that people of Kosovo are a sovereign who should decide on the internal order and political, legal and democratic status of Kosovo. I for one could never accept any other model contrary to the will of people of Kosovo, and I think the same holds true of any party leader, head of institution or MP of any country in a democratic world. After recent developments in Kosovo, all possibilities for Kosovo making part of any federation, confederation or union with Serbia and Montenegro have been exhausted. Moreover such a solution would not be in the interest of a lasting peace, security and stability in the region, but rather, a de facto avoidance of a true solution and proof of persisting prejudices harming the will and the right of people of Kosovo to self-determination.

6. What justifies the solution that you advocate, that is, what gives it legitimacy?

Under the 1974 Constitution Kosovo was an equitable unit among eight administrative-political units of the former SFRY until 1989, when Milosevic regime arbitrarily suspended that equality and the then autonomy of Kosovo. Later, through its police and military forces, that regime established a reign of terror and systematic repression in all spheres of Kosovo life. And we are all familiar with the consequences of that terror. After disintegration of that federation and emergence through bloodshed of many independent states, not a single argument denying the right of people of Kosovo to self-determination and creation of the state of Kosovo open to all its neighbors and model of democracy in the region, holds water. Added to that not a single argument could fly in the face or ignore that legitimate political and democratic right of people of Kosovo,

which together with Serbia and other neighboring states, strives to accede EU and other military and political international structures, for narrow-based integrations to date have always caused crises, bloodbaths and conflicts. Moreover all the interested parties should understand that such a practice has become obsolete.

7. Do you have any concept for the Serb community in Kosovo within the framework of independent Kosovo, and to which extent you urge repatriation of Serbs and their inclusion in Kosovo institution?

In Europe and in the rest of democratic world there are no totally ethnically pure countries, therefore minorities for those states are a genuine wealth which serves as a connecting bridge and a tension-easing factor. Moreover degree of democratization of a country is gauged by a degree of the rights and freedoms vested in minorities, rights and freedoms which should be legally prescribed in keeping with the West European standards. The Serb community in Kosovo should not shoulder the burden of Milosevic era policy, the one which is being tried in the Hague, but rather, be free to integrate into the Kosovo society and take an active part in building of democratic and legitimate institutions of Kosovo and the very state of Kosovo. Kosovo as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country should be an oasis of tolerance and peace and a good example for all the countries in the region, a model of Europe in miniature. Serbs displaced during the last conflict in Kosovo, barring those involved in crimes against innocent civilians, should return and be systematically repatriated to their settlements, and that process should be monitored by international mechanism, notably the UN Security Council, OSCE, etc. What has happened in Kosovo need not be forgotten. On the other hand similar developments should not be tolerated or allowed to happen, and in that context any source of crisis and of inter-ethnic tensions in Kosovo should be immediately stamped out. But it is not only up to Albanians to deal with the issue of the return of Serbs. That is not one-sided issue. Its resolution depends on the willingness to return of Serbs proper, but also on the official policies of our two, neighboring countries.

8. If Kosovo remained within the framework of Serbia, which would be the nature of participation of Albanians in the central authorities in Belgrade (either in independent Serbia or in the current State Union of Serbia and Montenegro)?

It is a superfluous question and an unnecessary experiment, in fact it belongs to the past century. It is no longer possible to talk about Kosovo as part of Serbia, or about reincarnation of the former SFRY. That issue was filed away and now belongs to the realm of memories. Those prone to harboring illusions and short-sighted politicians and theoreticians are free to ponder various aspirations, for non-one should be banned from indulging in day-dreaming. But Kosovo within the framework of Serbia is a solution which cannot be even imagined. Added to that it is very hard to believe that Kosovo has any aspiration to be within the Union of Serbia

and Montenegro, for there is no more time for retrograde processes, and revival of projects which have long been dead. Kosovo Albanians may live and work in Belgrade, as free citizens, businessmen, or diplomats in the embassy of Kosovo in Belgrade, but not as participants in power structures or institutions of Serbia, and vice versa. Also, the future venue of meeting between Kosovo and Serbia is New York, or Brussels, or Strasbourg. The quicker international decision-making centers decide on that meeting, the better for our two peoples, which should have good-neighborly relations, undo the past wrongs, think about future, and about new generations, instead of being burdened by the lack of responsibility and errors of their parents and of the most monstrous off-spring of history of the 20th century in this part of the Balkans-crazy politicians.

9. In case of independence of Kosovo what kind of relationship should be established between Serbs from Kosovo and Belgrade?

Independence of Kosovo should guarantee a comprehensive co-operation between Kosovo Serbs and Serbia, free movement in the whole space of that part of Europe, which should become the Balkans Schengen with only formal borders, and characterized by a guaranteed freedom of movement and liberalization of co-operation in all spheres for Serbs living in Kosovo, Albanians living in the Presevo Valley, and those living in the territory of Serbia. They should all enjoy all national, religious, cultural, human and other rights, in keeping with international acts, laws and standards.

10. How do you perceive decentralization of power in Kosovo, and status of local Serbs?

Decentralization is a process presupposing democratization of a country and creation of favorable living conditions for citizens of that country. That process should first ease their life, allow them to combat bureaucracy and autocracy, promote public services for all citizens, regardless of their ethnic descent. However decentralization should not be effected along ethnic, religious, or cultural lines, but rather introduced as an instrument for putting in place facilities for better communication between citizens and the local and central authorities. Serbs from Kosovo and other minorities, should understand decentralization as a technical-democratic act and not a political, or ethnically-based one.

11. How feasible are "standards for Kosovo"? Is there a need to amend UN SC Resolution 1244?

Not only Kosovo but all the countries in the region should accept and implement standards and democratic values if they are channeled towards Euro-Atlantic integrations and democracy in general. Thus Kosovo, in parallel with democratic processes and resolution of its final status, should prove to and convince both its neighbors and the international community that it has the right resolve to meet all the standards and to create circumstances and preconditions for realization of independence. Implementation of democratic standards is yet another proof of political

and democratic maturity of citizens and Kosovo and its political class. By meeting those standards both citizens and politicians of Kosovo shall provide enough evidence of the new reality on the ground in Kosovo, thus making international factors and the key decision-making mechanisms grasp that reality as well, and consequently becoming readier to recognize Kosovo's independence. In that case the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 becomes obsolete. It was fulfilled and created favorable conditions for passing of the new Security Council resolution, respectful of the right of people of Kosovo to self-determination relating to the final status of Kosovo with international guarantees. The foregoing would remove all dilemmas and prejudices about any ties between Kosovo and Serbia, except the ones which Kosovo should have with Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and other countries in the region.

President of the Liberal Party of Kosovo, MP in Kosovo parliament

Bujar Bukoshi:
Earlier that we all think Kosovo shall attain independence

1. What if for you the past, present and future Kosovo?

I shall answer laconically to your brief question: it is a place of a continual preservation of Albanian identity. Yesteryear Kosovo was a symbol of a country permanently inhabited by the Albanian majority, the Serb-occupied place, the country given to Serbia by big powers, partly because of our inability to build a state, and partly because of our destructive attitude towards the state-building. Admittedly, thanks to its better organization the Serb managed to morph Kosovo into the cradle of Serbia, and we all know that a baby cannot choose a cradle in which it will be put.

During the rule of all Serb regimes, Albanians in Kosovo were the object of violence, discrimination, repression, expulsion from all territories, colonizing and assimilation-minded programs, state terror, culminating with genocidal actions, while Kosovo was intentionally left to languish as the most underdeveloped area. Such a range of negative actions was based on a medieval ideology and retrograde, hegemony-minded and aggressive policy and was also conquest-minded. I would like to reiterate that it is wrong to blame only one side, since the captives have the obligation to free themselves without any internal division. Since Albanians have failed to do that job properly, Serbia was able to rule over Kosovo for such a long time.

After a long struggle for liberation, Albanian uprisings, many victims and military NATO intervention, today Kosovo is a free territory, liberated from military, police and paramilitary Serb forces. International administration has been established in Kosovo, and sovereignty of former Yugoslavia was suspended on the basis of the UN SC Resolution 1244. However Kosovo is still an unfinished project.

What many immediately notice is the progress which in a relatively short post-war period Kosovo has made in its reconstruction. Most impressive is the energy and optimism with which Albanians embarked upon the process of reconstruction. Thus many villages and towns were re-vamped. But there are also negative aspects, notably a very sluggish economy. The former is due to the wrong tack of the international administration. It failed to put in place an economic and security system in Kosovo which would propel us towards an upturn in economy. Devastated economy is a major hurdle for implementation of

successful policy, thus key problems in Kosovo remain unresolved. That precarious situation is compounded by the lack of investments. Without development of economy, there is no development of democracy in Kosovo!

But Kosovo of tomorrow shall be another new country in the region, whose majority population shall build a society providing for a better life of its citizens within a legal state similar to the Western democracies. It shall be a state existing in a safe ambience, in peace and co-operation with its neighbors. In practical terms, independence of Kosovo implies also an integrated Albania, an entity separated by borders, realization of the ideal of national revival cherished by all the freedom-loving Albanians. At the same time independent Kosovo means a free country for all its citizens, without discrimination and oppression. Kosovo integrated into Europe shall be an expression of maturity of our statehood-forming and national identity. Implementation of other regional plans shall also help boost realization of the Albanian national issue, and by extension, of the Serb one.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo, and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

In my opinion the current situation in and position of Kosovo is unfavorable. This country is facing very difficult problems, notably in the economic and social sphere. The new reality on the ground requires new, additional processes-and not going back to square one, or what is called, status quo ante. But in order to move forward we should raise awareness and educate every Albanian in terms of social relations in our country, and not only the intra-Albanian ones.

It is true that Kosovo is moving towards independence, but not so much because of statements of our politicians. In fact that process is in place because of the will of the West and inertia of decision-making. We are very lucky to have the West as our escort and a decisive factor. In that regard Serbia was lucky for centuries, for it always had allies and thus made use of a favorable situation to present Kosovo as its national cradle. The fall of the Berlin wall ushered in a new era, which gave birth to a brand new constellation of forces and ideas in Europe, and also broke up those structures or forces which were preventing peoples and nations to decide on their own fate. While all the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe were ending Communism, and initiating democratization, Serbia was stubbornly moving backwards by using a virtual ticket of ultra-nationalism.

3. There are still two opposed stands, or national projects on Kosovo, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between those two peoples, having in mind the experiences of other peoples?

At play are two diametrically opposed stands. In my mind, reconciliation and compromise between Serbs and Albanians in conditions of such a Serb line of thinking, and somewhat due to an arrogant Albanian rejection-is a sheer illusion, and a naive wish. Only after de-nazification of Serbia, after renunciation of the age-old Serb ideas, and after re-appraisal of the past (Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit) good conditions for such a reconciliation would be created. Charles de Gaulle recognized that Algiers was not French.

Serbia currently lacks such a political figure, strength, and conditions, to admit that Kosovo is not Serb. I however think that we should view that reconciliation and historical compromise of the two peoples with optimism, and constructive and civilized attitude, and not with a rigid, unaccommodating logic. I know how difficult it is to even imagine the beginning of that process of reconciliation, the moment when the two sides shall be compelled to swallow a bitter pill of compromise, which in this region, is perceived as a –rout.

However I think that in the future, with hindsight, we shall have to admit that much time was irrationally lost, and how belated that process was. In my mind the most salient problems, are per chance, aberrant perceptions of the conflict and of the Albanian-Serb colonization. They are compounded by the burden of history and mythology, terrible manipulations by political elites, lack of political culture, cynical stands, etc. I would not like to dwell on those problems any more, for much was written about them, and I don't aspire to resolve very complex problems. But I am ready to plead without any reservations, for a very pragmatic tack to this problem, to plead even by relying on historical experiences of other peoples. Furthermore the international community shall show readiness to assist us in that tack of ours.

And in conclusion I shall simplify my answer: both peoples would profit from embracing such a pragmatic tack to reconciliation, but they need courage to do that. The two peoples are already losing energy and time by protracting the agony of crisis. Kosovo and Serbia need a sustainable peace after a century steeped in violence in suffering. I think that reconciliation shall be ultimately imposed as the imperative of the times, like "Zeitgeist", and by the need for economic development, that it, at the moment when politics stop spoon-feeding our people with the past.

4. What is in your mind the resolution of Kosovo problem?

Kosovo shall attain independence earlier than we all think. Some shall be amazed by the swiftness of that process. Even Albanians proper shall be stupefied by realization of their idea of independence, in the face of their non-elaboration of a key and sustainable independence project. Independence of Kosovo may precede our readiness to translate it into a reality by dint of our elaborate and synchronized moves. To put it briefly and clearly: that shall come to pass mostly thanks to engagement of the West, hence the Albanian political class shall subsequently have to

accommodate its conduct to standards required by a democratic society and legal state. Whether the foregoing would lead to a territorial division is an imponderable. However, I think that the division is unlikely. I believe that Serbia, though banned from any Kosovo-related vetoes, should be included in talks in order to foil any going back to the square one and any Serb territorial aspirations towards Kosovo in the post-independence period. Such aspirations, in the future, would renew the crisis.

But we should be rid of the illusions too: Kosovo shall not become independent because of our claims and demands to that end. It shall become independent as a geo-political result. Independent Kosovo shall move quickly towards the EU, but to provide for such a development, we should ensure its independent functioning without interference of legal state. Kosovars are required to show that they can create and run a state without folk -lore and primitivism. They are required to ponder well in advance their moves and actions in such a state, and to respect laws and democratic order. Even today I shall speak as Cassandra by warning citizens of Kosovo not to let Kosovo morph into a rogue, into a failed state. Kosovars are asked to not create a rotten state in which institutions topple the government after each political crisis.

5. If you took part in talks on status of Kosovo, would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence, and how do you assess stands of some political and intellectual circles in Belgrade relating to the division of Kosovo along the ethnic lines?

After all recent developments, notably after the Serb state terror and genocidal actions notably against Albanians, in my mind the only solution is-independence. If there were a better option, I would accept it. Kosovo no longer belongs to Serbia. Serbia does not need Kosovo any more. It would be too heavy a burden around its neck.

Stands of some Belgrade circles imply reciprocity, that is an ethnic division of "narrower" Serbia by secession of the Albanian majority-inhabited territories. It is indeed incredible to watch how part of well-known Belgrade circles with atavistic line of thinking, tries to "sell" a thesis with the following motto: We have lost Kosovo, but let us do the impossible, that is salvage the salvageable by dint of slogans of historical compromise and territorial delineation with Albanians. Odd, if not absurd, are the current Serb political stratagems or ruses. The more so in view of inability of the Serb politicians to publicly admit that Serbia has lost Kosovo.

In the final instance I advocate the solution reached through negotiations and the one acceptable to all sides. We should not leave a legacy of unresolved problems to our descendants, though this moment of time requires taking of a very difficult decision.

6. Who should decide on status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Prishtina, with international brokerage, the UN Security Council or an international conference?

Fifteen years have elapsed since the break-up of former Yugoslavia, but the state future of Kosovo remained an unresolved problem. And the foregoing affected the region very much. That problem paralyzes a real progress in Kosovo and Serbia, and makes more difficult a process of a comprehensive regional stabilization. We should bear in mind another European anachronism: the massive international presence, though necessary in the area, does not have any exit strategy, until the state future of Kosovo is clarified.

Status of Kosovo was decided by a vast majority of its citizens. I know this sounds like a politicking slogan. But I also know that independence cannot be achieved single-handedly by Albanians. As a matter of fact they need the backing of big powers if the goal is stabilization of the country and the whole region.

According to the West, Belgrade lost the moral right to have much say in the resolution process, though most Albanians would say that Belgrade has never had the right to any say in the matter. It is important that Albanians first reach a consensus on the status and modalities of its attainment. Albanians should set up negotiating teams and draw up negotiating projects. Rambouille and Paris should serve as reminders of our inability. We must be prepared for a compromise before sitting at the negotiating table. One's ability of persuasion prevents compromises from harming the final goals.

And finally, in view of possible conflicts any future agreement should be ratified by Western powers, and even by the UN Security Council.

7. Which should be the position of Serbs in an independent Kosovo and which should be their role in the process of resolution of status of Kosovo?

For Kosovo Serbs, Kosovo is their homeland. They should not aspire to a separate survival, but rather love and treat Kosovo as their own country, for it is also their country. We shall never stop reiterating that Serbs and citizens of other descent in Kosovo shall be equal, but not privileged. We are ready to discuss those issues, to co-operate and to bridge the divide created by the genocidal regime in Belgrade, and not by Albanians. We are aware that it is a long and difficult process for all, but we Albanians, as the majority, have the commitment to assume responsibility for the future of Kosovo.

If an obstructive stance of Belgrade were excluded, the majority of Kosovo Albanians would be ready to co-operate with Serbs in Kosovo, and to offer them to participate in the future life of Kosovo. Future state of Kosovo would offer them an equitable treatment protecting their identity. The offer should also include guarantees for the exercise of all rights on the basis of a legal state, in which not a single citizen would feel discriminated on grounds of his/her ethnic descent. Serbs should give a positive contribution to the resolution of status of Kosovo. Albanians,

on the other hand, should make that state attractive also for Serbs. I am aware of difficulties existing within that process, however we should try to win over the trust of citizens of Serb descent by dealing honorably with the problems which oppressed us during the Serb regime and by dealing with the Serb right to take the course conducive to realization of their just aspirations.

8. Can Albanians and Serbs cohabitate in Kosovo? Have conditions for their reconciliation been created and who should apologize to whom for the distant and near past of Kosovo?

In principle they can cohabitate, but conditions for their reconciliation have not been created. The past is well-known ("die Vergangenheit ist bekannt"). Of course reconciliation is a two – track process. Albanians should be also asked to apologize for the near past in Kosovo. And we should also move forward, towards the future. Initiative for reconciliation should be made by Serbs, but if it is made by Albanians, it would be a sign of their maturity. Idea of reconciliation is an expression of the mental, political, and cultural emancipation.

9. How do you see decentralization of power in Kosovo and status of Serbs in Kosovo?

Decentralization is not the no. 1 problem in Kosovo, but rather an euphemism for enclavization and division of Kosovo. In my opinion enclavization of Serbs is tantamount to a self-ghettoization process, but a separate life of Serbs in Kosovo does not have very bright prospects. Decentralization was imposed by the international community and backed by Belgrade, in order to profit from non-existence of a good concept for the resolution of Kosovo problems. But in view of lack of readiness of both countries for reconciliation, decentralization is the only way to provide for a territorial whole, in other words, -a necessary evil. We should also bear in mind that decentralization enables the functioning of many developed states-from the federal-type Germany to united kingdoms, like the Great Britain.

10. In your opinion who should be the negotiating partners on the side of official Belgrade, and who on the side of Kosovo Serbs? Should Kosovo Serbs make part of the Prishtina or of the Belgrade delegation?

I am against negotiations with Belgrade on the status of Kosovo, for they would whet otherwise sterile appetite of Belgrade and postpone the whole matter until the Greek calendar (that is until –never). Protraction of non-resolution of the Kosovo issue would not be good for long-term interests of Belgrade.

However Belgrade has one government. And Kosovo has one government. Stands of Belgrade are more or less uniform, and power-holders of that country are not vying among themselves for the possibility to be the first ones to put their signatures on the document decreeing the loss "of Serb territories."

The problem with Albanians is their by and large rightful wish to speed up historic developments, and thus enter history. Albanians find it

to hard to make compromises with persons, and less so with an idea. In my mind any relevant document should be signed by Albanians discharging the offices of the president and prime minister. It would be better if neither are key political figures or persons renowned for their devotion to the revival of the national idea.

Kosovo Serbs should be part of delegation of Kosovo.

11. Are “standards for Kosovo” feasible and should the UN SC Resolution 1244 be amended?

Kosovo needs standards, and some of them have already been met, but when likened to neighboring countries, Kosovo visibly needs standards of a legal state. But conditioning the resolution of status by fulfillment of standards, was only a time-buying exercise of Michael Steiner’s administration. When those conditions were vaguely launched, I demanded a formula “standards for statehood.” Susan Woodward dwells much on the psychological time in which something, insufficiently motivated by a clear goal, is demanded: “If citizens do not know which country they are citizens of, what its borders are, let alone what its legal status is internationally, they cannot be active citizens or responsible politicians...How can one have the long time horizon necessary to the market transition and economic prosperity, accepting sacrifices in the short run, and making investments in the future, if the very definition of the state, legal authority, and bases of legitimacy is up for grabs? (Susan Woodward, “Transatlantic Harmony and or a Stable Kosovo?, Altmann-Whitlock eds. cit, page 28).

The foregoing applies also to the Resolution 1244, which only after several months of implementation, in view of Kosovo’s development, was superfluous, but it nonetheless remained petrified, and in force, to date. In contrast to Bible it should be amended, notably after disintegration of former Yugoslavia, and the Union of Serbia and Montenegro should not be allowed to become a heir of the FR Yugoslavia. Standards are feasible, but not easily measured. They can be used to thwart the resolution of status, but the latter cannot be delayed for ever, since Kosovo cannot remain “no-one’s land” for long.

President of the New Party of Kosovo-PReK

**Edita Tahiri:
Independence-the most just solution
for the region too!**

1. What is the yesteryear, past and future Kosovo for you?

Today Kosovo is a free country, protected by the international community. The end of war in June 1999, marked the end of the Serb-occupation chapter, and opened the way for building of future of Kosovo on the basis of the will of its people. As it is known Kosovo strives to attain the ideal of its people, an independent and democratic state, in keeping with the right of people to self-determination, and to enjoy the possibilities offered by political and economic freedom. Kosovo together with the international community in its role of an interim international administrator in Kosovo, works on construction of a democratic society, the rule of law, and a tolerant society, bringing security and equitable opportunities to all its citizens. In its agenda priorities are given to revival of economy, implementation of market reforms, and the unemployment-relieving measures. Government of Kosovo in co-operation with UNMIK and KFOR urges the creation of preferential conditions providing Kosovo with enough strength and stability for self-rule, without external threats and interference, in full respect of interests of other countries. Kosovo is also facing a painful process of healing the war wounds, along with sensitive issues such as clarification of fate of missing persons, care of war orphans, and repatriation of refugees. Kosovo also approaches with special care integration of minorities, and in that process has achieved good results. Problematic issue is integration of the Serb minority, which unfolds too slowly and faces many obstacles.

On international plane Kosovo has a clear vision of integration into Euro-Atlantic community and evolving into a serious partner in international and regional co-operation to the benefit of mutual interests of all the countries involved. By dint of an active state-making process and Western-style political philosophy, Kosovo paves the way to its future life-as an independent state in the family of democratic countries. All that has been accomplished to date results from a solid and persistent engagement of people of Kosovo and its leadership in the revival of ideals of a free and independent state. We have successfully covered a long and hard road, behind us is a decade of a peaceful resistance under leadership of the Democratic Alliance of Kosovo (LDK), an armed combat spearheaded by the Kosovo Liberation Army and a whole process of resistance during the entire 20th century aimed at reaching freedom. In that process the international community played a crucial role. Led by the US and in close co-operation

with EU and NATO, the international community not only stopped the war, but also ended a genocidal policy of Milosevic regime and thus protected Kosovo and its people.

Independence of Kosovo and creation of new states, after disintegration of former Yugoslavia, resulted from a great wave of changes in which, in the last decade of the 20th century, was also engulfed this part of Europe. Four factors played a decisive role in the creation of this reality. First the end of the cold war caused the fall of Communism and of the Berlin Wall, and the West took a firm stand against territorial expansionism, and liberated peoples of the Eastern part of Europe. Those changes brought about re-establishment of a new democratic order in this region and created possibilities for undoing the past geo-political wrongs in the former Soviet Union and in former Yugoslavia. Both countries were a product of expansion-minded projects, put in place with the blessing of the then big powers (the 1913 Ambassadorial Conference in London, and the 1918 Peace Conference in Paris) bent on satisfying the wishes of theirs, then allies and to the detriment of other peoples, who had then lost territories. Among the losers was the Albanian nation, for division of its territory implied the loss of Kosovo and Chemeria, which were given respectively to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later a country known as Yugoslavia) and Greece.

The other result of those changes was disintegration of former Yugoslavia and emergence of new states. The war could have been avoided if there had been full understanding of legitimacy of the process of disintegration, that is, that the latter resulted from the new circumstances and of will of peoples making up Yugoslavia. However the resistance of Serbia to that development, motivated by Serbia's hegemony-minded aspirations, made the break up acquire a tragic character. Four bloody wars followed the end of former Yugoslavia. On the one hand they were aggressor's wars of Serbia, while on the other hand they were wars for self-determination of the former federal units, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The end result of those wars was emergence of new states. Macedonia was fortunate in the whole tragic set of circumstances, for it gained independence without war. International community responded to the Kosovo war and the war in Bosnia, which were near-genocides, by staging military interventions. The newly-created reality on the ground confirmed that hegemony-minded conduct and domination-gearred schemes were redundant in the new era. Both the people targeted as possible objects of such schemes and international community confronted put up resistance to them. Moreover the international community in the name of protection of subjugated people activated the mechanism of humanitarian intervention.

The third factor was enforcement of the legitimate right of Kosovo people to self-determination and independence. In conditions of Yugoslavia's disintegration Kosovo faced a new wave of the Serb hegemony. Namely Serbia tried to retain control over Kosovo by dint of the military

occupation of the area in 1989-1999 period. Thus for the third time in the 20th century – the first time in the early 20th century when it remained occupied, and the second time after WW2 when it was denied the right to self-determination- Kosovo was subjugated in an attempt to deny its right to self-determination. Many arguments corroborate this assertion, but on this occasion we shall single out the key ones. I shall start with the legal status of Kosovo in former Yugoslavia, in which, as it is widely known, Kosovo was one of the eight federal units with the right of veto at all levels of decision-making, including the one of Federal Presidency. Territorial whole and borders of Kosovo were recognized and protected by Constitution. That status guaranteed to Kosovo the right to self-determination in case of break-up of the state. The 1974 Constitution of Yugoslavia clearly laid down an equitable status of all federal units and hence banned them from suspending each other. That is precisely why the Serb-masterminded suspension of the federal status of Kosovo in 1989-1999 was an illegitimate and forcible act, that is an occupation which strove to prevent Kosovo from exercising its right to self-determination.

The second argument is the Bujane Declaration (December 1943-January 1944) by which during the WW2 other peoples of former Yugoslavia recognized to Kosovo people their right to self-determination. Under that agreement Kosovo and Albanians were promised that they would be able to freely decide on their fate after the war, that is to decide whether they shall join Albania or remain within Yugoslavia. But in the post-war period that agreement was trampled upon and in conditions of military administration Kosovo was compelled, against the will of its people, to declare its readiness to stay within Yugoslavia (the 1945 Prizren Assembly). But in order to become fully familiar with the gist of the Kosovo problem we must discuss its origins, which lie in the unjust decisions of the London and Paris Conference, allowing for annexation of Kosovo and other Albanian territories by its neighbors. On this occasion I would like to go further into the past, by only briefly mentioning the 1878 Berlin Congress and the then downsizing of the Albanian territories and consequences of other turbulent historical periods.

It suffices to underscore that there are many other legal, historical and ethnic arguments speaking in favor of legitimate aspiration of people of Kosovo to realize their right to self-determination and create their own state on the basis of results of the 1991 referendum and a century-long struggle for freedom.

And finally there are arguments of striving towards the Euro-Atlantic integration, which serve as a key guideline in the region and a clear goal of some protagonists. Today all countries of the region want to become part of European Union and NATO, but before those accessions they must finish the remaining job in the region, that is, finalize the process of disintegration of former Yugoslavia by resolution of some open issues: recognition of independence of the state of Kosovo, ending of protectorate in Bosnia, and

recognition of the right of Montenegrin people to choose its own fate. Every deviation of the key protagonists from that context by attempts to profit from the old state of affairs, would breed new confrontations in the region, which, in my mind, are not in anyone's interest. We all have our needs and want a better life.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

In contrast to other countries under international administration, Kosovo is undergoing a more complex transition, which may be defined as a triple transition. Aside from the passage from war to peace, and entry into a genuine democratic system, Kosovo faces the challenges of passage from protectorate to independence. Despite such a complex set of circumstances, the post-war development of Kosovo was successful, notably during the stage of crisis and the one of building of democratic institutions. Though a society facing divisions and certain hurdles, in the post-war period Kosovo managed to implement the process of democratic elections and to build its self-rule institution on the local and national level. Progress was made also in the area of security and building of domestic security mechanisms, notably in the shape of formation of the Kosovo Police Services (KPS) which are to be vested in their full powers in the near future. Added to that the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) was well-developed in keeping with international standards, and after the end of protectorate it shall be able to take on the defense of the country. Kosovo also made some progress in the area of minorities integration, barring the Serb minority integration which is unfolding with some difficulties. The process of reforms was also put in place in the areas of education and health care with a view to raising the quality thereof.

However Kosovo still faces many challenges, the main one being definition of the final status of Kosovo-independence of Kosovo-the absence of which braked the general development of the country, notably the economic one. Delayed determination of the final status of Kosovo is the key source of discontent of population, which found its expression in a massive revolt in March 2004. Other challenges are: sluggish economy, stalled privatization, and high unemployment. There are also the issues of divided Mitrovica, parallel structures of Serbs and enclavization of Kosovo, tardy transfer of powers from UNMIK to the domestic authorities, missing persons, delays in repatriation, etc.

In the current stage, in line with the UNMIK strategy of "standards before status", Kosovo institutions have a challenging agenda of meeting those standards and taking over full powers from UNMIK. That process was accelerated after the second, national elections in October 2004. Progress in that direction is conducive to the stage of definition of the final status of Kosovo, which is to begin, according to the official stands of international

community, in mid-2005. Therefore Kosovo is slowly inching forward, that is, moving towards its independence, and judging by all the macro-political indicators the process of Kosovo's journey to independence cannot be reversed.

As regards the question whether Serbia has lost Kosovo for ever, I think that we cannot talk about the loss, for Serbia de jure has never had Kosovo. The fact is that Kosovo's annexation by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, was green-lighted by some big powers of that time (the London Conference), but only Serbia, that is its parliament, failed to ratify that international agreement, and thus failed to meet its international commitment. But if we talk about why Serbia could not retain the annexed Kosovo, the answer is clear: "there is always an end to oppression of people." I think that the foregoing is good for the Serb people proper, for it implies that they should renounce their criminal policy and endeavor not to repeat it. Independence of Kosovo should not be viewed as an isolated event, but rather as part of new historical developments and trends characterized by de-annexation, de-colonization, peaceful parting of the ways, and respect of an inalienable right of every people to self-determination.

3. There are still two opposed stands, that is, two opposed national projects on Kosovo: the Serb and the Albanian one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation of the two peoples, having in mind experiences of other peoples?

I think that your question is more related to the pre-war situation in Kosovo. In fact those opposed stands generated the armed conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. That war produced its winners and losers and in parallel, one project prevailed over the other. Kosovo and its freedom-gaining project-won, and the Serb project of oppressing and ethnically cleansing Albanians- was routed. Then, at the thrash- hold of the new millennium, we had a terrible 10-year period of occupation and a barbarian state torture of Albanians at the hands of Serbs. Policy of apartheid and genocide was a key instrument of Milosevic regime's in the pursuit of its goal, notably: ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosovo. In fact such an oppressive policy was in place throughout the whole century, and it prompted massive deportation of Albanians to other countries. To grasp the implications of that oppressive policy in the former Yugoslavia it suffices to say that in Turkey today there are more Albanians than in Albania proper.

But that period ended with the 1999 war. Kosovo and its people led a just liberation struggle, put up peaceful resistance for a decade, and then engaged in an armed conflict, as the last-ditch resort. The just war of people of Kosovo induced the international community, spearheaded by the US and in close cooperation with EU and NATO to side with Albanians and launch a military intervention to end the war and genocide. Thus the international intervention marked the end of human tragedy and also of Serbia's rule over Kosovo. But we should not forget tragic results of that war: thousands of killed Albanians, nearly one million refugees and many

missing persons. By signing the Kumanovo Agreement, Serbia took on the obligation to pull-out its forces from Kosovo, which implied that it has lost the war. Such a reality should be accepted. It is not in the interest of Serbia to oppose freedom of Kosovo and the right of its people to self-determination. Justice should be the top priority. Serbian leaders should muster the strength to explain to their citizens that recognition of Kosovo serves the justice, and perhaps leads to reconciliation between the two peoples. If we allow that historic injustice to continue, conflicts shall be resumed, and it seems to me that we all had enough of them.

4. How do you perceive the resolution of the Kosovo issue?

The just solution of that issue would be independence of Kosovo, for thus the will of its people would be fulfilled. That would be a lasting solution in the interests of all in the region. Such a stand is based on the following arguments:

Firstly, independence of Kosovo is a key for the regional stability. The fact is that such a solution would be in conformity with the popular will expressed at the 1991 referendum, that it would represent a guarantee of Kosovo's role as a factor of stability and a serious partner in the processes of regional and international co-operation aimed at achieving common welfare. Also from the aspect of international law, only the recognition of Kosovo as a state would induce it to behave as a state and accordingly put it in the position to respect international principles and documents, and act as a partner of the international community in resisting the challenges of global security.

Secondly, independence of Kosovo shall positively impact the Albanian issue, open since the 1913 London Conference. Independence of Kosovo together with the recognition of the statehood –building status of Albanians in Macedonia, recognition of legitimate rights of Albanians in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, Montenegro and Chemeria, shall be considered as an optimal solution, significantly contributing to the promotion of resolution of the entire Albanian issue in the Balkans. The foregoing would make the Albanians feel that undoing of the historical injustice to which they were subjected in early 20th century is on the right track. However, from the angle of national integrations, to which all divided peoples aspire, European integrations offer a more pragmatic option, for thanks to the former, Kosovo, Albania, and other regional countries one day shall be part of an expanded European family, thus becoming more co-operative and less belligerent.

Thirdly, formation of an independent state of Kosovo shall give a new dimension to its relations with the neighboring countries. Firstly, that independence shall contribute to dispelling of conflicting prejudices and to paving of the way to a dialogue and bilateral co-operation on principles of partnership and mutual interests. In that context, recent constructive stands of Macedonian government contribute to the resolution of the issue of Kosovo independence. Such positive stands should be voiced by other

neighbors, for recognition and mutual respect of states constitute a faster road to Europe. Serbia should also recognize Kosovo as an independent state for such a step would be conducive to its and region's faster accession to EU. Independent Kosovo opens a new chapter in neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia, for it ends a long-standing enmity. The foregoing shall clearly have a positive impact on the process of integration of the Serb minority into the Kosovo institutions.

And finally, an important spin-off of independence of Kosovo would be a positive role of Kosovo in an accelerated resolution of still open regional issues and in priming the region for integration into EU and NATO. It is evident that definition of independence of Kosovo shall impact in a positive way the birth of clear vision of the international community with respect to finding the just responses to the open regional issues, notably finalization of protectorate in Bosnia and creation of preconditions for a free determination of Montenegrin fate by its people. Such a development shall speed up resolution of other problems and open good prospects for integration of the region into Europe. Key element for a successful integration is implementation of a balanced policy towards all the post-conflict countries. Any other policy suggesting a selective and separate inclusion of those countries into European integration could be the source of tension. There is a sustainable assumption that projects relating to stability, development and integration of South East Europe countries should be based on principles of a balanced inclusion. Peoples of this region have long suffered at the hands of arrogant policy of domination and alleged superiority, hence, they are entitled to an equitable approach at the beginning of their road to Europe.

The foregoing consideration clearly suggests that an accelerated stabilization of the region, hinges on an early recognition of independence of Kosovo. Hence the international community should renounce its policy of shilly-shallying and experimenting with failed options, similar to the artificial creation of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Experiences from the recent break-up of Yugoslav federation should caution against further tests. Policy of shilly-shallying and artificial creations instead of boosting stability feeds extremism. Furthermore such a policy is harmful for the region and Kosovo and calls into question the success of humanitarian intervention.

5. Are you ready to accept any solution other than independence: conditional independence, federation, confederation, or union with Serbia and Montenegro?

Federation and confederation turned out to be failed formulas in this region. Ever single experiment with them failed, and each one was worse than the previous one. Collapse of the last federation of former Yugoslavia confirmed another phenomenon: fleeing of Slavic peoples from other Slavic peoples. Thus Slovenians, Croats, Macedonians, Bosniaks fled from Serbs, despite their common descent.

The above argument should suffice to prove why Albanians and Kosovo don't want to accept the other solutions, the more so because of the genocide to which they had been subjected. I think all inhabitants of this region are aware that solutions like federation and confederation belong to the past, but that truth should be grasped also by those international circles urging them.

Added to that it is wrong to impose on Montenegro to remain in such an union because the Montenegrin people should be recognized the right to determine their own fate. In the case of Kosovo its people have expressed their will at a referendum. Namely they have declared that they wanted Kosovo to become an independent and sovereign state and that it should be recognized its legitimate right to such an outcome. On this occasion I would like to warn that any pushing of Kosovo towards Serbia, would compel Kosovo to move towards Albania.

6. What justifies the status solution that you espouse, or, what vests it in legitimacy?

I think that independent Kosovo has an undeniable legitimacy on two grounds: firstly, through independence of Kosovo the political will of people of Kosovo is fulfilled, as a fundamental democratic right, based on the right to self-determination, secondly, since independence of Kosovo is of key importance for the regional stability it also opens up possibilities for integration of the region into the Euro-Atlantic community. However people of Kosovo draw on their legitimate right to self-determination on the basis of the same criteria which made possible independence of former federal units of Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia.

Disintegration of Yugoslavia was realized on the basis of the legal principle spelling out that the federal units enjoy the right to become heirs to the sovereignty of former Yugoslavia. That principle prevailed in the face of various obstructions, from the unjust projects of Badinter's commission to the armed conflicts. On the basis of that principle the process of disintegration of former Yugoslavia should be finalized. And then, in the wake of that development, just solutions for open issues in the region would be put in place. Among those issues the topmost is independence of Kosovo as the key to stability of the whole region. Kosovo, in all its aspects, be they legal, historical, ethnic or political, meets international criteria for its recognition as the state, and there are no reason challenging that recognition. Some stands which challenge that independence, in fact tend to ignore the above truth. Opposition from Serbia is historically motivated, though behind it often lurk economic (colonizing) motives, as the Serb aspirations to Northern Kosovo with mines, amply demonstrate.

Also on the international plane perceptions of independence of Kosovo have positively evolved. The idea that independent Kosovo would stabilize the region is increasingly embraced by the international circles and positive stands of some regional countries in that regard are also encouraging. The foregoing is also boosted by independence-minded projects elaborated by

many important analytical centers and by a growing support to that idea of influential, international figures. In the situation in which the region finds itself after a decade of crises and challenges, resolution of its problems and its stability hinge on a realization of the international community that the Balkans job must be completed as soon as possible. Policy of postponement is the policy which in this vulnerable period of time may harm the region mostly. The Balkans are at a new juncture and the role of international community must be a key one in setting the region on the right course.

7. Have the conditions been created for reconciliation of Albanians and Serbs and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past in Kosovo?

In the future when Kosovo and Serbia, as the two independent states, establish a framework co-operation on the principles of good-neighborly relations, the process of reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians, shall be initiated. Historically speaking reconciliation between peoples is a possible process, however in the current phase some undefined issues make that possibility distant. It seems that the factor with most bearing on the Serb-Albanian relations is a just solution of the issue of Kosovo, that it, Serbia's recognition of Kosovo's independence. Secondly, it is important to establish responsibility for war and genocide and punish perpetrators of war crimes and genocide. In those terms necessary sentences meted out to Milosevic and his aides by the Hague Tribunal shall be an essential contribution to the peace process. At the same time responsibility of Serbia for the four, aggressor-type wars against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, in former Yugoslavia, should be established. In the past the international community failed to deal sufficiently with that issue and consequently the Serb leadership avoided the general facing process. But I believe in a day when Serbia shall have a generation of responsible politicians ready to publicly apologize to Albanians and other peoples. Enforcement of law and resolution of the past problems are a precondition for a more peaceful and tolerant future in the region.

8. What should the Albanian side do to effect repatriation of Serbs and their inclusion into domestic institutions of system?

In the political agenda of Kosovo integration of minorities occupies an important place, and in that sphere some progress was made in the post-war period, except in the case of the Serb minority. We all know why very little progress has been made with respect to inclusion of the Serb minority in the Kosovo institutions, despite much energy devoted to that process. Kosovo government is permanently engaged in resolution of that issue, and through dialogue and affirmative policy (positive discrimination) it worked on creating a mood of trust and building of feeling that Kosovo is a state of all those who inhabit it. The fact that only the Serb minority in Kosovo enjoys the right to have twice the number of parliamentary seats, from the ones which belong to it, speaks for itself. On the other hand UNMIK attached much importance

to the issue of minorities, notably of the Serb one, which is best indicted by the priorities set by standards.

However the stand of the Serb minority has been continually ambivalent and indicated its inability to break free from the separatist influence of Belgrade. Political oscillations, along with the boycott of institutions of Kosovo, existence of enclaves and a continuing problem of Mitrovica, amply attest to unwillingness of the Serb minority to accept the reality of Kosovo, and of Kosovo as their land. While we are having this interview, the Serb minority is divided, one part of that minority takes part in the work of Kosovo institutions, while the other part boycotts them. Resolution of this issue shall not be easy, but mutual willingness could pave the way to a successful denouement. The following recommendations could help to that end: the Serb minority should accept the new reality in Kosovo and take a decision to shun Belgrade's influence, Kosovo government should continue with implementation of standards and work on creation of conditions for a dignified return of refugees and, the international community should pile pressure on Belgrade to renounce its destructive policy on Kosovo.

9. What should be the nature of decentralization of power in Kosovo, and how acceptable are proposals of Belgrade's political and intellectual circles on division of Kosovo along ethnic lines and sovereignty of Serbia over Kosovo?

Issue of process of decentralization and reform of the local authorities is important for Kosovo as a country going through a democratic transition. Special circumstances in Kosovo, that is incomplete central powers of Kosovo government stemming from a slow transfer of powers from UNMIK, create an absurd situation for the decentralization process. However, having understood the transition conditions the government of Kosovo included into its program the local authorities reforms and that process has been commenced. The goal is to improve the citizens-destined services of local authorities and quality of life of citizens. Decentralization which is backed in Kosovo has at its heart the interests of citizens. Government of Kosovo rejects any ethnically motivated decentralization. Recently expressed tendency of Belgrade to impose to Kosovo its project of ethnic decentralization is tantamount to an attempt to achieve division of Kosovo. Furthermore Belgrade has never hid that idea, not even today when the Milosevic era has been relegated to the past. Those attempts were categorically rejected by the official Kosovo policy, UNMIK and international community. The latter thus anew confirmed its stand on Kosovo as a whole. We should not however forget that continuation of such tendencies, division of Kosovo, or its stay within Serbia, carries within itself a danger of re-ignition of conflicts in this area.

10. Which stand should Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade take in case of independence of Kosovo?

Minorities may play an important role in the inter-state and inter-ethnic relations in the region. Such a role exacts a new tack to minorities. We

should first change the concept of stand on minorities. Two aspects are very important: firstly, we should renounce the use of minorities as a political instrument and promote the concept of minorities as the interconnecting bridges between the countries in the region, and secondly at a regional level we should build a political framework for unified minorities-related standards, in order to prevent double standards in various countries. Furthermore we should demand identical rights for our minority in different countries, once they are ready to recognize adequate rights to their minorities. In that respect they should discontinue their negative practice. In it is the interest of all countries to open up a new chapter for minorities, by turning them into a factor of rapprochement between the countries. That is exactly the role which the Serb minority should play in the inter-state relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

11. Are "standards for Kosovo" feasible and is it necessary to amend the UN Security Council Resolution 1244?

"Standards before status" policy is essentially positive and progressive for it provides Kosovo with a possibility to gear up to the two simultaneous processes: for independence and Euro-Atlantic integrations. Responsibility for and commitments towards standards were taken seriously and both the previous and the current government worked intensely on their fulfillment. Active participation of the "Contact group plus" was a great incentive to that process, which, in the face of many challenges, moves forward.

It is evident that the economic development shall be possible only when the status of Kosovo is defined. For without a clear status Kosovo cannot accede to international financial institutions and become attractive for foreign investors. Hence economic stagnation of Kosovo is a real obstacle to meeting of repatriation-related standards. Displaced persons are not likely to return to Kosovo until they are given firm guarantees of secure sources of livelihood. Therefore, from that aspect, stem hurdles to meeting of some standards.

As regards Resolution 1244 I think it is –redundant. Its framework no longer suits the Kosovo developments. Political process in Kosovo has evolved and conditions have matured for a new resolution recognizing independence of Kosovo. Kosovo, as an independent state, in the initial phase, should be backed by the new shape of international presence, that is, by a new UN monitoring mission until a total fulfillment of standards, and by a continued KFOR presence until achievement of a lasting stability. That model was successfully implemented in East Timor and now is the time to implement it in Kosovo.

Founder and President of Democratic Alternative of Kosovo

Rexhep Qosja: Future without illusions

1. What is for you the yesteryear, the present and future Kosovo?

For me the yesteryear Kosovo was the place of my education, of my intellectual formation, the place where I created my family and I made my career as a writer.

The present-day Kosovo for me is a place where I live without the old fear which we all Albanians shared of the police regime. It is a place where I see in practice the changes brought about by democracy, the place in which I experience realization of ideals which I aspired to, and also some unexpected disappointments.

Kosovo's tomorrow is in my mind its European future. I don't know if I shall live long enough to see it, but it is important that our children see it. Kosovo of tomorrow shall be a place without masters, injustice and difficulties of the present-day Kosovo. Making of an European Kosovo shall be long and difficult process...and the same holds true of all the Balkans countries-but it will come to pass.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some Kosovo circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

Kosovo has experienced major changes both visible and invisible ones. Material and spiritual changes. Socio-economic system, an ideology, politics, regime and the mind-set have been either totally changed or undergoing changes. There are many undesirable things, a lot of difficulties, poverty and bad aspects, but changes nonetheless represent a historical quality.

Assertions that Kosovo is moving towards independence are true. Independence of Kosovo is totally understandable, for it exacted by the historical processes. The foregoing should have been understood by Serbia, and was understood by some Serb intellectuals who accordingly wrote that Serbia should reconcile with a historically inevitable independence of Kosovo. However politicians and a large number of Serb intellectuals do not want to accept that historical necessity. Their unwillingness to embrace it led to the war in Kosovo and their non-acceptance of that historical inevitability may continue to create problems in the Balkans, but cannot stop independence of Kosovo.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is, the two opposed national projects, the Serb and the Albanian one. Do

you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind experiences of other peoples?

It is true that there are two opposed national projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. In contrast to the Albanian one which relies on the reality, the Serb project relies on the past, that is, on historical illusions. I don't know what the word compromise implies, but I don't see any compromise as far as the future of Kosovo is concerned. Albanians want only one solution to the Kosovo problem, the one bringing independence to that country. Even if the current Kosovo administration or part of it accepted any other status of Kosovo, the vast majority of Albanians would never agree with it.

Do I see any window of opportunity for reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs? Yes, I do. I see the possibility for reconciliation and it should come to pass. Many peoples on this planet waged wars against each other and then were finally compelled to reconcile. The best examples thereof are Frenchmen and Germans, Poles and Germans, Russians and Germans. Albanians and Serbs have been for centuries occupied by Turks, and made peace with them at the end. The Serb-Turkish and the Serb-Albanian friendship was forged in the immediate aftermath of WW1, and it has not been broken up to date. Reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians is necessary because it would contribute to the welfare of the present and future of both countries. I don't think that this reconciliation shall be late in coming.

4. Which is in your opinion the resolution of the Kosovo issue?

As I have already said for me the resolution of that issue is independence of Kosovo, and by that I mean the right of that country to use its independence in keeping with the will of its people, to survive as an independent and sovereign state or to unite with Albania. The foregoing should be a sacrosanct democratic right of the people of Kosovo. Some politicians mostly Serb and international ones, and less so intellectuals in both countries, urge a gradual independence of Kosovo. Gradual solutions are understood as the most acceptable ones, for they are supposed to be peaceful and calm. But let us not forget that the resolution of the Kosovo issue has been gradually evolving for a long time. In fact we entered the process of gradual resolution of the Kosovo issue in the year when former Yugoslavia was compelled to recognize to Kosovo the highest-degree autonomy. But former Yugoslavia, and even more so Serbs and Serbia, and ultimately the international community, grew to understand that Kosovo embarked upon the independence road, in 1981 and then in 1997-99 period. You can imagine how many persecutions, detentions, killings, massacres, mass graves and expulsions Kosovo would have avoided had its issue been resolved much earlier. Gradual resolutions may be peaceful ones, but at the same time they can cause much suffering. Clever people, visionaries, individuals with a knack for historical processes, agree with decisions and

solutions which stop or avoid that kind of suffering. If Charles de Gaulle had not been far-sighted, suffering of Algerians and Frenchmen in Algiers would have continued. Had Milosevic not been a satrap and a short-sighted politician, like his followers, former Yugoslavia would have been saved from atrocities in which its peoples were engulfed in the post-1990 period. Had he not been so short-sighted or rather historically blind, he would have reconciled with the historical inevitability, just like the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia did.

All the foregoing is a proof of the following stand of mine: it is in the interest of the Balkans, Serbia and Serbs and Albanians to reconcile with the inevitable-independence of Kosovo. Of course Serbs in Kosovo should be guaranteed all rights, absolutely all rights. In my mind, ethnic communities, should be guaranteed some political privileges. Kosovars shall not merit the understanding which the world has shown for their cause, for their free and independent life, unless they build a truly democratic society in which all citizens of Kosovo shall be safe and feel safe, free and equal regardless of their ethnic and confessional descent.

5. How do you assess stances of some Belgrade's political and intellectual circles on the impossibility of Serb and Albanian cohabitation in Kosovo and on division of Kosovo along the ethnic lines?

I understand such stances of Serb politicians and intellectuals. My knowledge of the Serb politics and its historical development since the 19th century onwards-and I believe to have some knowledge thereof,-and of line of thinking of the Serb intellectuals tells me that Serbs shall not accept to live in an independent, sovereign Kosovo, or in Kosovo united with Albania. In a whole past century Serbs got used to their status of masters of Kosovo, and were used to taking single-handedly decisions on Kosovo affairs. History teaches us that it is difficult for a master to feel equal to his apprentice. The same applies to a self-styled ruler and people subjugated to him. Regardless of their loathing of such paragons, it shall not be easy for Serbs, the rulers of Kosovo, to liberate themselves of the mind-set of rulers, masters. In this world the mindset obsessed with power is the hardest thing to change. Therefore I can understand claims relating to division of Kosovo.

And such an idea, in my mind, is not totally wrong. But I don't understand it in the way, in which, for example, Dobrica Cosic advocates it. A lasting solution for Kosovo can be brought about only by a division which presupposes a voluntary re-settlement of peoples, that is of Serbs and Albanians, from one part to another, and then, moving of borders between Kosovo and Serbia. However ideas of re-settlement for the sake of resolution of ethnic issues, like the Kosovo one, are not desirable and are not welcomed by the international community. On the other hand similar re-settlements helped resolve the dispute between Turkey and Greece, between some Scandinavian countries, etc. Change of borders between

Kosovo and Serbia after "re-settlement of people" and not "division of Kosovo" would represent a lasting resolution of the Kosovo issue. I don't know why, but I know that the international community would not accept such a solution, even in the face of Serb and Albanian acceptance of it.

6. Should the Albanian and Serb side continue to be hostages to the national aspirations dating back to the 19th century, or they should accommodate to the new European and international circumstances and trends?

Serbs and Albanians should clearly conform to the new circumstances and new European and Western standards. They should conform to them willy-nilly, or they shall remain in the historical obscurity. However a distinction should be made between the Albanian national interests and the Serb national interests, which have been cultivated since the 19th century. A long-standing Albanian aspiration was to remain in the land long-inhabited by them, and in which they constituted the only and vast majority population. A long-standing Serb aspiration which is still manifest today was to keep Kosovo at any price, even by making it the last colony in Europe. Unfortunately that aspiration is still alive in heads of many Serb intellectuals!

7. Who should decide on the final status of Kosovo: Belgrade or Prishtina under the international auspices, the UN Security Council or an international conference?

I think that Belgrade and Prishtina with or without the international surveillance, could not agree on the final status of Kosovo. The role of Belgrade in the resolution of the Kosovo issue was compromised at the Rambouille Conference and it is ever-dwindling. The UN Security Council or any other conference masterminded by the US, EU or the UN as an international institution, cannot take a decision on the status of Kosovo without taking into account the will of people of Kosovo. That means that the final status of Kosovo should be resolved in a referendum enabling people of Kosovo to have their say about its future. That is the only solution of the Kosovo issue in conformity with the democratic procedure.

8. Who should be Kosovo and Belgrade participants in negotiations on the final status of Kosovo? And in which delegations should be represented Serbs from Kosovo?

It is not up to me to say who should be the Serb participants in a possible international conference on the final status of Kosovo, that is up to Serbia and the Serb people to decide. And as regards the Albanian side, I can only say the following: Albanians who in 1990 –spring 1999 period traded with Milosevic and his stooges, at the time of his state terror in Kosovo, at the time when most heinous crimes and crimes against humanity were committed, should not be allowed to have any say in the matters pertaining to the final resolution of Kosovo status. Albanians who took part in those self-styled groups, namely Group 10, Group 12 or Group 15 which had talks with Milosevic, should be totally excluded

from the imminent negotiations. Some of them made part of the Albanian delegation in the Rambouille Conference but were totally marginalized there. Thus they shall be totally marginalized in a future development, a possible conference on Kosovo.

Two of those figures took part in the failed Vienna talks last year. Representatives of international community know that with such personalities decisions on the final status of Kosovo cannot be taken, for they are only figureheads in the Albanian politics in Kosovo. Hence the real and legitimate negotiating power is vested in by those political forces who constituted a true opposition to those war "profiteers" who had legitimized Milosevic regime by holding so-called "free and independent" elections in Kosovo in conditions of Milosevic-led state terror. That legitimate and real negotiating power is vested in those forces which sacrificed for the future of Kosovo, notably the parties originating from the Kosovo Liberation Army and its followers. And that fact is well-known even by the Serb politicians and intellectuals in Belgrade. They no longer try to differentiate Albanians and in Milosevic-style moves select Albanian interlocutors via secret agents, Saint Egidio or international community.

In my mind Kosovo Serbs should make part of the Serb delegation. Is a contrary solution possible? Kosovo issue is ultimately the issue of the two peoples, Albanians and Serbs.

9. Who should apologize to whom for Kosovo's past? Albanians to Serbs (Belgrade) or vice versa? Are conditions ripe for such an apology?

This question should not be posed at all. Subjugated people have never in history apologized to their occupiers, for they have never been in a situation to commit misdeeds exacting an apology. We are obviously not angels, but only some individuals committed crimes during a 22-year long Serb occupation, and those individual and few crimes are not comparable to the totality of injustice, exploitation, persecution, crimes, mass graves and forcible re-settlement which the Serb states committed. Hence the first apology should be made by the Serbs, or to put it more directly and precisely. by the political and intellectual circles in Belgrade. One can say that conditions are always propitious for repentance, remorse, forgiveness and historical lesson. And those conditions are created by our remorse, conscience, and ethic.

10. Is Serbia a hostage to Kosovo and why the official Belgrade instrumentalizes Serbs (Kosovo Serbs) for its political interests? What should the Albanian political structure do to effect repatriation of Serbs to Kosovo and make them forge links with the domestic institutions of powers and not with Belgrade?

Official Serbia's stand on Kosovo makes more difficult international position of Serbia, and turns it into a hostage to Kosovo. In contrast to those talking about instrumentalization of Kosovo Serbs by the official Belgrade, I talk about rights of Kosovo Serbs to politically act together with their people in Serbia. They are the one people, as much as we Kosovar

Albanians and Albanians in Albania are the one people. To share the view of instrumentalization means to deny the legitimate rights of Kosovo Serbs. We should be resigned to one fact: Kosovo Serbs shall always look to Belgrade for guidance and we shall do the same thing with Albania. And that is only natural. We cannot fight our nature, unless one is so short-sighted to overlook the defeat!

As regards the issue of the Serb repatriation, we should admit an inadmissible truth: the return of Serbs to Kosovo does not depend so much on the will of Albanians and international community, or on the conditions which they create for them and the space they shall be given in the Kosovo institutions. In fact that return hinges to a great extent on their assessment as to what the future status of Kosovo offers them. Since the Belgrade politicians maintain that Serbs don't want to cohabitate with Albanians, displaced Serbs don't want to go back to Kosovo in the hope of thus preventing or at least delaying the final resolution of the Kosovo issue.

11. Which principles should be respected in case of determination of the final status of Kosovo: the historical one or the ethnic one, advocated by Belgrade, or any other principle?

In determination of the final status of Kosovo a democratic principle, that is, a free expression of the will of people of Kosovo on its future in an UN-staged referendum should be respected. That democratic principle shall be of course based on an ethnic principle, an active, alive principle, contrary to the dead, historical principle.

12. Are "standards from Kosovo" feasible and is there a need to amend the UN SC Resolution 1244?

Implementation of standards for Kosovo is doubtless in the interest of Kosovo. Implementation of those standards entails vastly improved living conditions for all citizens of Kosovo. However, not all standards depend on the will of Kosovo institutions or Albanians. For example, the return of Serbs to Kosovo does not depend at all or depends very little on the will manifested by our institutions and Kosovo Albanians. In fact it largely depends on the Serb ideas of their future.

There is a need to amend the UN SC Resolution 1244. And since it is neither Bible or Koran it shall be amended to make legitimate the changes in Kosovo life and in its relations with Serbia, as implied by the changed historical positions of the Serb and Albanian people. As we know history of mankind develops through illusions and errors, and inevitably through liberation from illusions and undoing of errors. So in Kosovo history is also correcting the errors made in 1878 and in 1912-1913. In Kosovo history is also liberating Serbs from illusions that they would keep it forever.

In my opinion the Serb and Albanian politicians should stop expending their energy in the issue of status of Kosovo, for it is not wise to expend energy in the things bound to happen. Instead they should reconcile with the inevitable-independence of Kosovo. And accordingly they should expend their energy in efforts to establish better good-neighborly relations

between Kosovo and Serbia, between the Serb and Albanian people, and among all of us living in the Balkans. We shall remain neighbors for ever, therefore it is in the interest of all Serbs and Albanians, the two most important, ethnic and historical factors in the Balkans, to forge the best possible neighborly relations, build mutual tolerance, and to respect each other. Only from a neighborhood built in such a way, we all can profit. Let us be aware that Europe has entered a new epoch, and that it will be harmful for all of us to remain for long in its backyard for the sake of the past illusions.

University professor, academician, writer

Esad Stavileci:
**Only a full independence and
not a single link with Serbia**

1. What is for you the yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Yesteryear Kosovo for me is its bitter history. The present-day Kosovo is a “hostage” to that history, while Kosovo of tomorrow shall be an independent state of long-suffering and exploited people. In that state they shall be able to finally breathe freely and to gather around its primordial tree in order to “recover dignity and defend the marrow bone of the nation.” Throughout centuries we have witnessed the greed of the neighboring Balkans state to expand at the expense of the Albanian territory and their programs denying the existence of the Albanian nation. I ‘d like to reiterate that assertion notably in the light of the fact that the political history never protected Albanians and their whole national being. Political history of Albanians is in fact the history of suppression of the Albanian national being. The same is true of Kosovo, a special part of the Albanian issue. Though we had better deal with the future, and not the past, I cannot but reiterate the fact that the Kosovo issue, as one, if not the key, factor of the unresolved Albanian issue, dates back to the distant past. It originated from the narrowing of the Albanian ethnic tree and downsizing of most of the Albanian-inhabited territories in the Balkans, as dictated by the 1913 London Conference, and as later “sealed” by the 1918-20 Versailles Conference, at the time when, “at an important juncture of the Balkans wars” over half of Albanian territory with the Albanian majority and half of Albanian nation “found themselves outside the young Albanian state and moreover were occupied by the neighboring Balkans states, notably the Serb one.”

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions by some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

Because of non-determination of its status, Kosovo is today blocked both externally and internally. Many development processes are blocked: the economic and political transition, privatization, establishment of the market economy and of clear definition of property ownership, building of political democracy and functional state. That by extension stalls or makes more difficult regional, national or international integration of Kosovo. Thus the impossibility to fully chart Kosovo s political and economic development and constitutional-legal status.

The new reality is that Kosovo is under an interim international-civilian control and with limitations which make more difficult administration thereof. It is also true that Kosovo is trying to leave the "vicious circle" through a process of taking its own fate in its hands. Kosovo is "moving towards independence", but the international community "keeps chains around its ankles" to "soft-cushion the influence of Serbia" despite its awareness that "it is no longer possible to return Kosovo to Serbia's control."

3. There are still the two opposed stands or the two opposed national projects relating to Kosovo: the Serb and the Albanian one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind the historical experiences of other peoples?

I don't see any possibility for reconciliation, and a compromise "may be imposed." The Serb project is not a new one, it has been circulated for a long time. Its shortcoming is its "reliance on myths." If Serbs think that Kosovo is "the heart" and "the cradle" of the Serb state, they should realize, to put it figuratively, that "transplantation was done in an alien body." Possessive stands of Serbs towards Kosovo, even when they invoke history, are unfounded. Firstly, methodologically, it would be much better if history were a criterion apart from the national-territorial reality, for, otherwise Hungary would have the right to lay claim to part of the Yugoslav Panonia, Bulgaria and Hungary would have a new territorial dispute over Belgrade, Albania could aspire to Janjina, Mexico to Florida and California, Sweden to Norway and Finland, Germany to parts of Schlesien and Suedeten, Denmark to Schlesvingen, Iraq to Kuwait, etc., etc.

Secondly, the aforementioned possessive stands are unfounded even from the standpoint of the material historical truth, since Kosovo, despite claims to the contrary, is not a cradle of the Serb people or of the Serb state. (See Gazmend Zajmi, Volume 1, Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences, Prishtina, 1977). Albanian project is a reality in progress, and it is backed by many historical, political, and legal-constitutional arguments which make it feasible. In fact the very ethnic, historical, political and international character of Kosovo profiles today its political-state position of tomorrow and suggests how its socio-political reality should be realized in an adequate way.

4. Which is in your mind the solution to the Kosovo issue?

There is only one solution, that is, the establishment of its full independence, without links with Serbia or with an artificial creation, like the Union of Serbia and Montenegro is. I even tend to think that we shall all keep "losing time" while those and similar concepts are circulated, regardless of their "good political arguments." Firstly the present-day Kosovo is an individualized political-territorial region in the Balkans. Secondly, it is a historical, national and social-political entity with an undeniable identity and individuality.

Thirdly, the present-day Kosovo represents a national and demographic reality and territory with over 2 million people, with its geographic, national-structural and political individuality.

Fourthly, Kosovo requires the resolution of the issue of self-determination of its majority people, for that self-determination "belongs to Kosovo both as the right to national self-determination and the right to self-determination of the people living in an individualized territory."

Fifthly, in the former multi-national Yugoslavia, Kosovo enjoyed the status of a constituent, federal unit.

Sixthly, in the former Yugoslavia Kosovo had its federal borders which could not be changed without its approval; in the similar fashion external borders of former Yugoslavia could not be changed without approval of federal parliament.

Seventhly, by a decision contained in the Constitutional Declaration of its parliament (2 July 1990) Kosovo left the complex constitutional structure of the Republic of Serbia which had forcibly annexed it against the will of its people (1945).

Eighthly, after disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, not a single constitutional act of Kosovo made part of the process of formation of the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro or Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

Ninthly, relations between Serbia and Kosovo are, per se, an ethnic, Serb-Macedonian macro problem, and not a relationship between the two ethnicities which "can be placed into one formation."

Tenthly, Albanians, who make the majority population of Kosovo are "the subject of decision-taking with respect to their historical fate in the new historical and political conditions in the Balkans". (from the book "In the Defense of Independence of Kosovo" by Esat Stavileci, Independent Association of Jurists of Kosovo, Prishtina, 1998).

5. If you took part in talks on status of Kosovo, would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence, and how do you assess stands of some Belgrade political and intellectual circles on division of Kosovo along ethnic lines?

I could never accept any solution other than independence. And as regards the old idea of division of Kosovo, allow me to say that I am against it, and to prop that stand of mine with numerous facts.

Firstly, while the Serb mock scientists endeavor to "prove" that "Kosmet belongs to Serbia", historical arguments speak convincingly that "Serbs settled in Kosovo during the expansion of the Serb state of Nemanjici."

Secondly, in consequence of occupation of Kosovo in the Middle Ages and during the Ottoman empire, the Slavic, Turkish and Romany minorities were settled in the ethnic Albanian territory.

Thirdly, the Slavic minority considerably grew in size during the forcible colonization between the two World Wars, but never managed to exceed 10% of total population.

Fourthly, throughout history the Albanian population in its ethnic territories in former Yugoslavia, and in its ethnic territory as a whole, lived and functioned as an ethnic community alongside other Albanians in the Balkans.

Fifthly, the Serb aspiration to "division of Kosovo" cannot be sustained and scientifically explained by the Serb past in Kosovo.

Comparison between the past of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo confirms several truths:

1. Ethnic structure of Kosovo speaks more of the dominant Albanian majority as the national-demographic-territorial reality of the Albanian population in Kosovo, than of a heterogeneous, national structure in whose name a variant of "division of Kosovo" could be justified.

2. Any Serb idea about "division of Kosovo" is ungrounded, since it is not based on the "real ethnic-territorial divisions of its territory."

3. Albanian ethnic majority is a feature in all its macro-zones.

4. Kosovo is not a diversified, ethnic territory, of enclave-type. Hence "a possible forcible secession" of part of Kosovo, would be "out of original, political character of entity."

In Kosovo at play are "quantums and markedly different, relative demographic and national proportions." (Esat Stavileci, "Continuity of Kosovo- and Albanian issue-related ideas", League of Albanians in the World, Prishtina-Tirana-Tetovo, 2002).

6. Who should decide on the final status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Prishtina, under international surveillance, the UN Security Council, or an international conference?

If Kosovo is an issue of self-determination of its people, and on the basis of many historical, political, constitutional-legal arguments it is, then only its citizens can decide on its fate. Any displacement of that decision would deny a fundamental right of every people, contained as such in international documents. Only an international conference could legalize such a right. In the past only others took decisions about Kosovo. It was imposed to Kosovo to "accept" occupation by other countries. As I have already said in 1945 Serbia annexed Kosovo. In fact it was annexed for the first time in 1912, and later in 1918, while in 1989 its parliament was urged to "accept self-limitation."

7. Should the Serb and Albanian side remain hostages to the national aspirations dating back to the 19th century, or they should conform their solutions to the new European and international conditions and trends?

New European and international trends indicate creation of new states. In that regard it suffices to quote examples of the former Soviet Union and of former Yugoslavia, or instances in which laws or canons allegedly urged by the international community were "trampled upon." Hence we could pose the following question: why should other parameters be valid in the case of Kosovo and why Kosovo should be

exempted from the rules which had created a new international reality, in the face of calls for "abolishment of borders" and globalization. And finally the facts indicate that in the world there are 34 states, members of the UN, whose area is inferior to Kosovo's, 58 with population inferior to Kosovo's, and that to the UN fold in 1990-2002 acceded 34 states. Thus it is rightly maintained that "where the facts are present, the words become superfluous."

8. Can Albanians and Serbs cohabitate in Kosovo? Have conditions for their reconciliation been created, and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past in Kosovo?

It depends on the Serbs. If they want to cohabitate with Albanians, they should accept a new reality, and start considering Kosovo their state, instead of turning always to Belgrade for any guidance. Reconciliation is impossible as long as the hatred exists. Albanian wounds are deep and not easy to heal. Hence in my mind the question who should apologize to whom is a provocative and insulting one for us Albanians, who were for long subjected to a terrible oppression by the Serb regime. The Serb project to square the Serb crimes few violent Albanian acts against Serbs in Kosovo, which were more acts of retribution, during and after the war, is unfounded. Albanians crimes cannot be equalized with the Serb barbarian acts. That does not mean that some actions of Albanians should be justified, but rather, represents an advocacy of a just qualification of the size, and consequences of crimes and misdeeds. Our legal science, notably the criminal law, faces the task of a serious analysis and probe into crimes and acts committed in Kosovo by the Serb paramilitary, military and police forces. The criterion of truth presupposes appraisal and analysis, that is, the means to check the veracity or falsehood of any assertion, hypothesis, theory or a principle. Kosovo was the scene of "the most cruel and obscure phenomenon of the human history"-genocide against Albanians. Therefore even without waiting for the judgment of time, by sheer observation from a criminological aspect of the form of criminal offences committed against Albanians, their size, structure and perpetrators, and notably motives, one can establish that they have all had the elements of crimes against humanity. However since those crimes were "used as the means for ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians, and partial and total destruction of members of Albanian nation living in Kosovo" they obviously had elements of genocidal crimes. That is the only truth of what has happened in Kosovo.

9. How do you perceive decentralization of power in Kosovo and position of Kosovo Serbs, and how do you assess proposals launched by some Belgrade circles?

I shall dwell on decentralization on the two grounds: firstly because I think that I am quite knowledgeable about those problems, and secondly, because the manner in which the whole issue "is presented" constitutes a danger for the future of Kosovo.

I would like to begin with the fact that decentralization, as a notion and concept, is linked to the territorial administration system. In fact territorial administration is a complex job expressed through several functions discharged on the basis of the two principles: centralism and decentralism. In a broader sense, decentralization presupposes any weakening of central power with respect to its parts. Before directly answering your question, I would like to mention that there are three kinds of decentralization with different levels of organizational consequences: firstly, there is delegation, that is, transfer of jobs from the centre to lower levels; secondly, there is an organizational decentralism which presupposes transfer of jobs and in parallel formation of new organizational units; and thirdly, there is a political decentralism, which presupposes organizational expansion of lower levels and formation of political, control mechanisms over them.

When viewed from that angle, decentralization is a very complex process, with enough advantages, but also with shortcomings containing potential to produce contradictions and challenges to the set goal. Before "putting in place" a provisional model of decentralization in Kosovo, in my opinion, we should carry out empirical and theoretical research to find the most adequate model thereof for Kosovo, that is, a socially acceptable, politically adjustable, organizationally justifiable, functionally rational and above all an ethnically open model. Therefore there should be much caution not to identify Kosovo decentralization with a territorial division, or ethnic territorialisation, which is, by the way, the old Serb concept, that is not to envisage formation of ethnically-based municipalities or municipal units and above all to avoid anything similar that could harm a united character of Kosovo. On the other hand it would be very difficult to attain decentralization until Kosovo overcomes limitations of its current governance and administration. The following question should be asked: since Kosovo and its institutions are still powerless, that is, not centralized, what is there then to "decentralize"?

The fact that institutions of Kosovo are not vested in full prerogatives, and cannot expand those which they wield to its whole territory, does not favor decentralization before status. On the contrary prior to decentralization the status resolution is required. Once the latter is achieved, a model of decentralization determined also by Kosovo citizens could be introduced. Serbia has long been offering a concept of creation of the two entities in the light of "a justifiable preservation of the Serb interests in Kosovo." In my mind the Serbs should prove their readiness for integration into institutions of Kosovo and recognize the status of Kosovo in conformity with the will of the majority people in Kosovo. In view of that concerted efforts should be made in the meantime to reform public administration, not by creating municipalities or new organizational units perilously leading towards disintegration, but rather by improvement of the current public services to better serve all citizens in an equitable way. Making local public services more accessible to citizens is a permanent

striving of all states with democratic order. Kosovo is making its first steps in democracy and shall need a lot of time to establish it in keeping with the needs of its citizens.

10. What should Albanian political structures do to boost the return of displaced Serbs to Kosovo and do you favor their linking with the local self-rule institutions?

Albanian political structures should make major efforts to that end, but "they cannot do much" if "Serbs don't want to become part of those institutions." At play is a major Belgrade's blackmail. On the one hand Belgrade allegedly urges betterment of their position, but on the other hand, "holds them as hostages," for in case of their return "they shall become accomplices to creation of an Albanian state in the Balkans." International community and its political decision-making centers should understand the Serb scenario if they truly want peace and stability in the region.

11. What kind of position should Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade take in case of independence of Kosovo?

The two neighboring states shall be able to build good relations only when they undo the wrongs caused by the war. Otherwise they shall have only courteous political relations alongside a lasting enmity difficult to overcome.

12. Are "standards for Kosovo" feasible and it is necessary to amend the UN SC resolution 1244?

Firstly, we should see the purpose of "implementation of standards." Secondly, we should see whether the UN SC Resolution 1244 is "obsolete", whether it was "made redundant by the passage of time and the new reality in Kosovo," since the starting point of the resolution is preservation of "sovereignty" of the state which no longer exists, and that sovereignty is interpreted beyond any logic, that is, transferred on an artificial state creation, survivable only by dint of major international pressures and leaving Kosovo as "its hostage."

International community has set "standards for Kosovo" but has not named them as "standards for independence of Kosovo." It is certain that standards strive towards a goal, but to a vague goal, thus they remain per se "outside the context of that goal" and "objectively isolate Kosovo from other general trends." There is another problem with standards. They are selective and responsibility for their fulfillment should be assumed by the international institutions and not by the domestic ones, for the latter are not vested in genuine powers.

Hence the perception of those standards as "hurdles on the road" in Kosovo. The first hurdle is non-transfer or transfer only of selective powers from UNMIK to local authorities. The second hurdle is a markedly stiff resistance of Belgrade and its interference in that process. Other hurdles stem from the first two. As regards Resolution 1244, any invocation thereof is wrong, for the new reality has superseded it. International community

should realize that Resolution 1244 does not represent a formulae of the resolution of Kosovo issue. Since disintegration of former Yugoslavia and installment of interim international civilian control, in Kosovo a new reality has been created and the future of Kosovo can be built on the basis of that reality which shows Kosovo as an indivisible political entity.

International community should become aware of the fact that recognition of the will of people of Kosovo is the only factor determining its future. If the future of Kosovo should be in the hands of its people, then the said fact determines the issue of Kosovo status, and not negotiations with Belgrade and its untenable stand that the future of Kosovo "shall be determined by Security Council in line with Resolution 1244." And finally the issue of Kosovo is an issue per se, and as such it cannot and should not be in symmetry with issues of other regions. Surfacing of that reality suffices to bring about an acceleration of political process in Kosovo and establishment of its political status in conformity with the will of its people. Any other tack or any other decision would be considered as imposed, and would not help stability and peace in the region.

University professor, academician

Enver Hasani: A two-phase solution

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Yesteryear Kosovo was a test of resilience in the last phase of existence of the last state of South Slavs (except for Bulgarians). Today it represents a test of resilience of the international administration concept under auspices and leadership of United Nations. Tomorrow the same thing will happen with respect to the EU. In fact I expect and I believe that Kosovo shall be a test of European idea and europeization of the Balkans. In the imminent period Kosovo shall more frequently represent a form of test of quality and intensity of the US-European relations.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is a new reality? How true are assertions by some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

Current situation in Kosovo is similar to the previous one, the only difference being the absence of army, police and Yugoslav dinar. I think that here things are viewed in black- and- white terms, in a rather simplified way, and that concepts which should not be confused, notably jurisdiction and governance, on the one hand, and sovereignty and its international recognition, are nonetheless confused. The first two concepts clearly indicate that in a long-term period there should be no Serb laws and administration in Kosovo, that is the Serb jurisdiction and rule over this territory and people. As regards the issue of sovereignty I think that Serbs are in the best position because for the first time some members of the international community are ready to recognize Kosovo as part of Serbia, and moreover they are working intensely on that. The best proof of the foregoing is the March 2001 Belgrade Agreement or "Solania," as it is called in some Western circles. That agreement is not a novel invention in the international practice. It is only imitation of statehood, the model applied in many countries of the Third World. Initially such creations were not sustainable and did not have good prospects, but with the passage of time they acquired vitality and statehood resilience.

3. There are still the two opposed stands, or the two national projects on Kosovo: the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind experiences of other peoples?

If such a compromise hinged on domestic population, Kosovars and on the Belgrade regime, it would not be feasible. Only a major international pressure, the one piled by key prime movers of international politics, may

contribute to a re-definition of the current stands of both sides. In my opinion in the first phase of that process the conflict and its modalities should be transformed, while in the second, much later phase, resolution thereof by dint of democratic processes in the region would be tackled.

4. What is in your opinion the solution of the issue of Kosovo? (Please explain your stand in detail.)

Exactly the one which I have previously exposed. That is, there should be, grosso modo, two phases. In the first phase efforts would be made to eliminate the current hurdles on the road to a comprehensive development of Kosovo society, the guidelines of which were set by UNMIK. Present-day Kosovo totally lacks what many call development. It is stagnating, lagging behind on all planes. That situation should be removed by a provisional, but also long-standing solution of status of Kosovo, under which Kosovo, as an equitable partner would have opportunities to independently accede to social, economic, cultural, sports and other developmental projects. The second phase would be much easier, under one condition: namely that in Serbia the same process of total overhaul of the Serb society is enacted, for without a true democratization of Serbia, genuine resolution of the Kosovo problems and the regional ones is not viable. Pressure for the sake of qualitative changes, currently piled only on Kosovo, shall be futile if it is not followed by an identical pressure on the Belgrade regime, not only regarding the co-operation with the Hague Tribunal-and that pressure is currently sporadic and provisional-but also with a view to compelling Belgrade to change its views on the Balkans and its century-long neighbors.

5. If you took part in negotiations on status of Kosovo, would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence? If not, explain your stand.

I am getting the impression that I have to confess. I think that your question lacks vision. It is riddled with what I mentioned earlier, simplified reality. Albanian-Serb relations, with Kosovo as their epicenter, have a more complex and dynamic structure than the future status of Kosovo. In my mind Serbia would create problems in and around Kosovo even if Kosovo were an independent and sovereign state. I want to say that independence is just one of reflexes of Albanian-Serb relations, and of dynamics unfolding in Kosovo, Serbia and around them.

6. How do you assess stands of some Belgrade political and intellectual circles on the impossible cohabitation of Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and on division of Kosovo along ethnic lines?

I believe in the power of ratio, in the projection of modernity and in the human progress, despite the fact that ratio was and remains the main culprit for genocide against Jews, Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, etc. If we accepted non-viability of cohabitation between Serbs and Albanians then we would also have to accept the fact that we are two peoples without ratio and as such unfitting to be part of Europe and of the

civilized world in general. I sometimes, jokingly, quote an elite co-operation between the Albanian and Serb mafias in drug-smuggling, prostitution, human trafficking and other shady affairs. I believe somewhat cynically that we have better and more humane conditions for co-operation than those ganglands. But our co-operation requires time and joint efforts. I believe in the human factor and the one of passage of time.

7. Is it necessary that the Albanian and Serb side remain hostages to the 19th century national aspirations, or they should conform to the new European and global conditions and trends?

War is just an episode in the history of mankind. I want to say that people spend most of their time in peace and harmony. Relations between Albanians and Serbs have made considerable progress in the last decades, despite very frequent revivals of the Serb national programs, which because of power wielded by Serbia, led to tragic consequences, in contrast to national programs of other non-Serbs, including Albanians.

National projects should not be repressed, because repression thereof was the main cause of the Balkans tragedies. Feelings and ideas, even when they are crazy, should be allowed to circulate freely. But what we should do is to create preconditions for human realization and for prevention of aggressive manifestations of collective and individual frustrations. Now we have enough of good conditions for realization of that goal, and I firmly believe that our current ambience offers changes for a large-scale individual and collective development and a much faster realization of human life.

8. Who should decide on the final status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Pristhina under international surveillance, the UN Security Council or an international conference?

Though it is often said that the UN Security Council would take a decision relating to status of Kosovo, I nonetheless think that all the international and local factors, notably our neighbors, shall take part in a gradual decision-making process, but I also think that Kosovars should have a major say in the whole matter.

9. As regards Albanians and Serbs (Belgrade) who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past in Kosovo and have conditions for such an apology been created?

I think that such an apology should be made as soon as possible, but Serbs are those who should apologize to Albanians for having caused their suffering and tragedies in a whole century. Albanian retribution has never been a planned one, or organized on the basis of a platform. Retributive actions were always occasioned by accidental, sporadic circumstances, like in the case of disintegration of former Yugoslavia in 1941, or after capitulation of the Serb forces to NATO and Kosovo Liberation Army. Serbs should be leaders of a kind of the Balkans conference at which all peoples of former Yugoslavia and their neighbors would apologize for crimes committed against each other, while Serbs

would have to pledge their intention to change their policy towards neighbors.

10. Is Serbia a hostage to Kosovo and why official Belgrade instrumentalizes Serbs for the sake of some political interests? What would the Albanian political structures have to do to make Serbs return to Kosovo and forge closer links with the local self-rule institutions, instead with Belgrade?

Since 1912 every government in Belgrade has abused the local Serbs for the sake of day-to-day politics. That is very tragic for local Serbs because they have paid the highest price for such a policy. Albanians, as the majority people have done little to make the Serbs return to Kosovo, but their possibilities in that regard were limited. Perhaps from now on local structures of power shall be strengthened and a more tangible plan making Kosovo more attractive for all of us shall be charted and put in place.

11. Which international principles should be honored when determining the final status of Kosovo, ethnic or historical as Belgrade advocates, or other principles?

International law does not recognize historical principle in determining status of peoples. Provision of Resolution 1244 speaking about monasteries, churches and other Serb religious institutions, and represent a political clause, that is something relying on the current international practice. On the other hand the ethnic criterion is taken into consideration only when the problem is engendered, that is, the ethnic criterion serves to determine a problem which we call self-determination. However the latter's realization is always of a territorial nature. I want to say that self-determination is ultimately a territorial, and not an ethnic problem. In the case of Kosovo and its final status it remains to be seen which modality of territorial self-determination shall be the focal point in determining the "territory" of Kosovo.

12. Are "standards for Kosovo" implementable and is it necessary to amend the UN Security Council Resolution 1244?

Resolution 1244 leaves much more room for manoeuvring other possibilities for a flexible interpretation than any other Kosovo-related acts. But it is amendable within a political process based on an Albanian-Serb agreement on joint governance and removal of development hurdles, which I have mentioned earlier. Essentially removal of those hurdles represents *condicio sine qua non* for a successful implementation of standards.

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Fadil Maloku:

The right to self-determination, as a natural right of Albanians

1. What is for you yesteryear, present, and future Kosovo?

In conditions of an unregulated issue of definition of political status, the issue of a full consolidation of democratic discourse of the West Balkans region, the issue of prospects of those countries, and notably of Kosovo, should be based on some relevant indicators conditioning such an undefined status. Before the war Kosovo was in fact a kind of Algiers for Milosevic regime, in which it promoted in the most brutal way an institutionalized ethnic discrimination, a classical system of all forms of subordination and segregation. In 1981 Kosovo Albanians were caught in a turmoil of resumption of "divorce" with the former Yugoslavia. In contrast to the 1968 demonstrations, those in 1981 inevitably coincided with demands destined to bring about tectonic changes in Eastern Europe.

In the former Kosovo part of federation, controlled by the Yugoslav authorities (or better said, by Serbia), processes and philosophy of democratic changes took a painful course. Repercussions and the fact that in 1989 Kosovo was stripped even of the little powers it enjoyed as the eighth, equitable political entity in former Yugoslav federation, consequently led up to the process of homogenization of the Serb mindset on the one hand, and of the Albanian one, on the other hand. The present-day Kosovo is still searching for its new identity, while Kosovo of tomorrow shall clearly belong to the new integrating, global processes, in which ethnic identities shall fine-tune their political, economic, ethnic and notably cultural interests with interests of the new political entities in the West Balkans region.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

In the new historical reality in which citizens of Kosovo find themselves, at the moment when they are categorically asked to delay definition of the issue of their state identity (the Rambouille Agreement), for the new political elite and academic "prosecutors" the issue of definition of national interests through institutions of the nation-state, imposes itself not only as a mandatory task, but also as a need and historical inevitability! For any further delay includes the possibility of new conflicting situations not only in Kosovo, but also in Serbia and in the region. Possible

abstaining from resolution of the final status or renunciation of the lofty goal of independence, or, ultimately, acceptance of any other state pseudo identity, notably of an entity in the future regional and global integrations, shall not stop Kosovo political groupings from demanding the meeting of that need as an inevitability of a modern nation. Kosovo, despite all possible challenges, has entered the "software"

orbit of its state independence. And one could say that Serbia has lost Kosovo only in terms of governance and total control, while, tomorrow, in terms of trade, and cultural and political ties, Serbia and Kosovo shall both make part of the aforementioned, new integrating process.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is, the two opposed national projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind historical experiences of other peoples?

Opposed stands of the two countries, at this developmental and general emancipation stage, could be understood as the two natural consequences of prejudices which they harbored towards each other, and of the historical "mortgage" resulting from economic, political, social and cultural subordination, segregation and discrimination. Today Serbia and its incumbent political establishment on diverse political, economic and primarily historical grounds, find it hard to accept the fact that Kosovo should have its independent political, economic, legal and cultural identity. And finally if we thoroughly analyze the concept of independence in the new conditions of globalization, we discover that it does not represent a mechanism guaranteeing a considerable prosperity for the citizens of its country, for it is assumed that under the new global conditions and in the future phase of global capitalism the state identity mechanism shall be even more relativised and ultimately eliminated from the process of global transactions.

In other words all state identities shall become, in a way, the first victims of the big trans-national companies. In the Balkans the reality of the formulae of identity of nation-states is still identified as a symbol of a holy value, and as such it stands the chance of remaining important in the decades to come.

As regards reconciliation and compromise between the two peoples, I deem it more the future, than the present-day, process. I agree that the process is a well-known lesson from history of other peoples (notably of Englishmen and Frenchmen.) which featured even more bitter enmities that the one which poisoned relations between Albanians and Serbs. As an experienced sociologist, I think that despite democratic processes in progress, the Balkans shall remain a region of tensions and inter-ethnic instability. However it is certain that the future shall bring prosperity and welfare. That should be the hope of all of us living in this region.

4. What is your perception of solution of Kosovo issue?

Denouement of Kosovo issue is doubtless a very complex problem, not only because of the fact that the logic of the Serb stands relied too much on the arguments of a repressive and discriminatory force, and on a discourse which featured heavily throughout the past century until the 1999 NATO bombardment of Serbia, instead of relying on demographic, cultural, political and economic arguments.

Without dwelling too much on the distant past, I would like to stress that in the socio-political history annals of South East Europe or the West Balkans, the past 90 years were marked as turbulent times, the times of inter-ethnic tensions between entities of the former Yugoslav empire, whose disintegration began as early as in 1981, when civilized and democracy-minded demonstrations were staged in Prishtina. In the early 80's due to the existence of an extremely discriminating legal system, inter-ethnic distance between the local communities acquired the proportions of a troubling segregation in all spheres of social, political and economic life. Evident were the first symptoms of a kind of hegemony stripped of all moral, legal and political norms, the hegemony targeting Kosovo and Albanians.

Consequences of realization of that project, both morbid and obsolete in this modern era, of the project imposed to citizens of Serbia, are felt even today both on external and internal plane. On the internal, social plane, that mindset, projected by masterminds of the notorious Memorandum, affected mostly the middle-class, which had been turned into a multitude of scared and frustrated citizens ever ready to approve the new hegemony-minded projects, which have become a permanent ingredient of the Serb state policy. And consequently, under conditions of a rapid impoverishment of citizens, continual political crisis of government, legal insecurity (impossibility to implement the civilian model of society) a belligerent discourse targeting the neighboring peoples, was primed.

Project of Kosovo Albanians was based on diametrically opposed stands! In fact it tried to put up resistance to the police-military machinery through a new model, later called "passive resistance," the model which in fact only tried "to buy time." Only in the last decades of the past millennium Albanians managed to find a compromise solution, since the cruelty of Milosevic regime decisively distanced Kosovo from the Serb influence. Kosovo of today is following the road of a contemporary state with powers and rights of a democratic state, and is striving to accede to the international mechanisms. The foregoing is also highly recommended to Serbia.

5. If you took part in talks on status of Kosovo would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence? If not please explain your stand.

One could say from the political viewpoint that the right to self-determination demanded by our people does not emanate or result from a legal-political decree endowed to a nation by different decision-making

centers. It is above all a natural right, that is a legitimate state or status through which that right is legitimized or identified before the others. In this phase of social emancipation is it one of the inevitabilities of the times. For the national identity, despite repercussions and global transformations taking place in the present-day world at the beginning of the process of globalization, still needs to identify itself in the discourse relating to the nation-state. That is precisely why we, intellectuals of this epoch, shall not be able to distance ourselves from a legitimate demand for identification, through creation of a nation-state. Namely that is a legitimate demand of citizens of every state, notably of those living in the West Balkans, where existence of the state presupposes a kind of identification with what is considered the home turf.

Therefore if I took part in those negotiations (which is not very likely for it is not in the nature of intellectuals to negotiate on the base of authorizations for the state affairs which belong to the political elite,) I would surely insist on independence of Kosovo. For, to put it simply, independence of Kosovo, in conditions of the ongoing Kosovo-related processes, is imposed not only by the need to achieve peace in the region and create preconditions for an economic progress in which all its citizens are interested, but also by the need to create preconditions for standardization of Western values and norms, in which building and implementation are mostly interested Kosovo Albanians. Thirdly, it should be underscored that on the political plane Kosovo is clearly striving to accede to the West, though on the cultural plane it still has many mindset and traditional values-related problems.

6. How do you assess stands of some Belgrade political and intellectual circles on the impossible cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and on division of Kosovo along ethnic lines?

One cannot say that these stands belong to the vocation of intellectuals? They in fact indicate that the Serb intelligentsia is still a hostage to the 600 years-old myth of Kosovo! The latest public polls conducted by the Kosovo Institute for Democracy and Ethnic Relations, indicate that the degree of readiness of Albanian citizens to cohabit with the Serb community is growing. Experts engaged in that project, thus explained such a respectable degree of tolerance or of readiness for cohabitation with Serbs:

A/ According to a dominant discourse, namely sociologically identified scientific parameters, Albanians should be enough aware of non-viability of purely national states in the present-day Europe, in which, to a lesser or greater degree, exist mixed ethnic identities, and also that Kosovo with its 90% of ethnically pure population, achieved thanks to a natural bio rhythm of its birth rate over the last decades, should not be prone to following this principle.

B/ Cohabitation always in conformity with the criterion of non-involvement in crimes and genocide against Albanians would make null

and void the argument of some international circles and Belgrade regime about an alleged Kosovar intolerance towards minorities, notably, the Serbs, which in no variant (demographic, legal, political) could pose a danger to the future state of Kosovo. On the contrary, tolerance and inter-ethnic understanding, as old and proven values, which helped forge the EU identity, would be the trump-card for Kosovo's integration into that big family of ethnic identities and religious denominations.

It also bears saying that the option of possible division would be the worst option for reconciliation of the two geographically close peoples.

7. Is it necessary that the Albanian and Serb side remain hostages to the old, 19th century national aspirations, or they should accommodate to the new European and global conditions?

Kosovo with its territorial whole, ethnically complex identity and creation of preconditions for definition of its political (read: state), economic and especially legal identity in this phase of its emancipation and transition shall be able to manage and later guide and channel all those developmental processes conducive first to its Balkans integration and later to the European one. One cannot say that Kosovo has lost its chance to build mechanisms of the nation-state because of its historical tardiness. Moreover that "late arrival" of Kosovo should not be "punished" by a pseudo identity which, as much as the category of entity, is currently widely discussed in the Brussels offices of Eurocrats. Entities as the new national, political and legal identities have been engendered in those very offices with the intention of putting them to the test in the West Balkans proper. In my mind they are not sustainable in the forthcoming period, for they would simply strangle the idea of freedom and of distinctive identities. The foregoing could have unpleasant consequences in the West Balkans. Albanian and Serb side should not be hostages to old, 19th century national aspirations, often manifested in the shape of idea of "Greater Serbia" or "Greater (ethnic) Albania" for the new integrative conditions shall no more be able to sustain the "mortgage" or legacy of any nation, be it Russian or any other empire. Responsibility for the ethnic carving-up should be mostly assumed by the new elites, which continue to publicly lobby for the old, conservative ideas about the mini-Balkans empires! Mass communications, new technology and identification with the new values are unstoppable processes and only anachronous peoples try to avoid them.

8. Who should decide on status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Prishtina, alongside the international presence, the UN Security Council, or an international conference?

It would be good if the political status of Kosovo were decided by the international community, spearheaded by the US and EU, and with participation of delegations from Prishtina and Belgrade. It is true that Albanians and Serbs even in the post-war period suffer from the syndrome of "desired pondering," best exemplified by the Serb plan on Kosovo

status. Participation of a neutral –the US-factor could help Prishtina and Belgrade on the following grounds:

A) This is the first time in the history of their relations that Serbs and Albanians are trying to think in a pragmatic and logical way, to engage in institutional activities and assume political responsibility.

B) Both Serbs and Albanians face the same global challenges, notably global and regional integrations. Hence determination of the state limits would make easier integration of both countries, without the burden and mortgage of the past prejudices of both countries.

To put it simply independence of Kosovo, in the current phase, does not pose any threat to security and stability of Serbia or the region. And Resolution 1244 and “standards before status” are a natural path which Kosovo is following to reach a new discourse.

9. Who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past in Kosovo and is the time ripe for such an apology?

In my mind the dilemma over that apology is only one of the key preconditions (perhaps not so much a political one) for the moral satisfaction and building the future of the West Balkans in keeping with the standards of civilized, Western world. Legacy of the Serb collective responsibility even without a demand for apology to Albanians and other peoples, notably Bosniaks, which have had most victims, shall be undoubtedly recorded in the yet-to-be written history. Similar is the case of Germans, who 50 years after the holocaust, still carry the burden of collective responsibility. Identical is the case of the Serb state, which, propped by votes of its citizens, led five bloody wars in the West Balkans region, at the end of the millennium.

In the case of Kosovo, the precondition for a long-term regional stability is an apology made by Serbs from Serbia through the political establishment institutions not only to Kosovars, but also to Bosniaks (as far as I know a formal apology to Croats was made at the bilateral meeting of the two states). That is the only way to build peace and prosperity in the region. On the other hand in the post-war Kosovo causes of a slow ethnic reconciliation and slow building of a multi-ethnic society are perhaps more marked because of frustrating barriers erected by the previous, extremely discriminating Serb system of apartheid and also because of extreme linguistic, cultural and ethno-psychological differences between the Serb and Albanian community. If one takes into account the applied models of therapy and mind-set in other countries of former Yugoslavia, one shall realize that healing of all the wounds and resolution of ethnic disagreements in Kosovo, shall be long in coming. In fact it requires double the time needed for the Bosnian reconciliation.

10. Do Albanian political structures have a concept for the Serb community in Kosovo within the framework of independent Kosovo and what should be done to boost the return of Serbs and their integration into the system institutions?

My personal impression is that the current Kosovo discourse and the incumbent authorities have not yet managed to create- maybe because they have not prioritized that issue- the mood in society for at least a kind of multi-ethnic co-existence. Some could say that we are avoiding to talk about “standards” as an inevitability. But the gist of the matter is that the project of “standards” is not an offer of our government or of our civil society, but rather an international offer, and I would add, a precondition which the Kosovo society in its efforts to build democratic capacities (but not yet the state ones!?) must meet if it wants any negotiations on its status. To put it simply in the past five years political establishment of Kosovo failed to come up with a serious offer for Kosovo Serbs, notably the one relating to their freedom of movement. It is very absurd when people are not guaranteed their elementary freedom of movement, the one enjoyed by the whole civilized world.

But that oversight cannot be ascribed only to the past or current Kosovo government, for the argument about incomplete powers (only UNMIK still has full powers) and consequently their inability to rule over the whole territory of Kosovo, was and is an argument which can exculpate them from a persistently competitive mood among ethnic communities living in Kosovo. This year’s establishment of the Ministry for Repatriation of All Displaced Persons headed by a civil-minded Serb, gives hope that the process would be finally placed on the right track. This ministry should work out in detail the repatriation project, or, what should be done for the Serbs displaced since 1999.

11. What should be the future relations between Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade in case of independence of Kosovo?

Perception of this problem from the civil standpoint could be very helpful on this occasion. Local Serbs should be included in the building of a new, democratic Kosovo in keeping with Western standards: a state with civil rights in which everyone, regardless of his or her religion, race, sex, ethnic descent, may build his or her future, the future of his or her family and of the community to which he or she belongs. This formulae is not a discovery “made in Kosovo”, but rather a product of experiences of other countries and cultures, which contrary to the West Balkans are not burdened by the past legacy. Therefore I think that in case of independence of Kosovo local Serbs should without any shilly-shallying try to join in the building of that future, which does not only belong to Albanians, but also to all the people who want to live and prosper here.

And as regards the Serb state, it should be guided by the experience of great nations who knew how to accept the bitter pill of situations far more complex than the Kosovo one. In other words, that state should recognize such a short-term independence of Kosovo, for in the future integrations the past identities shall become nearly irrelevant. If we follow this, perhaps, futuristic logic, reconciliation of peoples which had conflicts is inevitable, due to the very fact that any pronounced ethnic, racial or

religious prejudice may only slow down development and prosperity due to a very violent nature of the process of identification with the new globalized values. Therefore non-recognition of independence of Kosovo by local Serbs and the state of Serbia today presents one of the key challenges, which may stifle not only prosperity and welfare, but also the process of integration of the two peoples into a big European family. And Serbs stand to lose more than Kosovo if they take such a decision.

12. Are “standards for Kosovo” viable and is it necessary to amend the UN SC resolution 1244?

Broad regional public has every right to inquire about and be correctly informed of implementation of “standards for Kosovo” as a normal challenge in preparations of the Kosovo society for the future European integrations. In case of Kosovo, as far as I am concerned, the issue of meeting those standards is one of the least contestable preconditions for closing a long-standing chapter dedicated to the political status. All the foregoing exacts amendment of Resolution 1244, because it is a serious hurdle on the road to realization of all aspirations on which Kosovar Albanians insist. And it has been long considered as such by political, legislative and executive circles and citizens of Kosovo. The problem is how to achieve that amendment in a democratic way and with political means.

As regards things which should be changed, I think that the process of changes should not be in collision with the new facts: political (above all), economic, social and generally those relating to cultural attitude toward the new Western values. In fact I predict a definitive return of Kosovo to all those values, and consequently the change of both resolution 1244 and stands of international community and Serbia on Kosovo. Kosovo has finally entered the orbit of major global changes. Its identity shall in the future most certainly belong to Europe, that is, the West, while there are pointers that Serbia may lag behind Kosovo in that process.

University professor
Director of Prishtina Centre for Ethnic Relations and Democracy

Belul Beqaj:

Two fundamental issues: relativization of borders and absolutization of human rights

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Yesteryear Kosovo was a failed European experiment, which is currently being morphed into an internationally-administered territory, which, tomorrow should correct that European mistake!

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions by some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

If independence of Kosovo had hinged on the will of its citizens, Kosovo would have attained independence in the past century. Fortunately its independence does not depend on Belgrade. In fact Serbia shall grow independent the day when Kosovo becomes formally independent. I don't consider this a loss. The loss would be if a new illusion emerged, notably the one something which is practically lost may be recovered or re-united, at least on paper, in a kind of confederation.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is, the two national projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for a historical compromise and reconciliation?

Reconciliation is necessary for absence of compromise generates war. In the post-war period chances for reconciliation of the key protagonists or backwards mindsets which abound in the post-war political scene of Serbia and Kosovo, are even slimmer. To make the things worse, not only political elites are opposed, but also social orientations, which in a special way generate other, new issues.

4. What is in your opinion the solution of Kosovo issue?

Kosovo with all its specific features should be integrated into the European Union by conforming to realistic requirements of European standards. I think that in that context two issues are of key importance: relativization of borders and absolutization of human rights. That means that borders should be impervious for criminals and war provocateurs, and transparent- invisible for citizens guided by natural and legal-existential motives. That can be achieved if within borders function democratic and efficient authorities at the service of citizens, and not self-serving. At play is not a degree or formal number of rights, but rather a quality of relations between citizens and authorities. De facto, the issue of Kosovo shall be resolved when Serbia is democratized. By extension the

issue of Kosovo Serbs, one of the hurdles to independence of Kosovo, shall be resolved after democratization of Kosovo. In fact both subjects are far from democracy, but very close to a formal solution, which shall vest in etho-centric attributes democratic processes, attributes which Europe has exceeded in different periods during the past century.

5. If you took part in talks on status of Kosovo, would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence? If not, please explain your stand.

In societies in which the degree of democracy is not at desired level, the issue of possessing the "deed" has a greater bearing on the quality of life. While an identical situation in the region persists, the issue of "deed" shall have precedence over other issues. Citizens have been massively spoon-fed with illusions for such a long time that they are convinced that the lack of independence is to be blamed for the faulty water distribution and sewage system in their settlement. That illusion may be demystified only by recognition of independence. Then citizens shall began to relax, then citizens shall understand that for their difficult position in all spheres of life they should not blame an unregulated political status of Kosovo, but above all the absence of good governance of Kosovo. I would not recommend any other solution before attainment of independence of Kosovo. But I am convinced that after recognition of independence the "bride shall quickly take off its wedding gown," that is, that citizens shall relax, and that real democratic processes conducive to an easier and swifter integration of Kosovo into Euro-Atlantic processes shall be put in place.

6. Is cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo possible and how realistic is the possibility of division of Kosovo along ethnic lines?

After the war division of Kosovo along ethnic lines would be a great tragedy with a negative impact on the region. Hence it would be good if our concepts focused on betterment of quality of relations between Serbs and Albanians. There is no alternative to that question. Of course as long as ultra-nationalistic enmities and intolerance in Kosovo and in Serbia exist they shall affect to a large extent relations between different entities. Hence a precondition for building bridges of co-operation between Albanians and Serbs is a high-degree normalization of relations between intra-ethnic political elites, for it would make them stop using minorities as an instrument in power struggle, and make them treat minorities as the most important element of democratic character of authorities.

7. Is it necessary that both the Serb and Albanian side remain hostages to the 19th century national aspirations, or they should accommodate to the new European and global conditions and trends?

Unfortunately Kosovo Albanians in the 19th century did not have what the Serbs in Serbia had. Hence their compensatory wish. Wishes of Albanians were historically at odds with their possibilities and historical circumstances. But independently from that fact, any unnatural going

back to square one, would cause a delay in the future, which in fact does not depend on us. Hence it would be better if the elites understood that their rule shall not depend on the size of the conquered territory or on reduction of rights, but rather on a good, democratic policy. This implies that Serbs and Albanians shall risk their very future, if they continue to go forward with their heads turned backwards.

8. Have conditions for reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs been created and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past in Kosovo?

Since it is a moral category, I don't think that any preconditions should be created. On the contrary, if those two societies had not been in a moral and ethic crises, today we would have talked about joint economic, technical and technological projects. But as these societies are burdened by a moral and institutional crisis, then excuses like the one "are preconditions for reconciliation created?" are sought. The two societies are burdened by a general crisis, in which in crisis is the very understanding of the question of crisis, thus they behave as if they did not know who should apologize to whom!

9. Do Albanian political structures have a concept related to the return of Serbs to Kosovo, their security and equality, and their integration into the local self-rule institutions?

Unfortunately Albanian political structures remember Serbs only when the international representatives remind them, while Serbs think of integration into provisional institutions of Kosovo only when they are reminded by Belgrade. Therefore the return of Serbs is discussed only when the Belgrade or Prishtina authorities have such aspirations. Serbs are sandwiched between the two authorities: they are forgotten by the Albanian political structures during elections, and the Serb ones remember them only when they should strengthen their power in Belgrade. What is to be done? Above all Serbs should not allow their instrumentalization by political structures, but rather decide independently decide on their own fate in Kosovo by demanding a natural backing of Serbia and the international community. Then the Albanian structures would be compelled to re-appraise their stand on the Serbs, for, on the contrary, it would be proved that they are against repatriation of Serbs, that is, a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

10. If decentralization of Kosovo was based on ethnic principles, which data would be taken into account-the 1991 census facts and figures or another document?

Though no census was taken after 1981, it does not mean that the demographic, economic, ethnic or social situation remained at the 1981 level. On the contrary. We are all witnessing major and extraordinary changes, which should be scanned by a new census. The second question is the whys and wherefores of those changes. In any analysis facts should be separated from causes vesting them in their aspects, though I think that

an ethnically based decentralization realistically constitutes a prologue into destabilization of the Balkans.

11. If Kosovo remained within the framework of Serbia, what kind of participation of Albanians into the central Belgrade authorities we could expect?

If Kosovo remained within Serbia, the vast majority of Albanians, barring few and negligible exceptions, would become bitter opponents of Serbia. Serbia would be then morphed into the least safe part of Europe, the one threatening the European security, in the view of the fact that half a million Albanians live in diaspora. Therefore Kosovo's stay within Serbia would objectively threaten the survival of Serbia proper and processes of European integration.

12. Are "standards before status" viable and is amendment to the UN SC Resolution 1244, necessary? If not, what needs to be changed?

Standards should be rather understood as an excuse for shilly-shallying and delaying resolution of Kosovo status than as a real condition without which that implementation that political status cannot be settled. However, Kosovo cannot aspire to get nearer to European Union without any standards, but we would need decades to meet some standards of objective character, for example, employment. Resolution 1244 should be amended because it has objectively become a hurdle to changes in the process, changes conducive to the creation of a mood propitious for recognition of the state of Kosovo. Thus we shall face a stalemate which shall jeopardize not only Kosovo but also the whole region, for absence of identity of citizens and Kosovo may cause on the one hand anarchy and on the other hand, extremism.

President of European Movement of Kosovo

Pajazit Nushi:

The right to self-determination of Kosovo Albanians is a complex issue of South East Europe

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Kosovo was one territory and socio-political community riddled with misunderstandings, strife, and permanent conflicts of varying intensity during one whole century. The present-day Kosovo is a political, social and economic subject which has covered half a road leading to the creation of a good political subject. Therefore Kosovo is in the final phase of formation of its being as a political subject. As such a subject it was placed "under the UN mandate, or mandate of the international security forces." Kosovo is trying to strengthen and affirm its subjectivity inside and outside its territory. Its state is provisional and oriented towards determination of its final political-economic, and social status.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions by some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

The current situation in Kosovo is characterized by political, defense and social changes of various magnitudes. Those changes indicate that restoration of the state which existed in Kosovo in the 20th century is –impossible. However a difficult economic situation and a low level of education, and notably a low level of implementation of human rights and freedoms in political, economic, social and cultural sphere, alongside a slow building of democratic institutions despite their nominal increase, create a blurred picture of the current state of affairs in Kosovo. Moreover the picture of transformations of some institutions, notably political, judicial, and police ones, has elements of a "chaos."

As regards the second part of your question I can say that Serbia was badly damaged because of its mistreatment of Kosovo Albanians, and that Serbia has lost Kosovo. There are elements indicating that development of political processes is leading to Kosovo independence, and numerous are developmental elements proving that Kosovo has embarked upon the path of peace and a gradual increase in welfare, and that the international political subjects, including the UN Security Council, are gearing up for a "substantive agreement on Kosovo."

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is the two national projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any

window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples?

Such projects exist and have their distinctive historical genesis. Each side based the genesis of such projects on its own "arguments" which they consider sustainable, and some even- indisputable. A specifically long process of development of the two opposed projects engendered such specific mindsets of the Albanian and Serb citizens then one has the impression that a historical compromise between the two embittered, angry and even much-hated and hostile sides is impossible. I think that in this stage of development of Kosovo, but also of development of Serbia, such a compromise is unattainable. But I cannot exclude the possibility of such a compromise in the future, in a more distant future.

The above stance of mine is based on the UN experiences in creation of conditions for a free development of peoples, for only after the WW2 the right to an independent development was granted to 100 nations. Thus I think that the UN institutions should take into account specific historical, ethnic and cultural conditions of Kosovo and within that developmental framework, play an important role in Kosovo too. It is not very likely that the two peoples, the Albanians and Serbs, in a near future shall muster strength for reconciliation and historical compromise.

4. What is for you the solution of Kosovo issue?

Dialectics of the political history of Albanians in 1913-pre 90's period of the 20th century indicate that with the Albanian peoples, including the one from Kosovo, a major bartering deal was done. According to academician Dedijer that "bartering was shameless, and not comparable with any other country or people." That bartering were in fact decisions of the post-WW1 Peace Conference, but I think that the Albanian-Serb relations have not changed much after 90's of the 20th century, regardless of socio-political changes experienced by Albanians and their countries, above all Kosovo and its ethnic Albanians. As the stances of the strategists of the People's Liberation Struggle of Yugoslavia that Albanians within the Versailles Yugoslavia "are conquered people and object of extermination" (Tito), decisions of the 1878 Prizren League, the 1918 Albanian resistance to their annexation to the Serb, that is, Yugoslav state, decisions of the Founding Conference of the National Liberation Council of the province of Kosovo, taken in 1943 and on 1 and 2 January 1944, and the current aspirations of Albanians, make up a read thread attesting to the Albanian separation from others, and of historical character of their will, I think that the will of Albanians should be respected.

That stand of mine is based on a demographic process of the Albanians in Kosovo, in which they have made and make an absolute majority, obviously in varying proportions during their century-long development, and also on the fact that the Albanians in Kosovo and elsewhere are creating their history and grasping full implications of the aforementioned bartering, etc. The will of peoples has been recognized as

a conceptual category by all fundamental international documents. That popular will regarding the right of Albanians to self-determination is not a simple reason, but rather a valid argument to be taken into consideration. That argument should be considered a strong one, for in the Albanian past not a single form of political and social development, even the system of political autonomy like the one under the 1974 Constitution, proved to be a likeable and acceptable experience. But the right of Kosovo Albanians to self-determination today belongs to one of the most complicated issues of South East Europe. Complexity of that issue is best seen in a major change in the level of economic, social, and cultural development of Albanians and minorities who have the right to develop in Kosovo, in a low level of culture of the system needed for the protection of human rights and freedoms, regardless of national descent and religion, in an insufficient degree of development of democratic mindset in the Albanian and Serb society, notably in Macedonia, Montenegro and the Presevo valley. But in that regard we should also mention insufficient degree of development of democratic mindset in the Serb society in Serbia and constructions of the religious-national mindset of the Serb Orthodox Church which that Church links to the religious institutions of the Middle Ages Kosovo, etc. In such conditions and relations, separation of Kosovo from Serbia cannot be compared to separation of the Czechs from Slovakia, or even less so with separation of Norway from Sweden. That separation is made even more difficult by the fact that Resolution 1244 recognizes sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia over Kosovo.

5. If you took part in talks on status of Kosovo, would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence. If not, explain your stand.

Since democratic elections in Kosovo determined subjects in which people of Kosovo placed their trust, I think that inclusion of not-elected participants in such talks would not be good. Experts should take part in those talks but only to the extent of offering assistance and support to those elected by the people of Kosovo. I think that the subjects elected in free elections don't have a need to ask me for anything, barring things related to my political experience, notably the one acquired in many agreements with the Serb side and others. But we should nonetheless know that only those elected shall not be able to shoulder an onerous and complicated burden of a historical agreement, the more so because Kosovo ranks among countries with the highest degree potential for a political crisis, has a high level of poverty and even of extreme poverty, and because despite that glaring poverty Kosovo's current institutions have not been able to spend all the budgetary funds and ended the year 2004 with a 250 million Euro surplus!

6. How do you assess views of some Belgrade political circles on the impossible cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and on division of Kosovo along ethnic lines?

I deem the stands on impossible cohabitation between peoples, notably the one between Serbs and Albanians, as an expression of opinions and stands which rely more on negative stands and individual and temporary prejudices than on arguments belonging to a valid and solid logic. Division of Kosovo along ethnic lines would affect relations between Serbs and Albanians in those divided areas, and that division could fast expand beyond their territories. Can inter-ethnic and interpersonal relations between Serbs and Albanians be resolved by physical and geographical borders? How would such a solution affect the Bosniak-inhabited areas and those inhabited by Turks? Can Kosovo survive and develop within its territorial whole and fragmented ethnic areas?

7. Is it necessary for the Albanian and Serb side to remain hostages to the national aspirations from the 19th century or they should conform to the new European and global conditions and trends?

As it is well-known, the 17th and specially 19th century were the centuries of consolidation of national identities of many peoples in Europe and elsewhere. The same holds true of the Albanian people. The 1444 Lieges League, the 1703 Arbers League, the 1878 Prizren League, etc. are evidence of development and formation of national awareness of the Albanian people. Albanian nation, despite its political separation, and independently of genesis of historical processes among Albanians proper and Albanian political relations with other peoples, notably Albanian neighbors, should by all means conform to the new conditions and political, economic and socio-cultural relations. That accommodation presupposes a change in its aspirations and interests alongside the preservation and nurturing of its identity, culture, language, system of social values, and in general its social legacy. In parallel with nurturing those structures, Albanians should open up to accept and nurture common human values, notably those of other peoples.

8. Have conditions for reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs been created and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past of Kosovo?

I imagine reconciliation as a process which in one phase or in a given moment is determined by the request for apology for what has happened here, and subsequently by a bold process of repentance for what do the peoples did to each other, as the process which continues to weigh down on the conscience of citizens. From that viewpoint, it is up to the representatives of institutions of the Serb people to make that apology and ask to be forgiven at for their mistreatment of Albanians in the 1998-99 period, and the way those crimes were committed. However Albanians should also muster moral and spiritual strength to apologize for what they have done to some Serb families. It is never late for the right, whole-hearted apology, and that applies to both sides.

9. What should Albanian political structures do to effect repatriation of Serbs, to make them feel safe and equitable, and to make them participate in the system institutions?

They should initially determine the number of displaced persons from Kosovo and social-financial efforts which their local milieus make to bring them back. Five years after an international mandate was put in place, Albanian citizens are still burdened by the legacy of recent past. The ongoing process also does not provide enough for a safe life, movement and development of Serbs who want to live in Kosovo. The need to combat prejudices, which are a more difficult and complicated block to fight than the physical violence, is still felt. Let us not forget that national prejudices have also motivational dimensions, and that they are difficult to uproot. In order to dispel or rather stamp out those prejudices local self-rule and international institutions should have profiled programs and projects, frequently involving an ample use of the print and electronic media. I think that the said institutions have yet to establish a common front for combating prejudices and to engage in replacing negative stands and prejudices with the modern, democratic, and peaceful stances, much needed confidence and tolerance of high qualitative and quantitative levels. Local self-rule bodies should strengthen judicial and police institutions and bodies and strive to ensure conditions for a swifter economic development in order to move Kosovo up from the rung of the country with the lowest economic development in Europe.

10. Which international principles should be respected in determining the final status of Kosovo: ethnic, historical, as Belgrade thinks, or other principles?

Albanians, Serbs and other peoples should raise their self-awareness, for peace and democracy cannot rely on cohabitation-related compulsion or on creation of state and statelet for every single national community regardless of its size, history, national mindset, economic development, etc.

From that aspect the Kosovo stance is very correct. I think that the national principle of the majority people in Kosovo should rank highly among the fundamental principles within the framework of development of European countries at the beginning of the 21st century, and not within the framework of the Manzini era social and political conditions and relations established 150 years ago. From that standpoint one expects more from international experts than the Albanian and the Serb ones. I believe that the right of Albanians to self-determination is one of the key preconditions for implementation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. If rights of people are threatened, I think that Kosovo Albanians and a vast majority of Serbs citizens, would opt for war, because for them the right to self-determination is more important than other rights. Hence national principles and basic premises of that principle must be discussed in determining the political status of Kosovo. On this occasion I have in

mind the claim of Mr. Vojislav Kostunica, Prime Minister of Serbia, that “independent Kosovo and increase in number of states in the Balkans would be fatal” and the oft-repeated claim of Mr. Ibrahim Rugova that “Independence of Kosovo should be formally recognized.” But at the same time I have in mind development of political thought of many peoples experienced in the passage from autonomy to independence, and shared by the Serb and other peoples.

11. Are “standards for Kosovo” feasible and is there a need to amend the UN Security Council resolution 1244?

Two-year long experience with “standards for Kosovo”, with determining priority standards and their prime movers, and with responsibility of Kosovo citizens for their realization are some of convincing indicators of readiness for and organized advocacy of implementation of these standards.

There is a need to somewhat amend resolution 1244. I attach a great importance to the change of the initial stand on sovereignty of the Yugoslav federation over Kosovo, for that stand has no relevance in the present-day Kosovo.

12. If Kosovo remained within Serbia, how would Albanians participate in the Belgrade central authorities in case of independence of Serbia and in case of preservation of the current State Union of Serbia and Montenegro?

In both cases participation of Albanians should be identical and as such imposed by the international community. But I doubt that such a development would be accepted by the Serb people, in view of their long state history, long-standing state-forming political thought and a dangerous demographic decline. On this occasion I should underscore that any international solution taken against the will of people of Kosovo would have negative consequences, and would be assessed by others as the international double standards towards freedom and the right of Albanians to self-determination. In case of such a solution, in my opinion Kosovo would not leave the company of the high-crisis countries.

President of the Pristhina Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, university professor, academician

Adem Demaqi:

Political self-determination via REFERENDUM!

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Yesteryear Kosovo was a colony, a third-class reservation of our people. The present-day Kosovo is an UN-administered experimental territory, neither a dominion nor protectorate. Billions of Euro keep flowing into the Kosovo coffers, while its economy is in a disastrous state, with 60% unemployment, 97% high imports, and exports as low as 3%. The shape of tomorrow’s Kosovo depends on internal and external developments: Kosovo may become an example for all, or that country may morph into a dangerous, Palestina-style zone in the West Balkans.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

Serbia has surely lost it in terms of a classical colony and former reservation, but in terms of “a modern colony” it still has not lost Kosovo. But if the Serb politicians don’t grasp the fact that reconciliation with Albanians is impossible without recognition of freedom and independence of Kosovo, Serbia shall remain in a permanent enmity with Albanians. With Kosovo as its colony Serbia shall continue to “limp” among European countries and shall not be able to ever reach the level of European development. Therefore Serbia shall either resign itself to the loss of Kosovo, or shall lose itself together with Kosovo.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is the two national projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind experiences of other peoples?

All depends on the collective political self-awareness of the Serb people and its political elite. When the Albanians renounced the right to national unification and reconciled to the creation of the two Albanian states, they made a decisive step towards a historical compromise. Now when they are awaiting the Serb move, that is renunciation of the Serb colonialist appetites towards Albanians, a mutual historical compromise should be reached. If not, then the merciless laws of life shall impose a historical compromise painful for both sides.

4. How do you see resolution of the Kosovo issue? (Please explain your stand in detail).

A. The Serb state must urgently renounce its aspirations towards and programs relating to a renewed colonization of Kosovo and take into

consideration as the basis of solution of the Kosovo crisis, political self-determination via REFERENDUM of citizens of Kosovo.

On that basis, within the next six months, negotiations between delegations of Kosovo and Serbia should be staged to discuss all modalities relating to organization of a REFERENDUM under international auspices.

B. After referendum, Serbia should recognize the results of that referendum and consequently recognize a full independence of the Kosovo state.

C. Within a month Kosovo should be granted a full UN membership with all rights and obligations stemming from it.

D. Within six months the two sovereign states, Kosovo and Serbia should commence negotiations with a broader agenda, with a view to laying the groundwork for a long-term co-operation in all spheres of common interest for the region. During those negotiations all short-term and long-term issues and political, economic, educational, cultural, health, tourism and other projects may be raised and discussed. They should constitute a preparatory phase for accession to European Union and also the phase making easier mutual meeting of all standards, required for membership of that European grouping.

5. If you took part in the Kosovo status-related talks, would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence? If not, please explain your stand.

I only accept independence, for we, Albanians for a whole century were subjected to various combinations and none of them functioned. Our peoples are neighbors, but there are vast differences between their characters and contents thereof, to put it simply they are not compatible. But as equals we can successfully co-operate in many areas, though without merging or melting into one state. The cruel Serb policy pursued by all the regimes and in all epochs has destroyed the last ounce of trust of Albanians in any organization of the Serb state. That was a result of a painful and long-standing experience, and facts testifying to that argument would fill many books.

6. How do you assess the views of some Belgrade political and intellectual circles on impossible cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs and on division of Kosovo along ethnic lines?

A small Serb minority lives in Kosovo. The number of other minorities is also small. The Serb political and intellectual circles in the name of protection of the Serb minority want to effect secession of large chunks of territory of our small Kosovo. That it totally unacceptable. Such trends can only create a new "Palestina" in the West Balkans.

7. Should the Serbs and Albanians continue to be hostages to the national aspirations dating back to the 19th century or they should conform to the new European and global conditions.

Those who fail to accommodate to circumstances, lose themselves and disappear. Because of their awareness of that fact, Albanians renounced their 19th century aspirations on national unification and

accepted the solution of the two Albanian states. Albanians are striving to join the European and global trends and developments, but are not ready to remain a colony of any country.

8. Have conditions for reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians been created? Who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past of Kosovo?

It is a well-known fact that since their arrival in the Balkans Serbs were conquerors. The Serb adequate and substantive apology to occupied and exploited peoples would be tantamount to recognition and of freedom and independence of those peoples. Only then the road to reconciliation and normal neighborly rapprochement would be opened. And notably, as regards the Albanians.

9. What should Albanian political structures do to make the Serbs return to Kosovo, to make them feel safe and equal and to boost their participation in the local institutions of power, instead of being linked to Belgrade?

Without freedom and full independence genuine Albanian political structures are not viable. Only when Albanians create their independent state they shall have all the necessary mechanisms of power and shall be able to create all conditions for repatriation of Serbs, shall be able to make them feel safe and equal with other citizens, and also shall be able to make unnecessary the local Serbs links to Belgrade institutions. Albanians are ready to accept and implement all European standards, and even to do something more.

10. Which international principles should be respected in case of determination of the final status of Kosovo: ethnic-historical, as Belgrade thinks, or other principles?

The surest principle, the truest and most just, is a free expression of the political will of the majority of citizens via a pan-national and civil REFERENDUM.

11. Are "standards for Kosovo" viable and is it necessary to somewhat amend the UN Security Council Resolution 1244? If your answer is yes, please tell us what should be changed in that resolution?

It is necessary to change the colonial position on Kosovo of the state of Serbia. There is a need for Serbia's essential democratization, and not a superficial one, like the one in the ongoing process. Other things written on paper are of technical nature and easily amendable.

12. If Kosovo remained part of Serbia, what kind of participation of Albanians in the central Belgrade authorities (in case of independent Serbia or preservation of the current State Union of Serbia and Montenegro) we could expect?

I don't know.

Human rights activist, politician, writer, publicist

Albin Kurti:

There is only one solution-freedom of Kosovo!

1. What is in your opinion yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Kosovo is a country in which I was born, in which I grew up and in which I unfold my activities. It is a country which has made me, on which I drew my strongest, both positive and negative, impressions and experiences. It is a country whose history, reality and current situation continue to shape me, it is a country in which I live and which helps me live. Kosovo is my beautiful and unrealized dream. Kosovo was not free in the past, Kosovo is not free in the present. Absence of freedom and consequences thereof have changed, but also repeated themselves. Freedom is still absent, albeit in a different way, and consequences thereof are still felt. Freedom of Kosovo is contained in its independence, in the possibility to choose. Independence offers a chance for a genuine freedom, that is individual freedom of every citizen and in parallel opportunities for social and economic progress. Whether Kosovo of tomorrow shall be like that, depends above all on all of us who are born, who live and who die in Kosovo.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

The new reality is less new than it seems to be. Generally speaking it seems that situations change less than we think they do. Basic documents which determine the legal and constitutional position of Kosovo, Resolution 1244 and Constitutional Framework are contrary to the will of Kosovo citizens. Political and institutional system built on the basis of those documents obviously failed to protect interests of citizens and offer them good prospects. International structure which run Kosovo and local institutions have been transformed into a political and social establishment devoid of vision for Kosovo and bent on preservation of status quo. However that status quo suits only the power-holders and not the people, who today are experiencing a genuine political, economic and social regression. Three things continue to grow in Kosovo: poverty, unemployment and discontent. And finally, within the framework in which it had been placed, Kosovo does not go towards independence. Serbia has lost Kosovo in the terms promoted by Milosevic, that is, as possession of and control over Kosovo, but has not lost it in variants relating to a

sophisticated re-integration of Kosovo into the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, or to division of Kosovo, which represents a real danger.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, or the two national projects, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and a historical compromise between the two peoples having in mind historical experiences of other peoples?

Kosovo problem is not an ethnic problem. It is a problem of a conquered and colonized country, of a situation in which an entire nation was enslaved throughout the 20th century by sheer force of national-chauvinistic and hegemony-minded Serb regimes. Also the war in Kosovo was not an ethnic war. For one side it was a liberation war, a war for liberation of Kosovo from the Serb state and Milosevic regime, and for the other side it was the state project for killing and expelling Albanians from Kosovo. In the years 1998 and 1999 it became clear to all and sundry that Milosevic not only wanted Kosovo, but that he wanted Kosovo without Albanians. In the meantime the Kosovo Liberation Army did not wage war with Serbia because of Serbs, but because of terror and genocide committed by the Serb occupation forces.

4. How do you perceive the solution of Kosovo problem? (Please explain your stand in detail)

I think that there is only one solution, and that is freedom for Kosovo, or recognition of its right to self-determination including the possibility of secession. In that case the will of citizens of Kosovo would not be stifled, contrary to the present-day situation, and fulfillment of that will would represent a necessary and just basis for creation of an adequate political and institutional system. Any other solution would not be a solution, but rather an improvisation, continuation of injustice and a possible starter of new conflicts and wars. Hence we should follow the following path: UNMIK should set the earliest possible date for the end of its mission (the more so because the vague duration of its mandate has become not only unjust, but also unsustainable). The end of that mission would coincide with the holding of a popular referendum. And then we would have another international monitoring mission, the one tasked with protection of minorities rights. That would be the only right way towards the future and charting of developmental plan relating mostly to economy and education.

5. If you took part in negotiations on status of Kosovo, would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence?

Firstly, I cannot take part in talks on the political status of Kosovo for I think that they should not be held at all.

Participation in talks is a proof of readiness to accept less than independence and statehood of Kosovo, to accept non-recognition of the will of people of Kosovo. Political status of Kosovo can be resolved in a just way only if it is treated as the issue of the right to self-determination of

people who had experienced systematic violations of their human rights, a genocide, ethnic-cleansing and economic exploitation in a country which had been treated as a colony for a whole century. In no way the foregoing should be treated as a negotiable issue, let alone a negotiable issue with Serbia. Secondly, talks can be held after determination of the political status, after its just determination, and only when Serbia renounces its intent to conquer anew or divide Kosovo.

6. How do you assess various proposals for resolution of the final status of Kosovo: conditional independence, federation, confederation or union with Serbia and Montenegro, confederation with Albania, Kosovo as a two –entity federation? Which of these options is most acceptable for you?

For me is acceptable only the declared will of the people of Kosovo on the future of Kosovo. And I believe that is the only way to have a lasting solution and result.

7. Who should decide on the final status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Pristhina under international brokerage, the UN Security Council or an international conference?

Throughout the 20th others decided on the fate of Kosovo and its people. Because of that fact we have never had peace or a continual progress in Kosovo. We have always had repression, discrimination and war because the people did not decide, because others took decisions to the detriment of Kosovo. For we faced imposed systems and institutions which failed to articulate the will of people, but instead oppressed them and tried to morph their will. We have always been the most backwards and underdeveloped entity in former Yugoslavia, because we have been the most oppressed people in that federation. And freedom serves to boost development. But the others still take decisions related to Kosovo. Belgrade, Pristhina, the UN Security Council and an international conference should not decide on the fate of Kosovo. All these factors should instead accept the decision of the people of Kosovo on Kosovo, the will of its people.

8. Is it necessary that the Serb and Albanian side remain hostages to the 19th century national aspirations or they should accommodate to the new European and global conditions and trends?

Problem of Kosovo is not the issue of rivalry between Albanian and Serb national aspirations. It is a problem of lack of freedom of its people and domination over people of Kosovo by the state traditionally run by nationalistic regimes with expansionistic leanings. Freedom of the people of Kosovo is not only the problem of the 19th century. Entire history of mankind is a history of enslaved peoples and their attempts to liberate themselves. Even at this moment of time many peoples worldwide are fighting for their freedom, either by confronting external conquerors or domestic, undemocratic regimes which oppress them. If we first gained freedom, we would conform to the new European conditions and trends and thus ensure our integration. EU is an union of free countries

and peoples. Creation and expansion of EU is a sign of affirmation of sovereignty: in order to join the EU all the countries first held relevant referendums.

9. Have conditions been created for reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past?

Forgiveness must precede reconciliation. There is a chain of causes and consequences, a coherent causality, without which reconciliation cannot be achieved. Therefore reconciliation exacts forgiveness, and forgiveness exacts an apology, and an apology is made by a man repenting. The need for repentance stems from the wish for a better future, for a peaceful future. It has two dimensions stemming from two impossibilities: firstly, the impossibility of legal treatment of collective responsibility, and secondly, impossibility of a special judicial treatment of every legal breach made by millions of people. However repentance becomes sustainable and legitimate only when it follows the justice and notably when it does not try to replace it. And justice in a special case of Kosovo, and forgiveness in general, has two dimensions: firstly, a resolute and non-politicized prosecution by independent judicial system of Kosovo, in Serbia and in the Hague by all crimes committed in the past, and secondly, recognition and acceptance of human rights of citizens of Kosovo to self-determination, their right to chose their fate and the fate of their country, as an affirmation of freedom and compensation for the past losses and suffering. In my mind the first future step should be an apology of the government of Serbia to Kosovo and its people, an apology in the name of Serbia and history of the Serb rule. However to ask for that apology now while Serbia still has aspirations towards Kosovo is absurd, if not malicious.

The foregoing should also happen on the social and civil level.

And it is a complex issue: how to realize it and where to start. Justice and forgiveness shall not happen per se, so that we should only wait for them. In order to be aware that they resulted from our efforts we should change our mode. Problems are not solved by being treated separately from their background. If we treat them separately we shall not be able to understand them and in fact we shall only increase them, if not generate the new ones. The best way to be liberated from the history of this problem, linked to our recent past, is to open a discussion on it. It is necessary that Serbia and Kosovo on all levels start a debate on the past, on why it happened, on the war, on the pre-and post-war period. Serbia and Serb society indeed need such a discussion, but that should not justify our lax stance on it. I don't believe that differences in stands fade or are forgotten if they are hushed up. Our internal propensity for likable effects of silence, should be resisted. For otherwise, because silence is vengeful, we shall never have the vision of future. In absence of a dialogue on the past, there are many extreme monologues on the future. Whenever when things are frozen, heads become hot. A comprehensive debate would at

the same time contribute to development of ability which we still lack: to refuse or critically accept what we are offered or being imposed to accept. A debate on the social and civil level would doubtless impact the authorities and politics.

10. What the Albanian political structures should do to boost the return of the displaced Serbs to Kosovo and their participation in the local self-rule institutions?

Return of all persons to their houses and property is very important for Kosovo and for its future. It would be tantamount to the manifest respect for an universal value. It is also an elementary human right which should be honored unselectively and without conditions. We should not forget that the return of Serbs and others to Kosovo, as well as Albanians to North Kosovo, are not processes of Serbization, Albanization or similar, but rather part of the process of normalization. In this context we should underscore the respect of several rules on the return, which, in my mind, are linked to the private property and status of refugees: refugees are to be considered only those people from Kosovo who have property on Kosovo but were expelled or fled; those refugees who have sold or are selling their property and have no place to return to cannot be considered refugees; refugees have the right to sell their property without returning; refugees who don't want to return cannot be compelled to return or to be replaced with others; refugees who want to return should return exclusively to their places of residence-the return includes restitution of private property and the return to their private property; war crimes suspects cannot return until they are tried in regular judicial proceedings and in keeping with the law; any creation of new enclaves is prohibited, for then we would face re-colonization and not the return; and finally, in view of its aspirations, government of Serbia should be banned from buying property in Kosovo. With respect to all the foregoing UNMIK and provisional institutions of self-rule should draw up a social and civil offer. Within the framework of that offer every citizen (including Serbs) should have a chance to initiate just, judicial proceedings, in case of complaints and disputes, and that presupposes equality before the law.

11. What kind of position should the Serbs from Kosovo and Belgrade have in case of independence of Kosovo?

Once the authorities and social and cultural elite of Serbia had a consensus on the problem of Kosovo as an internal issue of Serbia, and even as its "cradle." That nomenclature rationalized its political and economic interests through irrational myths in order to instigate the Serb people against Albanians. It managed to fix the mindset of its general public on the things and phenomena which could not be confirmed. Vast majority of the media, the church and the Serb army spearheaded that campaign. I fear that now in Serbia a consensus on division of Kosovo is swiftly created. And it is very dangerous not only for Kosovo and its population. The very talk about borders is very dangerous. Any

negotiations on new borders, as non-consequences of war, shall cause the war, for each side shall try to improve its positions on the ground. On the contrary, independence of Kosovo within its current borders, would in fact create conditions for finally putting in place non- chauvinistic and non-nationalistic authorities in Serbia. And with a truly democratic government in Belgrade, devoid of aspirations towards Kosovo, Kosovo Serbs could be able to establish a normal co-operation for the general welfare, contrary to the current situation, in which they have been almost totally transformed into instruments of the Serb government and its projects.

12. Are "standards for Kosovo" feasible and is there a need to amend the UN Security Council Resolution 1244?

"Standards before status" concept, which was later re-named "standards for Kosovo" for the sake of psychological effects on the public, is unjust, impossible and useless. It stems from the lack of UNMIK's vision of Kosovo and its future. It was put in place just as a "time buying" exercise. That concept is a paternalistic one towards the people of Kosovo and its representatives. It is also conducive to a checkmate situation: to get more power and prerogatives Kosovo elected representatives have to meet standards, which they cannot meet precisely because of the lack of such prerogatives and resources. And finally, after meeting those standards, we should sit at the negotiating table with Serbia to discuss Kosovo, our freedom, us! Of course that resolution 1244 should be amended. Change of that resolution presupposes a passing of the new one, ending the UN mission in Kosovo and recognizing Kosovo's right to self-determination.

Activist for protection of human rights, coordinator of KAN

Azem Vllasi:
Exclusion of independence
– a potential danger for the whole region

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

Since the times of the Ottoman Empire Kosovo had its specific features: a diverse-mixed ethnic, religious, cultural population structure, different traditions of population and cohabitation in sustainable tolerance. During its longest historical period Kosovo was not ruled by Kosovars, but by centers outside that milieu: until 1912 it was ruled from Istanbul, and in 1912-1999 period it was ruled by Belgrade, barring a 15- year period when Kosovo, as a federal unit within the SFRY, had a rather broad internal autonomy.

The authorities which ruled Kosovo, barring the ones during autonomy, were branch offices of Istanbul and Belgrade. And as regards their treatment of local population, one can say that after 1912 (barring the 1968-1988 period when a relative ethnic equality was established), Serbs were privileged in all senses, Albanians mostly discriminated against or treated as the second-class citizens, while other ethnic communities were accorded a relatively tolerable treatment.

According to the available facts and figures, Albanians in Kosovo throughout centuries constituted the majority population. Barring the recent war, when the ruling cliques instrumentalized and mobilized ordinary locals for their goals, Kosovo has not seen a major armed conflict on ethnic grounds engendered in Kosovo proper.

The fact that about two million Albanians in territories in which they for centuries made the majority population (Kosovo, West Macedonia, the Presevo Valley, Montenegrin border zones with Albania), belonged to the state which by its sheer name (Yugoslavia-country of South Slavs), excluded them as an alien element, was by itself unnatural.

The 1974 constitutional reforms finally represented a balanced solution, accepted by the majority of Albanians as a possibility for cohabitation. However Belgrade thought that suspension of the Serb privileges and its rule over the majority population was tantamount to the loss of Kosovo.

Then Slobodan Milosevic came to power and by his reliance on the Greater Serbia nationalism and expansionistic strivings irretrievably upset the reached balance. Radical denouement in Kosovo in 1999 was a logical final stage of Albanian resistance to the cruel Milosevic regime in conflict with the whole democratic world. The UN protectorate over Kosovo since 1999 in fact represents a period of transition towards liberation of Kosovo

from sovereignty and jurisdiction of Serbia and a full independence.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the new reality on the ground? How true are assertions by some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

For nearly 6 years Kosovo has been functioning as a whole, totally beyond influence of sovereignty of the state of Serbia and its authorities. As the time passes, Kosovo's independence increasingly becomes a realistic prospect. To be honest there is the UNMIK temporary administration, but the strategy, goal and mandate of that administration is to capacitate Kosovo to function as an independent state community, and domestic system institutions to gradually take on the vital governing functions, and not to return Kosovo to the sovereignty of Serbia.

Final departure of Kosovo from Serbia shall not damage Serbia. In fact it shall be finally rid of a heavy historical burden and of an illusion with which it is increasingly difficult to live, as Milosevic regime had amply manifested.

Of that reality are obviously aware the incumbent authorities of Serbia. However they are not bold enough to openly communicate that truth to the Serb people and to mobilize all the energy to try to salvage Serbia from the historical quagmire in which it was pushed mostly by its wrong policies, notably the Kosovo one by Milosevic regime.

The option which would be most welcomed by all the Serb politicians is division of Kosovo. But that is not feasible without dragging into the whole bargain the Presevo Valley with as many Albanians as there are Serbs living in Kosovo. And as that division would entail many other problems, the international community is not likely to green-light it.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is, the two national projects, Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation and a historic compromise between the two peoples, having in mind historical experiences of other peoples?

The Serb aspirations to impact projections of the future of Kosovo are nothing but vestiges of a routed policy which had ambitions to project the future of others: to separate the Serb-inhabited territories in Croatia; to make the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina remain within the rump Yugoslavia under the Serb domination or to appropriate its Serb "parts"; to make the whole Montenegro remain with Serbia; to wholly Serbize Kosovo and when that project failed, the idea was launched to divide it. As no other former federal unit of the former SFRY, now an independent state, did not have and does not have the right to project the future of other units, so Serbia does not have now the right to project the future of Kosovo.

However Serbia is entitled to urge a better status of the Serb minority in Kosovo, but not via division of Kosovo. That implies that Kosovo should be a democratic society, society characterized by the rule of law, and a state of free citizens, all protected and equal before the law, with the same

rights related to safe life and possibility to work. Serbs and Albanians shall continue to have different views on the issue of Kosovo. But it is in their mutual interest that a historical reconciliation be effected.

4. How do you perceive resolution of Kosovo issue?

Citizens of Kosovo, barring Serbs, have a legitimate right without alternative to demand statehood of Kosovo and its state independence.

Of course if we want the international recognition of our statehood, we as citizens of Kosovo, notably we, the majority Albanians, have some important obligations towards democratic and integrated Europe and democratic world, namely to take on full responsibility for improving the status of ethnic minorities, notably Serbs, and like everyone else in Europe to ensure their full security, civil equality and exercise of their ethnic rights and freedoms in keeping with the highest European standards.

Any other option which excludes or tones down the project of independence of Kosovo is not a solution, and moreover carries a potential danger to destabilize the region. By the way independence in conditions of European integrations is not an absolute independence. It presupposes building of a legal state and democratic society in conformity with the EU standards, or standards of integrated Europe.

Citizens of Kosovo, domestic system institutions, and UNMIK administration face a huge task and responsibility to breathe life, substance and stability into statehood of Kosovo, before the formal recognition of independence.

In the course of 2005 intense talks on what is yet to be done, on prioritization of standards, and meeting of conditions shall be initiated. Therefore those talks would be dedicated to further preparations for independence of Kosovo. Participants in these talks should be Kosovo institutions, UNMIK, EU representatives, the US and the Serb authorities, but the Serb representatives should not be allowed to impact the decision on status of Kosovo. The very act of proclamation of independence should be finalized by a special UN SC Resolution ratified by Kosovo parliament.

Some segments of talks should cover the resolution of status of the Christian Orthodox religious and cultural institutions (Visoki decani, Gracanica and Pecka Patriarchy).

5. If you took parting talks on status of Kosovo would you be ready to accept any solution other than independence. If not, please explain your stand.

I would accept only independence of Kosovo, because no other solution is better. But if we devote too much attention to what Serbia would agree or disagree with, then we face a thankless task, for Serbia would never agree with any good solution. For Serbia the most important thing is non-independence of Kosovo, and that is the worst situation.

Compromises are usually recommended in resolution of difficult issues involving different aspirations. But Kosovo is not a more difficult issue than the issues of other, former federal units in the wake of Yugoslavia's

disintegration. In this case Serbia is not a partner with which compromises should be made. The last legitimate constitutional status of Kosovo was the one adopted under in the 1974 SFRY Constitution. Then Kosovo was a federal unit and that status was forcibly, in an unlawful way, suspended in 1989. Then Serbia showed which status it wanted for Kosovo, and not much has changed in that regard today. International community helped us reject that unlawful status in 1999, and thus put Kosovo in the position, similar to those of other, former, federal units, to democratically decide on its constitutional status. It would be much easier for the Albanian majority in Kosovo, for Serbia and for the international community, to find a favorable solution for the normal life of all Kosovo Serbs who want to remain in Kosovo, than to hold Kosovo as a hostage because of aspirations of Serbia. Unresolved status of Kosovo affects the position of Serbs in Kosovo, and imperils stability and security of Serbia and the region.

6. How do you assess various proposals on the final status of Kosovo: independence with the strings attached to it, federation, confederation, union with Serbia and Montenegro, confederation with Albania, a two-entity Kosovo? Which option is the most acceptable for you?

Until serious initiatives to finally resolve the Kosovo status are launched, various political analysts, institutes, NGOs, shall continue to treat that issue as an experiment and to test different options and variants as if preparing for a students' exam. Now allow me to analyze those variants. "Conditional independence" is not an adequate term, for if it fails, then we must return to the original state of affairs, and that means that there would be no solution. It is more adequate to term it "independence along with a beefed-up international monitoring and assistance within a certain time-frame," until a full coming of age for self-sustainability. Federation or confederation with Serbia and Montenegro is not a solution, for if Serbia had trampled upon the status of the federal unit of Kosovo as part of the SFRY, why would it now form a federation with Kosovo as an equitable entity? By the way Montenegro also rejects such a framework, and moves inexorably towards its full statehood and independence. Union is something undefined, and no-one knows what it would mean. No-one demands confederation with Albania. According to Dobrica Cosic's thesis Serbs should take a large chunk of Kosovo, and leave the rest to Albania for annexation. That means that Kosovo would vanish. Kosovo as a two-entity federation is an artificial dilemma for it is not clear how an entity with 100,000 citizens and the other with about 2 million can function together, since division along ethnic lines is impossible. That division would be more adequate for Serbia which has more ethnic and other diversities than Kosovo. And thus we come to the most natural, the easiest and the best variant of the status resolution-independence of Kosovo.

7. Who should decide on the final status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Pristina under international brokerage, the UN Security Council or an international conference?

Citizens of Kosovo should decide on status of Kosovo in a referendum, while a constitutional model of a democratic state of citizens should be prepared with assistance of EU and Security Council, under a strong US influence. Belgrade and Pristhina stand no chance to ever reach a relevant deal, and the principled issue, which I have explained earlier, is that Serbia does not have legitimacy to take part in the Kosovo-related decision-making process. I think that it would be good to kick-start talks, and then, at a later stage, the US and EU should recognize independence of Kosovo. In the follow-up to those talks modalities of constitutional solutions for Kosovo's independence should be determined. Not a single UN member should veto the project of independence of Kosovo, for such a move would imply assumption of responsibility for the remaining crises. It is better if all the interested parties co-operated in the search for the best, constitutional model and political resolution of independence of Kosovo, which shall most certainly have a positive impact on the regional stability.

8. Which principles should be respected in determining the final status of Kosovo: the ethnic or historical ones, as proposed by Belgrade or other principles?

The starting point of talks related to resolution of status of Kosovo should be a democratically expressed will of citizens and the fact that Kosovo, under the last internationally recognized position of the SFRY, was a federal unit thereof, equitable to other federal units, which, in the meantime, have morphed into states. As regards the ethnic principle no-one should be ethnically discriminated in Kosovo, it should be a state of citizens of diverse ethnic and religious descents. Inside Kosovo there should be no administrative divisions along ethnic lines, and the local authorities, constituted on the basis of an equitable ethnic representation of population in its bodies, must be at the service of citizens. At the level of Kosovo adequate institutional mechanisms for protection of the minorities status and rights must be respected.

9. How do you view the return of displaced Serbs and their participation in institutional, political life of Kosovo? Do the Albanian political structures have a pertinent concept?

All individuals who left Kosovo in the war turmoil should return to their homes and property if they have not sold them, and continue their free life there. Usurped property of those individuals who don't want to return should be restituted to them, so that they could freely dispose of it. Authorities are also duty-bound to provide for their peaceful and dignified lives. The Serb authorities should compensate the Albanians for their houses torched until June 1999, while the Kosovo authorities should effect compensatory damage for the houses of Serbs and others, burnt down after June 1999.

10. Is cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo possible and why Belgrade continues to instrumentalize Kosovo Serbs?

If the largest number of countries in the world has ethnically mixed population structure and boasts cohabitation between diverse peoples, why would Kosovo then be an exception? But the Serb authorities are inciting Kosovo Serbs to reject such cohabitation in case of Kosovo's independence. That is, they instrumentalize them for Serbia's proper political goals and ambitions towards Kosovo. Added to that chauvinistic prejudices against Albanians depicted as Serb-haters are being spread. To say that people cannot cohabit because they are different, is a fascisoid idea.

Lack of readiness of Serbia, that is, of its spiritual and political elite to face its rout in the recent, Serbia-instigated wars, is mostly reflected in its stance on Kosovo. Serbia is not ready to face up to the crimes committed by the ruling structures in its name and to make a clean and bold break with that legacy. Defeated party is not always defeated. It can rise and stand firmly on its two feet anew if it realistically appraises the causes of its defeat and distances itself from it. Until it makes such a move, Serbia shall remain defeated and shall not recover from the rout.

11. Have conditions for reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs been created and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past?

Albanians should apologize to those Kosovo Serbs against whom before and after June 1999 they committed any crime. And Serbs and the state of Serbia should apologize to Albanians for all the crimes they have committed against them since 1912, notably during the Milosevic era. It would be a civilized gesture which could help us somewhat unburden ourselves from the past and move towards Europe.

12. Are "standards for Kosovo" viable, and is there a need to amend the UN Security Council Resolution 1244?

The story about standards should be simplified: Kosovo and its institutions must be sufficiently capacitated for ensuring the normal external and internal functioning of our society. In other words they must be enabled to protect its citizens and their peaceful life. Kosovo and its neighboring countries shall not be able to reach the level of Switzerland and Germany for a long time. Not a single unit of former Yugoslavia, not even Serbia faced the task of meeting special standards in order to have their statehood recognized after disintegration of the SFRY.

Albanians, Serbs and the international community should understand the following: peace and stability in this part of Europe shall be attainable only when the process of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia –initiated in 1989– is finalized by the final resolution of issue of Kosovo, and even of Montenegro. And that means- by their independence. Then the status of Serbia shall be clarified too, so that country will be able to finally turn towards itself.

Lawyer and political analyst

Mehmed Kraja:
**Independence of Kosovo within its current borders,
as a compromise solution for Serbs too**

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future Kosovo?

For Albanians Kosovo is a reality, and for Serbs it is fiction. In this day and age no-one believes in historical myths, and political solutions are never based on romantic pipe dreams. If that happened the whole world would be re-structured and one of the most democratic principles in the history of mankind, the right of people to free life and self-determination, would be trampled upon.

I am a writer so I know that fiction serves to make an artistic impression. But, on the other hand, I am a man who leads a real and practical life, and I am aware that dreams are one thing and reality another. That is why for me Kosovo is above all a real territory in which I live, the only place in the world where I have a shelter, friends, relatives and where I can make my professional accomplishments. Kosovo Albanians don't have a reserve country. I trust any Serb who experiences Kosovo in that way, and I lend credence to his concerns, but I cannot trust him if he bases his concerns on myths, legends and on infantile fables of crazy heads. Therefore I would like to believe that every Serb who has lived or lives in Kosovo feels Kosovo as his own problem, as long as fantastic projections, created in the meantime outside Kosovo, don't impact his realistic judgment or appraisal of the problem. Foggy projections about Kosovo engendered outside Kosovo are the basis of the Serb myth of Kosovo. That myth, in addition to being infantile and naïve for this day and age, is also tantamount to the abuse of fiction for the sake of realization of certain political goals. Even fools know that Serbia loves Kosovo because of its pragmatic goals, and not because of legends and myths. In this case myth is the means justifying the end.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and what is the reality on the ground? How true are assertions of some circles that Kosovo is moving towards independence and that Serbia has factually lost it?

The current situation in Kosovo is quite similar to the current situation in Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Serbia. We are all the same damned Balkans people who during one whole day produce more stupidities than we would be able to produce in the next 100 years. In this complex situation Kosovo has one advantage: it is in the initial phase of creation of its identity, of its identity as an independent entity, therefore

its has more energy and enthusiasm than the other entities tired of their non-functional statehoods. Kosovo is striving to become a state, and people know that such a goal requires sacrifices. Therefore they are ready to tolerate in the longer-term the idiocies of politicians. Kosovo politicians may make thousands stupidities and errors, but they cannot renounce independence, for it would be tantamount to their political suicide.

And now the question in which you are most interested: shall Kosovo become independent? My answer is: it is not "sliding towards independence" but has rather embarked upon the road of no return, the road leading to independence and statehood.

Who is to stop Kosovo? Serbia? With which motive and for which reason? International community? With which motive and justification? Rest assured that this is not rhetoric. This is a realistic assessment of situation. Serbia can no longer stop independence of Kosovo, it can only try to get as much as possible from that process, or exact a high price for it. But the only price it can exact is its inclusion into integration processes, and nothing more. The idea that after downfall of Milosevic a more favorable situation would be created for Serbia, has faded for ever. Now Kosovo Albanians are a decisive factor. They would not accept to be ruled again by Belgrade, even if Belgrade were governed by Mother Therese herself. On the other hand the international community cannot face another decade-long war in Europe.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, that is the two national projects, the Albanian and Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation of the two peoples, having in mind historical experiences of other peoples?

I have already explained that the Serb project for Kosovo has a major drawback: it is based on myths and legends, while the Albanian project is based on an undeniable reality. Albanians have another advantage: they are very familiar with the Serb national project, while Serbs don't know anything about the Albanian project, and moreover underrate it. Nationalism and megalomaniac aspirations prevented Serbs from curing themselves from the Albanian complex. If you read the last Cosic's book you shall see that, despite some realistic assessments, he fails to get out of the vicious circle of national-chauvinism. He would kill Albanians again, because they are Albanians but he knows that he cannot do it any more.

He has evolved only to the extent of having become aware of the fact that Albanians are now a factor which cannot be easily ignored. We know that Cosic's opinion is shared by the majority of Serbs. Many of them have an even worse opinion of us. We know what they think, but they don't know what we think. They are not even interested in our opinion. How can you achieve historical reconciliation with that logic? Serbs don't know us. They keep thinking that we are cannibals, a perverted race which should be erased from the face of earth. When they change that logic, when they renounce their national-chauvinism, when they are cured of

fascist ideas, they shall have the historical reconciliation. You see, I am not using derogatory terms for Serbs. But if you read Cosic's book you shall be petrified by the number of insulting terms used for Albanians. And what about Albanians, do they have their national-chauvinists? Yes, they do. But they differ among their lot. Some hate Serbs for having suppressed and exploited them for such a long time, or having killed their grandfathers and fathers, and recently, even their sons, daughters and grandchildren. Some hate Serbs for having committed all those crimes in the milieu in which he lives. And what have Albanians done to Serbs from Backa Palanka, Belgrade and Sombor, who have never had physical contacts with Albanians, to provoke their pathological hatred of Albanians? Common sense says that the fascist ideology is responsible for such a pathological hatred, while in the case of Albanians, hatred is a painful result of the past circumstances. Once factors causing that hatred disappear, the hatred itself shall disappear too. I want to say that contrary to Serbs, Albanians have not elevated their hatred of Serbs to the level of ideology. And now we are talking about the need to effect the historical reconciliation between the two peoples?! Yes, but how? I say that first Serbs should renounce their fascist ideology and their false myth of Kosovo, and also try to grasp that Albanians shall not renounce their identity and aspirations for the sake of that reconciliation. Serbs tried to reach that reconciliation with the corrupt Albanians, but that was a bluff. Serbs can reconcile with the true Albanians but they don't know them and don't deem them worthy negotiating partners. And what is to be done? Nothing. We shall live without that reconciliation until Serbs are cured of their folly.

4. What is for you solution of the issue of Kosovo?

Independence-it is the most realistic and the only possible solution for Albanians. Independence of Kosovo within its current borders should be a compromise solution for Serbs too, on the following grounds: Albanian ethnic space is historically too reduced, and today Kosovo is over-populated. It can be compared to the most densely populated areas of Europe. However Kosovo is surrounded by a near empty space called Serbia. Reduction in the living space of Albanians resulted not only from their high birth-rate, but also from their past and present expulsions. 20,000 people from Albanian municipalities in the Presevo valley in recent years re-settled in overpopulated Kosovo. And which compromise should then reconcile both sides? Independence of Kosovo within its current borders, without division, without enclaves, renunciation of the "historical right" to rule over Kosovo, for Albanians had renounced their territories at the Berlin Congress, of course if things are perceived in line with the "historical right." Added to that, if the current international border is confirmed, Albanians would renounce their "biological right" to settle in vacated Serb areas, surrounding Kosovo. Therein lies the difference: Serbs wage wars for legends, and Albanians for survival. Compromise and reconciliation are attained by reliance on the realistic situation and not on fiction.

5. If you took part in talks on status of Kosovo would you be ready accept any solution other than independence? If not, please explain your stand.

I have already explained my stand. Independence of Kosovo is the only alternative, not a mythological one, but an existential one. I want to live in Kosovo and I don't want my children to experience what I have experienced: persecution, and many-year exile. I know that now I may appear to be a nationalist, which I am not. However my nationalism is not my posturing, it is in fact my right to a dignified life, the only possibility for survival. Does anyone have the right to deny me that? I did not participate directly in the recent war, for I thought that an intellectual's job is not to be a guerrilla fighter. Now things have changed. If on the basis of some obscure reason the decision is taken to return Kosovo to the Serb rule, I shall take part in the war and in the armed resistance. If my age or other reasons stop me from doing more in such a war, I shall become a cook and shall wash dishes.

6. Who should decide on the status of Kosovo: Belgrade and Prishtina, under international brokerage, the UN Security Council or an international conference?

None of those factors. I don't know which road shall lead up to the final independence but I know that the closing of that issue shall hinge on the resolve of Kosovo Albanians. They should clearly tell everybody that the only alternative to independence of Kosovo is a new war, and not because Albanian nationalists want it, but because Kosovo Albanians have no other solution.

7. Who should represent Prishtina and who should represent Belgrade in negotiations on status of Kosovo, and in which delegation should Serbs from Kosovo be represented?

Both Prishtina and Belgrade delegations should be composed of representatives of institutions of both countries in the way it is usually done in such cases. Modalities are not important, but I know, that not a single Albanian would be able to return home, because of the vast majority of Albanians, if he made an unacceptable compromise. He would be hanged by his own children. On the other hand different negotiations, not related to status, should be conducted with Kosovo Serbs which have real interests in Kosovo. Status is not a matter of their concern, for they are a minority and minorities don't ever decide on the status of a country. With Kosovo Serbs we should talk about their educational system, about preservation of their cultural and national identity and similar. Of course their rights shall be established in conformity with their loyalty and in proportion to the rights guaranteed to Albanians in the Presevo Valley. Therefore in the near future Serbia should recognize reciprocity in that sphere, as it is done by all civilized countries.

8. Is it necessary that the Albanian and Serb side remain hostages to their national aspirations dating back to the 19th century, or they

should accommodate to the new European and international conditions and trends?

As regards the Serb position on the above issue, you should ask them. But as regards Albanians I can say that the idea of Kosovo, as a hostage to the Albanian national program from the 19th century, is totally untenable and overly cynical. Why should one in order to become “European” or “worldly”, as you say, renounce one’s right to a free and dignified life? That is a defeated interpretation of contemporary processes and a wrong interpretation of history. Only those who are not familiar with history of Albanians may thus speak. What have Albanians done in the 19th century to contradict the principles of the right of people to self-determination? And Serbs, have they acted in a similar fashion? No Albanian wrote a counter-part to Garasanin’s “Nacertanije” in the 19th century. Since the contemporary Serb intellectuals are not familiar with the Albanian history and culture we obviously cannot be equal in this discussion. One Albanian national program was written in the 19th century by Sami Frasheri in the shape of the book “Albania as it was, and as it will be.” If one reads that book he shall not find a single word indicative of the wish for hegemony, or of chauvinism and intolerance towards the Slavs and Greeks. Even in the part which served as the Albanian national program until proclamation of independence of Albania in 1912, Sami Frasheri only clearly urged togetherness and good-neighborly relations between the two countries. Thus equalizing the Balkans peoples in terms of belligerent nationalism was a product of West European centralism. We who live here, we who cohabitate, should not accept such assertions as the well-meaning ones.

9. Is cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo possible and who should apologize to whom for the distant and recent past in Kosovo?

Of course that cohabitation is possible. That is even maintained by politicians. They even say that Kosovo Albanians should get to know and recognize the new reality in Kosovo, and in compensation and gratitude for that Albanians shall understand their concerns and interests. However we should not forget one thing: the time which had passed since the Serb instrumentalization, since the Serb-centric chauvinism of Belgrade, is too short for the Albanians to forget the recent past. Graves are still fresh, some are even empty. You well know that both remembering, and forgetting are human feelings. But one needs time to forget. Current pressure being piled on Albanians to forget under these circumstances has its background: it aims at making Albanians insensitive to their own future. It is an attempt to deceive them. To put it simply the goal of that pressure is the following: forget all that has happened, reconcile with Serbs, cohabitate, Kosovo is Serbia-and that is enough (Sic!). Those who thus speak insult Albanians and their memories, they mock them. They are playing with them, they want to erase their memories, to morph them into people without identity,

into a herd of idiots, as they were seen throughout the 20th century by the Serbs. But the times and history have changed, and they are not repeated always in their negative variant. Therefore reconciliation is not achieved by deceit or by empty stories about European integrations. It is achieved by de-fascization of Serbia, in the same way it had been done with Germany after the WW2. But that process has not happened in Serbia, and I don’t expect it will come to pass for a long time. Politicians and a good part of the Serb intelligentsia are as chauvinistic towards Albanians as they had been during the Milosevic era, they have only changed their rhetoric. Hence the most realistic thing is for them to perceive that their repeatedly failed projects even this time around are not feasible. Therefore, in the abovementioned context, for me it is less important if Serbs made an apology for 150-year long mistreatment of Albanians. That is more an issue of their conscience. And one apology does not change the spiritual state of the people who are fascized to their core.

10. Is there a concept and readiness of the majority Albanian people and their political structures to effect the return of Serbs to Kosovo, to make them feel safe and equal, and to integrate them into the local self-rule institutions?

How can I know what the political structures think? They sometimes make compromises even when their wives are raped and their children taken from their cradles. But I know that the number of Serb returnees shall be smaller than the number of local Serbs who once used to live in Kosovo. Why do I say that? I say that because some of them shall find a better life in Serbia than in Kosovo. Secondly, some of them have never felt Kosovo as their homeland, for they were new or old colonists. Thirdly, some of them have blood on their hands and therefore fear to return to the crime scene. And lastly, we are facing a phenomenon noticed elsewhere in the world: after the change in balance of power on the ground, the process of leaving of colonists sets in, because they find it hard to recognize the new reality. The time will come when Kosovo Serbs shall be safe, equal and “positively discriminated”, but they shall nonetheless feel disgruntled and continue to flee to Serbia. That shall happen because they will be less privileged than before. (You will realize many things if you read the novel “The Shame”, written by the South African Nobel Prize winner, J.M. Coetzee). Therefore Kosovo Serbs shall not be satisfied until Kosovo goes back to square one, that is, becomes as it was during the Milosevic era. By extension the Belgrade politicians should realize that they have transmitted an incurable disease to part of their people by their propaganda-style stories and chauvinistic policy.

11. If decentralization of Kosovo were to be based on ethnic principles, which data should be taken into account, those of the 1981 census or those pertaining to other documents?

None of them. According to the European Local Self-Rule or Decentralization Charter, ethnic structure of population is not taken into

account. Decentralization everywhere tends to establish functionality of power and administration and has no other political background. I don't know if our politicians know that, but foreigners, international staff in Kosovo, in Brussels in New York should know that without understanding and approval of Albanians not a single decentralization for Serbs shall be workable, even if it is effected along the ethnic lines, for then Serbs shall feel even more threatened. Who shall protect those enclaves which in the eyes of Albanians shall always have a negative hallmark because of their potential to upset the territorial wholeness of Kosovo? Shall NATO do it? And for how long? With how many troops? To protect by force the Serb enclaves separated from the territorial wholeness of Kosovo NATO should deploy in Kosovo additional, 50,000-strong troops. And that obviously shall not happen. On the other hand is it normal that Kosovo with its dense population and shortage of living space keeps in its territory empty or semi-empty areas only because they are located in territorial units under the Serb local self-rule? Albanians shall get those enclaves by purchasing them, by forcibly usurping them, for the Serbs don't face the lack of space. It would be more normal if the Serbs who want to live in Kosovo start integrating themselves and accepting the new reality on the ground.

The Serb policy on Kosovo and manipulation of the local Serbs has been turned into a cause of possible, frequent repeats of the 17th March 2004. Of course that shall not be good for Kosovo, but it shall continue to happen until the last Serb flees from Kosovo and unless a big and incredible, currently unexpected, turnaround in the Albanian-Serb relations happens.

12. Are "standards for Kosovo" feasible and is it necessary to amend the UN Security Council Resolution 1244? If not, what should be changed?

"Standards for Kosovo" are conditioning Kosovo's independence. The International Crisis Group has stated and demanded that. That means that at this stage Kosovo should follow the path of conditional independence, The question how long that conditioning shall last would be tantamount to asking a question how last the Balkans integration into Europe shall last. Therefore everything shall hinge on the manner of evaluation of those standards and identity of those gauging their implementation. In a way every country undergoing the process of transition should attain those standards, while in the case of Kosovo their gauging is a thoroughly political matter. For example if a favorable climate for independence is created, it shall be said that standards were well implemented. But until that positive mood is created, standards shall be a hurdle, for it is impossible to ever fully, 100% implement or meet them. Resolution 1244 is linked to that international political climate, in which should be included various strategic balances of power in Europe and elsewhere. We have to see which compromises shall be made with China and Russia, how much others shall yield in the face of their stances.

But we, during that whole period, shall continue to be monitored by all, and every side shall test its abilities by espousing its stand on Kosovo, including those Security Council members which don't know precisely what the word democracy means. But all that time I shall sleep peacefully for I know that the Serb policemen shall never again knock at my door, nor at my children's door.

Journalist, publicist

**Skelzen Maliqi:
Independence from Belgrade
is an imperative of this moment of time**

1. What is for you yesteryear, present and future of Kosovo?

Kosovo is my birthplace. I left it to live for 16 years in Belgrade, but I returned in 1982, at the time when one of the most difficult periods in history of Kosovo began. I think that Kosovo had luck and that it would continue to have luck in terms of fulfillment of the independence- and EU integration-related wish of its citizens. I personally don't have any wishes as regards the future. I am tired of politics, of the Kosovo issue, I would like to deal with my business, to wrap up some projects and live in peace.

2. How do you assess the current situation in Kosovo and do you accept the newly-created reality? How true are assertions by some circles that Serbia has factually lost Kosovo?

The current situation is relatively stable, which means that it is better than yesterday, or the day before yesterday, but as regards many aspects the situation here is still explosive. I am referring to the existence of armed groups opposed to resolution of problems. Those groups are less powerful now than in the past, but they still wield enough power to cause trouble. It is clear now where Kosovo is headed: it shall be independent from Serbia, but perhaps not with a full sovereignty of a fully independent country. Perhaps we shall have one minute of independence before we are integrated into EU. I think that it would be quickly understood that its sovereignty on paper, of a non-existent state, must be transferred onto Brussels. And from there democratization of Kosovo shall be managed, since such a solution could also affect in a positive way democratization of Serbia. I was among the first ones who said that Serbia cannot liberate itself and make progress until it is free of the Kosovo burden. Today many people in Serbia understand that view, some are bold enough to admit that publicly and some are ready only to say that privately. However I think it is now fait accompli, only operationalization remains.

3. There are still the two opposed stands on Kosovo, the Albanian and the Serb one. Do you see any window of opportunity for reconciliation between the two views and for a historical compromise between the two peoples, having in mind the historical experiences of other peoples?

It is theoretically possible and would be also useful. But I don't think that it is practically feasible, for both sides, notably Serbia, invested much in hated-mongering and in hate-deepening. But it is not a hopeless project.

Things can change after a while, when the new, less burdened generation comes onto the scene. Serbs and Albanians would not be the only people who after waging wars, later reconciled and built good relations.

4. How do you perceive resolution of the Kosovo issue?

I have already said that I see Kosovo independent from Belgrade. That is the imperative of the times, for otherwise the agony of 90% of its citizens would be protracted. And I am not interested very much in subsequent developments, in the level of independence granted to Kosovo. I can say that I am even interested in having a kind of international control over Kosovo, not because I like it, but because I am less afraid of international controllers than of some power-hungry Kosovo "democrats," who are obviously corrupt and have a manifest totalitarian mind-set. But I am essentially against the racist arguments, namely that Albanians are not ready to manage their independence. In fact I am not saying that Kosovo should be devoid of an independent administration, but I am only saying that it would be easier for us to develop and progress if our elite were controlled, if it were compelled to respect laws and the highest standards human rights. But now our elite cannot perceive that.

5. Would you be ready to accept any solution for Kosovo other than independence: conditional independence, federation, confederation, an union between Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, or other solutions?

I think that such experiments are superfluous. They can be imposed by international factors, but all of them would be less functional than the imposed union between Serbia and Montenegro. Realistically even Belgrade does not want that, except as a tactic for some gain, notably to realize aspirations of the Republika Srpska, but that is not a good road.

6. How should the issue of status of Kosovo be resolved: through talks between Prishtina and Belgrade under international auspices, by the UN Security Council decision, or at an international conference?

The most elegant and the least painful way would be to adopt a new Security Council resolution stripping Serbia of its sovereignty over Kosovo- any way it exists only on paper-, and thus trace the path for self-determination of Kosovo. In that way Serbia would be rid of the trauma of Kosovo myths and illusions that it can defend its "ownership" of Kosovo. But if a conference or negotiations are chosen as a preferred mode, then it would be a longer path, a more tiring one, full of hurdles, but nonetheless with an identical final result. I don't know why we should lose more time, when we have already lost so much time, we, in this region, notably in Serbia, Kosovo and in Bosnia. The sooner we clarify everything, the sooner we are rid of our illusions, the faster we shall board a train carrying us into the future.

7. In your opinion which is the role of Belgrade and of Kosovo Serbs in the resolution of status of Kosovo, and should Kosovo Serbs be on board of the Prishtina or Belgrade delegations?

I agree with Goran Svilanovic that Serbs should look for a solution of dignified togetherness, and that can happen only if Serbs realize the

post-1999 reality, namely that Serbia can no longer control Kosovo, that the Serb police and army cannot return to Kosovo. I personally favor more progressive variants of guaranteed rights for Serbs, for example an extra-territorial status of Pecka Patrijarsija and Visoki Decani monastery. Contrary to the issues of self-determination and independence, we can directly and immediately hold negotiations on that part of the historical treaty. But when I say Kosovo Serbs, I have the right to doubt the sincerity of those among them who had backed Milosevic regime and hated Albanians. Don't force me to love them too. That is why I would first accept the talks with judicious individuals in Serbia, and not with those victims of the radical and fascist regimes of Serbia. If you think that I don't want Serbs with the extreme nationalistic convictions in Kosovo, you are right.

Those who say that they cannot cohabitate with Albanians should not live in Kosovo at all. I don't want to be a hypocrite. But Serbs are welcome to Kosovo, and I shall protect their national and political rights, if they are not fascists. I also intend to oppose the Albanian fascists who say that not a single Serb should live in Kosovo. And I don't condition one thing with another. Perhaps I and others should have been more resolute and bolder in our combat against Albanian extremism. On the other hand we proved that we could confront it. And I am not referring only to the reaction of Veton Suroi in September 1999, with which I partially agreed, barring the qualification of fascism which he unjustly in the then context, attached to the still active formations of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

8. Which is your stand on the return of displaced Serbs to Kosovo, and who should accelerate that process?

I have already said that Serbs should return, but also the they should know where they are returning to. They don't return for that reason, for even those who want to know that in fact don't know where they are returning to, and what fate awaits them there. Even Albanians don't know for which reason Serbs are returning. Status should be an-all clarifying factor, and by then we shall have a more massive return, which shall bring about reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs, but not the one between the Albanian and Serb militants. Those who mention only figures in explaining their wish to return, including militants, are manipulators. Manipulation is also the statement that 200, 000 Serbs should return. I think that returnees should be fully integrated and with guaranteed rights, but they also should be convinced returnees, ready to accept the Kosovo reality, that is, the fact that in Kosovo Albanians are the majority population. They should accept that fact not for the sake of guaranteed rights and subjugation, but rather in order to avoid being only a number or a lasting obstruction in Kosovo.

9. Is cohabitation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo possible and do you and other Albanian political leaders have a concept of the Serb community within the framework of independent Kosovo?

It is a negotiable issue. There are various models of decentralization and one of them can be implemented in Kosovo. In my mind there a ready-to-use model does not exist.

10. How much the present-day Serbia is a hostage to Kosovo? And in your opinion why the official Belgrade instrumentalizes Serbs and prevents them from participating in the work of the Kosovo institutions?

I define the transition societies as societies unable to function normally. They cannot create normal elites able to guarantee the pursuit of genuine and long-term interests. The Belgrade authorities instrumentalized not only Kosovo Serbs, but also Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, not because of their real interests, but because of narrow interests of clans or short-sighted nationalistic circles, unable to grasp the new reality, and only bent on establishment of the Serb hegemony in territories of the former Yugoslavia. All the events showed the boomerang effect of such a manipulation, which affected not only Belgrade, but also Serbs in other parts of Yugoslavia.

11. Are "standards for Kosovo", feasible, and is it necessary to amend the UN Security Council Resolution 1244?

I believe that the resolution will be changed, and moreover changed very fast, because of UNMIK's early building of an exit strategy. Standards? This word shall be rarely heard from now on, and soon it will be communicated in connection with the UNMIK's exit that they were attained, or would be soon attained.

Political analyst, publicist

Annex

Dobrica Cosic
ROPOSAL FOR CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN
ALBANIAN AND SERB PEOPLE

It is the eleventh hour for us to leave the past to history and literature, and in politics turn our attention to life and future. We are compelled to set such a goal because of our objective perception of the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija and results of the five-year long UN protectorate. Guided by such perception we may find a road leading to a rapid resolution of the Kosovo issue. It is in the interest of Serb and Albanian people, the Balkans, EU and US, for that issue has been highly internationalized. Our common goal should be a just, agreed-upon, and lasting solution of centuries-long Albanian-Serb antagonisms.

I

1. During the UN Protectorate in Kosovo and Metohija and its 5-year long UNMIK and KFOR missions, the UN Security Council 1244 Resolution has not been implemented. That Resolution was used for establishing Albanian statehood in Kosovo and Metohija; from that Resolution and the Kumanovo Military Agreement have been struck off provisions guaranteeing existential rights of Serbs, other non-Albanians, and Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo and Metohija.

In that period over 1,000 Serbs and some Albanians have been killed and abducted; tens of thousands of Serb houses and public buildings have been torched, and about 150,000 Orthodox, medieval monasteries and churches have been destroyed. 220,000 Serbs, Montenegrins, Romany, Croats, Goranci and other non-Albanians were expelled, while only 2% of expellees have returned to Kosovo and Metohija. Kosovo and Metohija is currently a mono-ethnic territory in which the remaining Serbs live in the KFOR-protected ghettos.

During the Albanian-staged pogrom over Serbs in March 2004, 800 Serb houses, and public buildings were torched and destroyed, as were 34 churches and monasteries. Over 4,000 Serbs were expelled and about a dozen killed. The pogrom was also carried out by members of the Kosovo Protection Corps in the face of prolonged passivity of KFOR members. All Serbs were expelled from Kosovo cities, Pristina (until 1999 inhabited by 80,000 Serbs), Prizren, Pec, Djakovica; Northern Mitrovica is the only city in still inhabited by Serbs.

Ethnic-cleansing of Serbs and non-Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija effected by militant and chauvinistic Albanians with a tacit consent of Albanian authorities and abetted by Albanian leaders may be likened in the territory of Europe only to Nazi massacres over Jews and the Ustashi crimes against Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in WWII.

2. Implementation of UNMIK's project "Standards before Status" to date has not yielded significant results, for those "Standards" are not feasible in the current Kosovo reality. Human rights of Serbs, non-Albanians and Albanians have not been improved. "Stratification of standards" like all other decisions and recommendations of the US Security Council, UNMIK, EU and Contact Group, served the purpose of political and legal establishment of Albanian state-the Republic of Kosovo.

3. Serbia's government Plan on decentralization of power and autonomy for Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija was discarded by Albanians out of their conviction that the UN Resolution 1244 was a diplomatic deception of Serbia and of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. International fora took a similar stand towards that plan in line with Albanian demands. They have relativised that plan and made senseless its contents even before embarking upon a competent dialogue.

4. Kosovo and Metohija are currently the only territory in Europe in which freedom of movement does not exist. Serb peasants may work their fields only under protection of KFOR. Serb children are escorted to school by KFOR units. Serb MPs in Kosovo Parliament are ferried to and from that topmost institution in KFOR armoured vehicles. Some torched and destroyed churches and monasteries have been morphed into garbage dumps, public toilettes and parking lots. In Kosovo and Metohija all Serb libraries with three and a half million Serb books have been torched.

Kosovo and Metohija is today an area of permanent violence in which Albanian criminals and individuals indoctrinated with Greater Albania ideology freely indulge.

In that territory there is great poverty and no rule of law; it is a society steeped in organized crime, human, mostly women and children trafficking and drug-smuggling. It is a society of great social despair, and the one at the lowest rung of civilization in Europe.

5. During their military and political engagement in that area US and EU have spent billions of dollars to pacify Kosovo antagonisms and create a multi-ethnic society. But, their efforts were futile. The US and EU policy met with a total rout, as best manifested by a negligible number of Serb returnees, lack of fundamental human rights for Serbs, Albanian pogrom of Serbs in March 2004 and subsequent developments in Kosovo and Metohija.

6. If political factors of international community want peace, democracy and progress of Kosovo and Metohija, co-operation between Albanian and Serb people, well-conceived integration of both peoples into

EU, and political stability of the Balkans region, they must revise their Kosovo policy or create a new one.

II

1. Kosovo and Metohija is a territory in which at play are very, active, residual and contemporary antagonisms of diaspora Balkans ethnicities, which intermingle and are encouraged by interests of big international and European powers.

2. National ideologies of Albanian and Serb people are awash with obsolete and poisonous political mind-sets based on the legacy of their pasts characterized by long-standing national subjugation and heavy routs. On postulates of those ideologies-"Greater Albania" on territories formerly held by the Turkish Empire and "the Holy Serb land" based on Kosovo myths-contemporary national and state problems of Albanian and Serb people, conditioned by total interdependence between the Balkans peoples, Europe and the rest of the world, cannot be justly and reasonably resolved.

3. Albanians, encouraged by a strong support of the US and other foreign factors, are united in attaining their goal of proclamation of independent republic of Kosovo and Metohija within the current administrative borders of the Serb province of Kosovo and Metohija. They are convinced that the US and NATO by their 1999 act of aggression against Serbia have conquered Kosovo and Metohija for them and made possible the creation of the state, Republic of Kosovo, as the first stage of establishment of the Greater Albania. Next goals of that militant and expansionistic nationalism have been clearly promulgated: unification of Kosovo and "East Kosovo" (Presevo, Bujanovac, and Medvedja) and West Macedonia, and in a later stage unification of Kosovo and Albanian-inhabited parts of Montenegro, from Gusinje, Plav, Tuza to Ulcinj. All the foregoing would be tantamount to implementation of the Greater Albania program of the Prizren League from the 19th century.

4. Pragmatic and absolute prioritization of Albanian exclusive claims for independent Kosovo, in the US and EU policy, leads to a radical change of civilized, cultural and Orthodox Christian character of the territory of Kosovo and Metohija with extremely negative consequences for the region and likewise the future of South East Europe.

5. Serbia has not abandoned its traditional policy towards Kosovo and Metohija, based on the historic and state right included also in the UN Resolution 1244. Forcible islamization and albanization in the past centuries, plus demographic movements and communist system, have radically changed the ethnic set-up in Kosovo and Metohija to the benefit of Albanians. Demographic set-up and historic developments between the break-up of Yugoslavia, NATO aggression and establishment of the UN protectorate over Kosovo and Metohija, compelled Serbia to revise its state

policy on the Kosovo issue. That revision included a compromise between Serb historic and Albanian ethnic right.

In order to salvage its key national interests and provide for a peaceful future, Serbia today needs to draw up a new, realistic, feasible and long-term policy towards Kosovo and Metohija. That policy must primarily take into account the current demographic set-up in Kosovo and Metohija and exhausted biological potential in Serbia. Serbia should not commit any mistake as regards its rights in Kosovo and Metohija, for it would be tantamount to a major defeat, wounding deeply and lastingly its national being and causing a collapse of its ethics. Younger generation should renounce the struggle for Kosovo and Metohija, but at the same time should defend successfully key national interests, by consciously accepting unfavorable outcomes of historic developments and the loss incurred by older generation, or the loss due to History in the past centuries.

6. In Kosovo the United States have built a powerful military basis Bondsteel, which is a living proof of their strategic interest in Kosovo and Metohija. EU has also major strategic interests in Kosovo and Metohija. It is only reasonable to assume that those interests, like the particular ones of Russia and Germany, manifest in their pragmatic policy towards Kosovo, must be respected and taken into consideration by both Serbs and Albanians. It is also to be expected that the US, EU and the entire international community would declare that their interests are best ensured through their fine-tuning with interests of Serb and Albanian people.

7. The current albanized Kosovo and Metohija with the inherent, anthropological features of Albanians, suddenly ideologized and corruptive islamization, social structure of non-producing society and energy generated by organized crime, is the most fertile soil in Europe for reproduction of fundamentalist terrorists and Al Quaida militants fighting for the same goals. It is in a pragmatic interest of international community to defuse the existing destructive and terrorist potential in Kosovo and Metohija and assist in the renaissance of Albanian society on democratic and civilized postulates including the respect of freedom and the rights of Serb and other peoples. Such endeavors of foreign factors in Kosovo have not yielded significant results.

8. Support of militant, terrorist, and expansionistic nationalism of Albanians, extended for decades, in the name of ideology of human rights, by the media, lobbies and some official factors in the US and EU, have caused much devastation and suffering to Serb people and other non-Albanian ethnicities in Kosovo and Metohija. Such political manipulation of "civilizing" factors has torn apart the collective moral fiber of Albanian people, and possibly affected their future.

Policy at whose heart is Serb-phobia provoked the defensive and extremist nationalism of Serbs, the most destructive and retributive aspect of which was visible in the war with the KLA. Respect of national rights,

ethics, and dignity of Serb people is the only way of appeasing the energies of the nationalistic extremism, which politically degrade Serbia and make it potentially the most unstable region in the centre of the Balkans.

9. Unresolved state-legal status of Kosovo and Metohija slows down and threatens democratic, economic and civilized revival of Albanian and Serb people. Postponement of that solution only fuels additional, inter-ethnic tensions, prolongs the suffering of the remaining Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, causes new casualties and makes more difficult a positive outcome of the Kosovo crisis.

III

Is a resolution of the Kosovo issue impossible?

It is not if political postulates morphing the Kosovo crisis into a national agony of the two peoples and most complex European issue, are abandoned.

It is not if Albanian people in Kosovo and Metohija are recognized their historic and democratic right to unify with their domicile state.

It is not if Serb people are recognized their legitimate right to their ethnic territories, cultural and religious legacy in Kosovo and Metohija and their private and state property in the province of Kosovo and Metohija.

It is not if a compromise of ethnic and historic right is reasonably accepted and on that basis just solutions preserving civilized integrity of Kosovo and Metohija are found out.

On the table are several intentions and ideas, but the most important and conspicuous are the following four:

1. Albanian claim for independent state of Kosovo within the current state borders of the Serb province of Kosovo and Metohija, and at a later stage annexation of "East Kosovo"-Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

2. Serb defense of the entire territory of the province of Kosovo and Metohija on the basis of state sovereignty guaranteed under the June 1999 Kumanovo Agreement and the UN Resolution 1244, including Serbia's readiness to guarantee to Kosovo the highest degree autonomy within the framework of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, and to provide for territorial autonomy of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.

3. Intention of EU to integrate Kosovo as a special entity in a kind of confederal union with Serbia and Montenegro into EU once the "Standards before status" are implemented.

4. Territorial division of Kosovo and Metohija and separation of Albanians and Serbs, bereft of aspirations to ethnically cleansed territories, but inclusive of reciprocity in contents and shapes of guaranteed national and civil rights for minorities. Medieval Serb monasteries Pecka Patrijarsija. Decani, Gracanica and Devic should be restituted their land and forests nationalized in 1945, and be granted self-rule, and rights on Athos model for Orthodox monasteries in the Greek state.

Let us discuss the legitimacy of those claims and intentions vis a vis the proven truth: Albanians do not want to live with Serbs, Serbs cannot cohabit with Albanians. Serbs and Albanians may live freely only side by side conditioned by their interdependence.

4a. Independent state of Kosovo within the current administrative borders would be tantamount to a forcible annexation of the Serb state territory, international award to the chauvinistic violence and ethnic cleansing of Serbs and non-Albanians. Creation of such a state would be tantamount to laying the foundations of a Greater Albania whose inherent potential would destabilize the Balkans for a long time and would represent the base of a possible fundamentalist terror.

Albanization and islamization of that Serb and Christian territory was achieved by violent means. Both campaigns resulted in destruction of the Serb cultural heritage and badly affected historic and spiritual identity of Serb people.

Independent Albanian state of Kosovo would be a permanent obstacle to coexistence, co-operation and complementing between Albanian and Serb people in their possible progress and integration into EU.

Independent Albanian Kosovo would be a mono-ethnic state from which the remaining Serbs and non-Albanians would be compelled to emigrate.

Independent Albanian Kosovo, with all traces of centuries-long life and creativity of Serbs obliterated, would leave an incurable and deep wound on the Serb national being and cause spiritual turmoil and ideological aberrations among Serbs.

4b. The current Kosovo and Metohija within the Serb state, in any political shape, is not acceptable for Kosovo Albanians. It would lead to fanning of chauvinism, inter-ethnic contrariness, and prolonged inter-ethnic conflicts in all shapes and sizes.

Kosovo and Metohija in Serbia represents a demographic, economic and political burden which Serbia cannot carry successfully if it wants to normally develop. Kosovo and Metohija in the territorial wholeness of Serbia would be a factor of permanent political instability and would put a brake on the latter's civilized recovery.

Entire Kosovo and Metohija in the Serb state would represent a highly cancerous element.

4c. Idea that "a package integration" of Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia and Montenegro into EU eliminates residual chauvinistic, nationalistic and expansionistic aspirations, is quite hypothetical, if not altogether unrealistic. That idea is floated by the EU officials; it is an ideological project based on misunderstanding and underrating of nationalistic and state-combating energies of "belated nations", notably of the Albanian one, currently the most biologically vital and most aggressive Balkans nation. Forcibly integrated national communities have always been short-lived ones.

Aforementioned joint integration would bring to European Union complicated political problems, potential generators of new destructions not only in South East Europe. State borders once universally regulated and reduced to the formal state framework and acting as stabilizing factors on psychology, spirituality and politics of ethnicities living within them, cannot represent a hurdle to European integration. Defense of inviolability of state borders may be considered democratic and peaceful means only if it is used as a principle against aggression and territorial pretensions. If state borders are altered in agreement, and with the stamp and legitimacy of international recognition, if border changes serve to eliminate inter-ethnic antagonisms and to foster peaceful co-existence, which could happen in the case of territorial separation between Serbs and Albanians which I advocate, such changes are beneficial for any integration, and in the case in point, for harmonization of the complex structure of EU. If the UN Security Council and EU act otherwise, in the name of an anti-historic dogma, in total disregard of the Kosmet, Albanian, Serb and Balkans reality, then this European region shall slip into a virulent and uncertain future.

4.d Territorial separation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija based on a compromise of historic and ethnic right, represents a rational end of a century-long inter-ethnic antagonism. That proposal does not satisfy either prime movers of Albanian and Serb national ideologies or their followers. But within the realm of feasible prospects of a rational end of the Kosovo tragedy this is at the same time the best and most difficult solution for co-existence between both peoples, and the most reliable road to a lasting consolidation of the Balkans territory.

Territorial separation presupposes respect of private and state property and division of industrial capacities in which the Serb capital is invested.

Demographic structure before the Albanian secessionist uprising and NATO aggression against Serbia and Montenegro should serve as a basis for territorial separation.

That separation should rest on full equality and respect of all human and national rights: Albanians should have the same rights as Serbs, and vice versa.

In implementation of territorial separation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija positive examples and experiences of self-rule granted to national and political communities in Europe should be maximally taken into account.

The entire process of territorial separation including referendums of Serb and Albanian people should be implemented by dint of an equitable participation of Serb and Albanian interim governments and in co-operation and with consent of the UN Security Council, EU and the US. Legally founded agreements and contracts should be internationally recognized and guaranteed.

I wrap up my proposal for co-existence between Serb and Albanian people with the following, general remarks:

Forcible, armed secessions and creation of new borders in the territory of former Yugoslavia have provoked inter-ethnic, civil and religious wars with terrible consequences still felt in the peacetime. Kosovo and Metohija is the penultimate act of tragedy of peoples living in the Yugoslav territory. The last act could be easily the tragedy of Macedonian people. Historic common sense compels us to maximally take into consideration experiences stemming from recent developments and to end the forcible re-composition of the Yugoslav and Balkans space with the process of scandinavization: a peaceful, compromise-style, and referendum-style solution in full agreement with the international community.

If Turks won the 1389 Kosovo battle on the battlefield, Serbs won that battle spiritually. Time-wise both peoples have lost that battle. Responsibility for the future compels both Serbs and Albanians to resolve their century-long battle for Kosovo not at the battlefield, but at the green table: in agreement, in mutual respect and by replacing retribution with – co-operation. That is the only possibility for both Albanians and Serbs to remain victors in Kosovo.

14 September 2004

(Excerpt from “Kosovo” by Dobrica Cosic)

Miroljub Labus: Twelve principles for Kosovo and Metohija program

“Both status and standards”

We need negotiations in order to resolve the issues of standards, decentralization and status. Hence we propose that an International Conference on Kosovo and Metohija be convened in Vienna on 21 November in 2005 on Saint Archangel Day.

Standards before status. UNMIK demands negotiations on standards before status. This could place Serbia in the fait accompli situation. When it is assessed that standards are “to a sufficient extent” met, then UNMIK powers shall be transferred on the provisional Kosovo and Metohija governing bodies. By that move Kosovo shall de facto gain independence.

Both status and standards. We must demand negotiations both on standards and status. Without an adequate status, standards relating to human rights, security of people and property, the right to unbiased trial and local self-rule, are not possible.

Status does not mean independence, but rather an institutional prerequisite for meeting the standards.

An international conference. We need negotiations to resolve the issues of standards, decentralization and status. Hence we propose that an international Conference on Kosovo and Metohija be convened in Vienna on 21 November 2005, on Saint Archangel Day.

At that Conference an Agreement on the manner of protection of minority rights, decentralization, entities, provisional sovereignty and collective security would be reached.

Historical treaty. It is not possible to define the status of Kosovo and Metohija without an agreement between Serbia, Kosovo Albanians and the United Nations.

It would be much better if the agreement were reached at an international conference, then be charted, without us, by the UN Security Council.

Two entities. It is necessary to form the two entities within Kosovo and Metohija. The Serb entity would be composed of the following areas: North Kosovo (municipalities Leposavic, Zubin Potok, Zvecan and northern Kosovska Mitrovica) and Kosovo Pomoravlje (municipalities of Kosovska Kamenica, Novo Brdo, Gracanica, parts of municipalities of Gnjilane and Lipljan).

The Albanian entity would cover the rest (about 85%) of the provincial territory.

Decentralization. Decentralization of power within both entities is necessary. The basis for negotiations on decentralization shall be the Territorial Autonomy Plan of the Government of Serbia and UNMIK's Framework Plan for Local Self-Rule in Kosovo.

Both plans should be supplemented by binding instructions on formation of new municipalities for the sake of better security of minorities.

Multi-ethnicity. Both entities would be multi-ethnic. An EU-monitored mechanism for protection of minorities would be put in place in both entities.

Provisional sovereignty. Before accession to EU, a provisional European sovereignty over the whole territory of Kosovo and Metohija would be guaranteed. In that regard EU would replace the United Nations.

Kosovo institutions and Serbia would have partial sovereignty over their respective entities. Precise contents of that sovereignty would be defined at an International Conference in line with the European tradition.

Inviolability of borders. International borders are inviolable. Neither side can unilaterally change those borders.

Collective security. NATO forces shall guarantee collective security. Serbia wants to join Partnership for Peace and later NATO so that our armed forces could make part of mechanism of collective security in Kosovo and Metohija.

Cultural and historical heritage. Monasteries, notably Veliki decani, Pecka Patrijarsija, Prizren Bogoslovija, St. Archangel Ruins in Prizren and the Kosovo Battle area, should be declared extra-territorial areas. It is also necessary to recognize the special rights of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia over those monuments.

Property and obligations. Property rights are inviolable. All citizens should be enabled to freely exercise their property and ownership rights of which they had been stripped after establishment of the provisional institutions in the province.

It is necessary to reconstruct destroyed houses, enable repatriation of all displaced persons willing to return, and resolve the issues of abducted and missing persons.

It is necessary to reach an agreement on the issue of repayment of international debts of Kosovo and Metohija.

We are ready to take part in reconstruction and economic development of Kosovo and Metohija together with the United Nations, the USA and EU, as stability and prosperity of that area are in the interest of Serbia.

Vice Prime Minister of Serbia, "Politika" 6 November 2004

Group for Kosovo (Independent expert group): "The Free State of Kosovo"

While political, interethnic and personnel problems are more than complex and multidimensional, a platform for the final status of Kosovo that would approach the issue properly and offer a generally acceptable guarantee for a successful integration into Europe is still non-existent. This draft attempts to back up post-communist transition and bolster reforms in the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (SMN), as well as in the South East Europe.

What we need today are not myths of either Serbian or Albanian Kosovo, but Europeanization of both Serbian and Albanian myths of Kosovo! What we need today is a European Kosovo.

What we need today is a European Serbia and a European Kosovo – the Republic of Serbia within the SMG State Union, a full-fledged member of the EU, with an autonomous European macro-region – the Free State of Kosovo (modeled as the Free State of Bavaria) with a high level of international representation.

Bearing in mind that the Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999 and the Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement are not implemented adequately – either in their authentic political sum and substance or in the context of security – by the Prishtina-seated UNMIK and KFOR's international protectorate, and taking into account that the Constitutional Frame for Provisional Self-government in Kosovo has not brought about expected results (less than 2 percent of expelled persons have returned to their homes), we are presenting this Draft Platform for the Final Status of Kosovo. This is a political offer to the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Kosovo Albanians and the international community: the USA, NATO, the EU and the UN.

While the Resolution 1244 offers a de jure possibility for an intra-state compromise by underlining a substantive autonomy for the final status of Kosovo, the Constitutional Frame de facto negates any connection between Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia (RS), i.e. the SMG State Union. Having in mind such state of affairs, it is obvious that a status quo is unviable!

Mindful of the situation's complexity, all relevant factors involved in Kosovo political processes should publicly acknowledge their commitment to the Resolution 1244. For its part and by the means of the State Council for Kosovo, the Government of the Republic of Serbia should demand a revision or at least a correction of the Constitutional Frame, and

adopt a Serbian platform for the final status of Kosovo to be submitted for consideration not only to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, but also to the international community and Kosovo Albanians. In parallel, the implementation of all above-mentioned and future political, constitutional and legislative activities should be compatible with and adjusted to the Agreement on the European Constitution.

The legal-political formula we put forward to the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Kosovo Albanians and the international community (USA-NATO-EU-UN) is as follows:

Final status of Kosovo, plus the 1974 constitutional autonomy, minus a republic or, to put it precisely, "more than Kosovo's 1974 constitutional autonomy, less than a republic."

What is more than Kosovo's 1974 constitutional autonomy implies a break with the communist totalitarian ideology, the rule of law, market economy and human rights and civil freedoms. Formally and in practice, Kosovo should be vested with some (agreed on) elements of statehood and prerogatives similar to those granted to the Free State of Bavaria within the Federal Republic of Germany.

When it comes to near future and Kosovo's geopolitical prospects in Europe, the following sequence of events is preferable: the final status of Kosovo, formally and factually, would be decided only once a dialogue, a viable political process (basic standards, status and sustainable development) and multilateral negotiations are launched. The latter should be conducted in the form of panel discussions paying due heed to clearly defined, basic standards (decided by the UN Security Council) and a platform for the final status (proposed by the European Commission after a public debate and in consultation with all international factors no later than June 2005). Further, such multilateral negotiations should not grant the power of veto to the directly involved parties and should be convened and organized by the UN Security Council by the end of 2005. The final status of Kosovo would be decided post festum in a new UN Security Council resolution, whereby certain segments of the UN protectorate would be transferred to the EU's "expert supervision" – to the EUMIK that would be tasked with implementation of basic standards (the UN Security Council would proclaim the document "Powers and Duties of the EUMIK's Expert Council in the Implementation of Basic Standards in Kosovo"). An approach as such to the solution of the final status of Kosovo would be the best and the most efficient one, the more so since it has been planned within the Draft Euro-regionalization of Kosovo, in the section "Distribution of Powers in the Free State of Kosovo."

In practice, that would be a Maastricht-like rearrangement (administrative redefinition, rather than territorial-political partition) of Kosovo as a European macro-region, given that political representatives of the areas traditionally inhabited by non-Albanians (counties, districts, etc.) would be recognized as political factors. Decentralization of the

administration – implying fiscal decentralization such as entrepreneurship governance and ownership-financial autonomy, but also decentralization of natural and traditional historic-geographical local governance and regions (Serbian, Albanian and non-Albanian but multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious) – would result in political institutions of local and regional self-government concerned with vital, existential and administrative interests. The central idea here is to adopt the pro-European concept of the Schengen regime (Schengen agreements on border control), i.e. to administratively redefine and territorially reorganize the political system of the governance in Kosovo by revoking the Article 10 of the European Charter on Local Self-Governance (1985). Apart from this major European document, the Council of Europe's charters, conventions, protocols and recommendations dealing with local and regional governance would be incorporated.

Thus, the Draft Platform for the Final Status of Kosovo would enable setting up of local political institutions (counties, free counties, free towns, administrative centers, administrative municipalities, municipalities, etc.) The political system of the European macro-region Kosovo would be based on equitable cooperation between natural and traditional historic-geographical (cohabitational, for in the initial stage of the development of civil society in Kosovo, Albanians and non-Albanians would be living side by side, in peace and tolerance) local governments and regions. Each local government and region would exercise their interests through mutually compatible and functional political institutions. Consequently, this would also meet geographic-economic interests of the general and public European good – the political community of Kosovo.

Creation of a unique European (economic) area, based on the European Union's legislation or communitarian law, would open the door to free flow of people, goods, services and capital, which, in the final analysis, affirms the European principle of "four freedoms" – every citizen or enterprise would have free and equal access to work, business, trade or investment opportunities.

Thus, the Free State of Kosovo would be composed of the following regions:

- The Ibar-Hvostan District;
 - The Kosovo Polje – Pomoravlje District, including free town such as Obilic and Kosovska Kamenica;
 - The Sara-Jezero District, including the free city of Prizren;
 - The capital area of Prishtina;
 - The Mitrovica District;
 - The Pec District, including the free county of the Pec Patriarchate;
 - The Djakovica District, including the free county of Orahovac;
- and
- The Urosevac District, including the free county of Binac.
- Multiethnic regions would have adequate mechanisms for the

protection of ethnic minorities. Such regions would encompass some 34 percent of the territory of Kosovo. These regions (and their counties) have been organized with a view to protect, inasmuch as possible, the Kosovo tradition, rather than along ethnic lines or historic principles.

Such Euro-regionalization of Kosovo will rule out ethnic borders. Instead, it would enable efficient protection of minority communities. By following this model of territorial organization, the European macro-region of Kosovo would be fully compatible with modern European trends in the domain of territorial organization.

Euro-regionalization would thus meet two major objectives:

- Peace, security and tolerance in the Free State of Kosovo; and
- A European Kosovo for its citizens.

At the same time, the existing districts obliged to protect traditions of ethnic minorities (non-Albanians) would cover the historic and cultural monument of 1st and 2nd degrees. These monuments would be under the protection of members of the Kosovo Protection Corps (depending on their ethnic origin – e.g., Serbs would protect the Serbian cultural heritage) that would cooperate with the Kosovo Police Service (heads of police departments would be appointed by regional councils).

The aforementioned refers to Serbian cultural monuments of strategic significance:

- The Decani Monastery (14th century) and its property would be under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate's free county;
- The Budisavci Monastery (14th century) and its property would be under the jurisdiction of the Iban-Hvostan District;
- The Dolac Monastery (14th century) and its property would be under the jurisdiction of the Iban-Hvostan District;
- The Devic Monastery (15th century) and its property would be under the jurisdiction of the Iban-Hvostan District; and
- The St. George Monastery (14th century) and its property would be under the jurisdiction of the Sara-Jezero District.

Similarly, the Albanian cultural monument, the Iso Bolletinai Tower in the village of Bolletinai would be under the jurisdiction of the Mitrovica District.

The Free State of Kosovo should have the following independent agencies:

- The Central Electoral Commission;
- The Main Auditor's Office;
- The Department of Banking and Transaction;
- The Independent Commission for the Media (Broadcasting Council);
- The Agency for Housing and Property Issues;
- The Commission for Housing and Property Claims;
- The Commission for the Exchange of Property; and
- The Anti-corruption Commission

A constitutional law on local and regional government in free counties, free towns, districts, administrative municipalities and counties (organized within districts, except for the Opolje county) should provide the protection of ethnic minorities – actually, in the regions where members of ethnic minorities do not exceed 60 percent of overall population, the law should stipulate establishment of two councils and provide that decisions made by the council of citizens can be overruled by the two-third majority vote of the council of minorities. In such two-house councils, one of the two vice-presidents is elected by the council other than the one that has elected a president (a president is nominated by the council of minorities and elected by the council of citizens, while a vice-president is nominated by the council of citizens and elected by the council of minorities).

Boiling down of the Kosovo issue to the Belgrade-Prishtina relations fuels national tension, strengthens interest groups within national political elites, wastes time of the transition process and, above all, disadvantages citizens of Kosovo and their European vision.

(December 2004)

The Draft Platform for the
Final Status of Kosovo (excerpts)

The US Institute of Peace: Eight options for Kosovo

Plan on the status of Kosovo worked out by the US Institute for Peace is titled "The final Status of Kosovo: Options and Cross-Border Claims."

In the study "The final Status of Kosovo: Options and Cross-Border Claims", which excerpts "Novosti" runs for the first time, only two possibilities are outright rejected as unrealistic: immediate independence and reinstatement of Belgrade's sovereignty over Kosovo.

OPTION 1: Unlimited status of international protectorate. UNMIK and EU continue to strengthen autonomy of Kosovo but without a clear stand on the final status. There are no difficulties as long as KFOR is present. Albanians could respond by violence to such an unlimited status. Serbs could demand military presence. Passage to the EU protectorate would require a new UN resolution. Considering that Europe is against their independence Albanians could ask for certain guaranties for their state. And Serbs, fearing the loss of the Russian veto, would not allow the passage to the total European control.

OPTION 2: Cantonization-decentralization: Serb enclaves have power de facto, but not de jure. Albanians could claim the same rights in Macedonia/South Serbia. Serbs would accept this option, and Albanians would be against it. Serb-Albanian negotiations via UNMIK and the US pressure are necessary. Peace-keepers would have to guard the Serb enclaves and borders. The US could devote itself to consolidation of Macedonia and Bosnia.

OPTION 3: A loose federation: Belgrade retains its nominal sovereignty, but Kosovo functions as an independent state. Though without a seat in the UN, like Montenegro, Serbs would accept this option if it included decentralization and Albanians would protest, perhaps, even violently. The international community would in all the likelihood accept this option. Albanians would not refuse to participate in any way in any Belgrade governing bodies.

OPTION 4: Commonwealth in Belgrade: Belgrade retains a nominal sovereignty, but Kosovo gets a seat in the UN. Serbs would refuse the UN membership of the province, and Albanians a nominal sovereignty. The US pressure on Albanians to accept ties with Belgrade would be necessary. The new UN Security Council resolution would be necessary. The US should ensure the Russian and Chinese acceptance thereof.

OPTION 5: Decision to be taken by an international panel to be convened at a date to be agreed upon. That panel would decide on the

final status of Kosovo for a certain period of time (for example, 3 years). No guaranteed independence. Both Serbs and Albanians could reject that decision. Russian and Chinese influence through the UN Security Council, should be avoided.

OPTION 6: Conditional independence. Without the border change, Kosovo moves towards independence by demonstrating its democratic governance, respect for the minorities rights and a responsible regional policy. Guarantees that sovereignty over Kosovo shall not be reinstated to Belgrade, to be followed by the demand that Kosovo shall not try to expand its borders or destabilize its neighbors. That option empowers Albanians to participate in the regional stability, but also represents an incentive to the Serb nationalists to stall the progress in Serbia and demand the same agreement for Republika Srpska.

OPTION 7: Independence within the existing borders and within a certain time-frame. After an agreed period of time (probably three years) Kosovo would become a state. Serbs would be guaranteed international rights and a broad local self-rule. Some Albanian extremists would probably continue to demand a Greater Albania, Serbs from North Kosovo would reject the Pristina authority, and pressure to effect division would grow. Albanians would attain their goal, Serbs would consider that decision illegitimate and thus create conditions for a new conflict. A strong international presence would be necessary. Implementation could be effected only in the meeting rallying all the regional countries. The US would have to convince Russia, China and some European countries in the viability of that plan.

OPTION 8: Independence alongside division: Serbia would get Northern municipalities, Zvecan, Zubin Potok, Leposavic, and Northern Mitrovica. Other municipalities would make part of an independent Kosovo. The majority Albanian municipalities in South Serbia would become part of Kosovo. Serbia would get Trepca, while its smaller part would remain under the Albanian control. A destabilizing precedent for Bosnia, Macedonia and Serbia. Albanians would continue to lay claim to Trepca, and Serbs to towns south of Presevo and river Ibar. Division would be a compensation for the Serb acceptance of independence of Kosovo. Security Council would send a signal of its readiness to accept division if it does not affect Bosnia and Macedonia.

(11 December 2004)

International Commission on the Balkans: Kosovo's Final Status

Time is running out in Kosovo. The international community has clearly failed in its attempts to bring security and development to the province. A multi-ethnic Kosovo does not exist except in the bureaucratic assessments of the international community. The events of March 2004 amounted to the strongest signal yet that the situation could explode. Since then UNMIK has demonstrated neither the capacity nor the courage to reverse this trend. Serbs in Kosovo are living imprisoned in their enclaves with no freedom of movement, no jobs, and with neither hope nor opportunity for meaningful integration into Kosovo society. The position of the Serbian minority in Kosovo is the greatest indictment of Europe's willingness and ability to defend its proclaimed values. Kosovo Albanians should receive a clear message that the use of violence is the worst enemy of their dream for independence.

The lack of leadership in Belgrade has contributed to the plight of the Kosovo Serbs, and the Serbian community in Kosovo has to a large degree become hostage to the political struggles in the Serbian capital. The Albanian leadership in Kosovo must also shoulder its part of the blame for failing to show any real willingness to engage in a process of reconciliation and the development of multi-ethnic institutions and structures. Our survey indicates that a majority of Kosovars is keen on living in an "ethnically homogeneous Kosovo" (figure 22). Most Kosovo Albanian politicians have done nothing to oppose this public mood which flies in the face of everything that Europe believes in.

But a substantial share of the blame for the failure of the project of a multiethnic society in Kosovo should be placed at the door of UNMIK and the international community. Over the past few years UNMIK has on several occasions been actively involved in a policy of reverse discrimination in Kosovo. Under UNMIK's leadership the number of Serbs employed in the Kosovo Electric Company has declined from more than 4000 in 1999 to 29 now, out of total of over 8000 employees. "The international community in Kosovo is today seen by Kosovo Albanians as having gone from opening the way to now standing in the way. It is seen by Kosovo Serbs as having gone from securing the return of so many to being unable to ensure the return of so few."(4) The failure of UNMIK can be explained but it should not be tolerated. The social and economic situation in the protectorate is no less depressing. Kosovo suffers endless disruption thanks to its regular power cuts. Some villages in the provinces

are without electricity for periods of longer than a month. ("4" Kai Eide, The Situation in Kosovo. Report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Brussels, 15 July, 2004. The Balkans in Europe's Future I Report of the International Commission on the Balkans 20)

The province never boasted a self-sustaining economy and there is no chance that it will develop one now. Currently, the unemployment rate is about 60 to 70% (almost 90% among minorities). The construction boom of the immediate post-war period has come to an end. Kosovo Albanians are frustrated with their unresolved status, with the economic situation, and with the problems of dealing with the past. The demand for sovereignty has not diminished; on the contrary, it has increased in the past year. UNMIK is perceived by the local public as corrupt and indecisive.

The Commission shares the judgment of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that Kosovo has made insufficient progress towards meeting internationally agreed standards with regard to human rights, respect for minorities, and law and order. At the same time the Commission wishes to underscore the urgency of dealing with the final status of Kosovo.

We do not believe that Kosovo's independence will solve all the territory's problems, but we are concerned that postponing the status talks will lead to a further deterioration in the situation in the province.

In our view Kosovo's independence should not be imposed on Belgrade. The 'imposition' of Kosovo's independence is not only undesirable, it is also unlikely to happen, bearing in mind that some members of the UN Security Council (Russia, China) are opposed to it. Moreover, if Belgrade opposes the process, it will significantly increase the chances of trouble breaking out elsewhere whether in Bosnia, Macedonia or Montenegro.

The Commission is also pessimistic about the possibility of direct talks alone between Belgrade and Pristina when it comes to solving the status issue. It is up to the international community to guide this process. In our view, negotiations on the status of Kosovo should concentrate on offering real incentives to Belgrade so that Serbia may find acceptable the prospect of an independent Kosovo as a future member of the EU. Persuading Belgrade to engage is difficult but not impossible. If anything can, the EU accession process can provide such incentives. Within this context, Kosovo's independence should be achieved in four stages.

The first stage would see the de facto separation of Kosovo from Serbia. In our view this stage is implicit in Resolution 1244, which transformed Kosovo into a UN protectorate. This is despite the fact that the UNSCR 1244 deals with Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and not with Serbia. It is a dangerous illusion that Kosovo can revert to rule from Belgrade in any foreseeable future.

The second stage (independence without full sovereignty) should recognise in 2005/2006 Kosovo as an independent entity but one where the international community reserves its powers in the fields of human

rights and the protection of minorities. Legally Kosovo will remain a UN protectorate but the Commission advocates transferring the UN's authority, as defined by Chapter 7, from UNMIK to the EU. KFOR should preserve both its mandate and its size.

Kosovo should be treated as independent but not as a sovereign state at this stage, allowing it to develop a capacity for self-government. All functions of a normal government that are currently performed by UNMIK or KFOR should be transferred to the government of Kosovo. This government will tax and police the population, regulate the economy and provide public services. The international community should reserve its power to intervene in those areas that are essential for meeting the Copenhagen criteria, namely human rights and minority protection.

In order for this policy to work, we should move away from a 'standards before status' policy and towards a 'standards and status' policy. Decentralisation, the return of refugees, and the clarification of property rights are the key questions to be addressed. At this stage the Commission advocates a special arrangement for the area around Mitrovica and a special legal status for the Serbian monasteries. A special administrative arrangement for Mitrovica (a transitional international administration along the lines of UNTAES in Eastern Slavonia) should exclude the possibility of Kosovo's partition.

The Commission advocates an internationally-supervised census in Kosovo, including of those who claim to hail from Kosovo, before we can start designing a programme of decentralisation. The definition of a 'Kosovo citizen' is of critical importance. The long-overdue census should be complemented by clearing up the property claims in the province. Disputed property rights are the major obstacle to economic development in the region. This is true for both private property and for the 'social property' from the Yugoslav period.

The returns policy introduced by the international community in Kosovo should be modelled on the successful returns policy applied in Bosnia. In our view, the implementation of the returns policy is of great importance. But our conversations with both Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo and in Serbia convinced us that the chances for a large-scale return are minimal. The international community should provide incentives for Kosovo Serbs to return even if they prefer to live in the mostly Serb-populated parts of the province and not in areas where they lived before the war. It should also take care of those who decide not to go back. A 'Palestinisation' of the refugees who decide not to return to Kosovo could be a major source of vulnerability for Serbia's democracy. This is why the Commission supports the establishment of an 'Inclusion Fund' to assist the integration in Serbian society of the Kosovo Serbs who have chosen to remain in Serbia. This fund should be financed by the European Union.

The decentralisation of power in Kosovo and guarantees of a normal life for Kosovo Serbs are a pre-condition for engaging Belgrade

in a constructive debate with respect to Kosovo's independence. In the view of the Commission, some of the minority quotas provided for the Albanians in Macedonia in the Ohrid Agreement should also be given to the Serbs of Kosovo. Decentralisation should afford Serbian enclaves a real opportunity for self-government and development. It is essential to appreciate how Serbs believe that the social and economic difficulties they have experienced over the past five years amount to an intentional policy of discrimination and ethnic cleansing, designed by Albanians and underwritten by the international community. So, the European Union should develop special incentives for companies that employ citizens from ethnic minorities.

The need for policies focused on the needs of minorities should not obscure that the culture of civil society, and not the principle of ethnic separation, is at the heart of the European project. The 'ghettoisation' of ethnic minorities could promote institutional weakness and dysfunctionality in the future state.

The US's active engagement at this second stage is of critical importance for a successful outcome of the EU negotiating process. Kosovo Albanians view the US as a guarantor of their independence and an American disengagement or a split in the Euro-Atlantic community could quickly lead to trouble.

The third stage (guided sovereignty) would coincide with Kosovo's recognition as a candidate for EU membership and the opening of negotiations with Brussels. There is a real purpose to this stage as the EU cannot negotiate with itself (i.e. with a protectorate which it controls). During this stage the EU would lose its reserved powers in the fields of human rights and minority protection and would exercise influence through the negotiation process alone.

The fourth stage (full and shared sovereignty) will mark the absorption of Kosovo into the EU and its adoption of the shared sovereignty to which all EU member states are subject.

These stages would be an integral part of the overall process of Europe integration of the Balkans as suggested earlier.

The necessary precondition for both the Serbian government and the Serbian public is a fast track accession of Serbia to the EU together with international guarantees for the protection of the interests of Kosovo Serbs. Croatia provides a precedent in terms of such a fast-track approach. In our opinion, the fast track for Serbia is a sine qua non. The EU accession process is the only framework that gives Serbia real incentives if not to endorse then at least to consent to such a fundamental change in the status of Kosovo as independence represents.

Key Messages

Contact Group Political Directors visit to Belgrade and Pristina

1.) This year will be of crucial importance for the future shaping of the region. The government in Belgrade, the PISG and all political actors in Kosovo and international partners may start a process to find a lasting solution for Kosovo in accordance with UNSCR 1244. The Contact Group is committed to start working with you all to facilitate this process.

2.) At this important moment in time, the countries of the Western Balkans have a unique chance: The resolution of Kosovo's future status will be embedded in the European perspective of the region as a whole. It will contribute to completing the European integration process of Serbia and Montenegro and others in the region. We shall not allow this opportunity to pass by: The Contact Group recalls the commitment of the European Union to support the preparation of the Western Balkans for future integration and ultimate membership into the European Union.

3.) Four issues will be key to SaM's future as a successful European State:

- A Kosovo settlement that provides multi-ethnicity, protection of minority rights and regional stability;
- Full cooperation with ICTY, especially on the key indictees;
- A constructive way forward on the Union of Serbia and Montenegro;
- Good neighborly relations in the Balkans.

Progress on these issues will determine the pace of SaM's integration processes. It is entirely in the hands of SaM how fast it will proceed down the road of integration.

4.) Progress on the question of Kosovo is a major prerequisite for regional security and stability and will be in the interest of all sides concerned. To achieve improved political, economic and social conditions for all in Kosovo, including Kosovo-Serbs and other minorities, all must engage constructively. The political process on the future development will be inclusive.

5.) The Contact Group underlines the importance of substantial dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and between all communities in Kosovo, in particular between Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs. All political actors, including the Serbs in Kosovo, must rapidly engage in such a dialogue on all levels and should commit themselves in the ongoing work to reform and decentralize local government and in other working bodies of mutual concern. The Serbs in Kosovo should equally take their

place in the PISG. It goes without saying that they should also have a role in the process of defining status.

6.) Above all, progress towards a process to determine the future status of Kosovo will depend on the future implementation of the Kosovo Standards. We expect a comprehensive Review to be held in mid-2005 should conditions so warrant. Neither the review nor its result is a foregone conclusion.

7.) A key element in the standard implementation is the protection of minorities. In this context, it is particularly important that the process of decentralization should be taken forward actively and rapidly, i.e. that the pilot projects should be implemented in a constructive manner. Their objective is to ensure that all people, in particular Kosovo Serbs and other minorities, can enjoy a safe and prosperous future in a multi-ethnic environment, and at the same time make local government more effective.

8.) If there is further significant progress on Standards implementation, this should pave the way for the launch of a process of talks leading to a settlement on Kosovo's future status.

9.) What results the Review will bring will depend above all on the efforts and commitments of all Kosovo's political leaders. PISG should put Standards implementation at the center of its activities. Further concrete tangible progress, notably in the treatment and protection of ethnic minorities, is required. If there is no real progress, the process will be postponed and we will need to set a date for a further review of Standards implementation.

10.) At the same time, we expect good will from all parties to reach a mutually acceptable solution. All parties are expected to refrain from obstruction of the process.

11.) Any Status settlement must ensure that Kosovo does not return to the situation before March 1999 and that Belgrade and Pristina move on further towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

12.) The settlement of Kosovo's status will, in conjunction with the implementation of standards,

- be based on multi-ethnicity with full respect of human rights including the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in safety.

- other effective constitutional guarantees to ensure the protection of minorities including mechanisms for their participation in central government and new structures of local government established through the decentralization process that facilitates the coexistence of different communities.

- include specific safeguards for the protection of cultural and religious heritage.

- promote effective mechanisms for fighting organized crime and terrorism.

13.) The Solution of Kosovo's status must strengthen regional security and stability:

- Accordingly, no unilateral solution or one that results from the use of force will be accepted and there shall be no change in the current territory of Kosovo (i.e. no partition of Kosovo and no union of Kosovo with any country or part of any country after the solution of Kosovo status).

- The territorial integrity of regional neighbors must be fully respected

- The status solution will ensure that Kosovo continues to develop in a sustainable way both economically and politically.

- It will further ensure that I does not pose a military or security threat to its neighbors.

14.) Any solution must be fully compatible with European values and standards and contribute to realizing the European perspective of Kosovo and of the region.

15.) Any solution must recognize the fact that Kosovo will continue to require international civilian and military presences in the future to ensure security and protection for minorities, to aid full implementation of standards and to exercise the appropriate supervision over the implementation of the provisions of a Status settlement.

The International Crisis Group: Executive Summary and Recommendations

Time is running out in Kosovo. The status quo will not hold. As evidenced by the deadly rioting in March 2004, Kosovo Albanians are frustrated with their unresolved status, the economic situation, and the problems of dealing with the past. The Albanian majority expects the international community to begin delivering this year on its independence aspirations. Without such moves it may act unilaterally. In such circumstances, given the dismal record of Kosovo Albanians with regard to minorities, Kosovo's Serbs may call upon Serbia's armed forces to protect them, and the region could be plunged into new turmoil.

Either 2005 sees major progress on a future status solution that consolidates peace and development, or the danger is that Kosovo will return to conflict and generate regional instability. This report, seeking to fill the blanks left by Security Council Resolution 1244 at the conclusion of the 1999 conflict, shows how that progress might be made.

As a first step, the six-nation Contact Group should issue as soon as possible a statement spelling out a timeline for the resolution of the status issue and four crucial ground rules: that the protection of minority rights in Kosovo is the issue on which progress will most depend and that neither Kosovo's return to Belgrade's rule, nor its partition, nor any possible unification of Kosovo with Albania or any neighbouring state or territory will be supported. At the same time, a Special Envoy should be appointed by the UN Secretary-General to begin consultations on the content of a settlement accord and the process by which it should be implemented.

In mid-2005 the UN is due to assess the Kosovo government's commitment to democracy, good governance and human rights standards. If the assessment is positive, the Special Envoy should prepare a draft settlement text -- the 'Kosovo Accord' -- and the details of an international conference to endorse it.

If Kosovo's new government is to lead its people to the independence destination they desire, there must be complete respect and protection for Kosovo's Serb and other minorities. The Kosovo Assembly, with international assistance, must immediately begin to draft a constitution, fully satisfying these concerns, the text of which would, if accepted by the international conference, form part of the proposed Kosovo Accord. Overall the object of the Accord, together with the new constitution, would be to create the conditions for acceptance of Kosovo as a full member of the international community.

It would be appropriate, given everything that has happened in the past and the uncertainties about behaviour in the future, for the Accord and constitution, between them, to set some limits -- important in content, but few in number and relatively limited in scope -- on an independent Kosovo's freedom of action, in particular:

- Kosovo would be explicitly committed not to unify with Albania, or any neighbouring state or territory, other than in the context of EU integration;

- there would be a number of internationally appointed judges in Kosovo's superior courts, and certain international parties would have the standing to ensure that certain key matters relating to minority rights and other agreed obligations can be brought before those courts;

- Kosovo would accommodate an international monitoring presence -- the 'Kosovo Monitoring Mission' -- to report to the wider international community and recommend appropriate measures if Kosovo were to backslide on its commitments.

Before the end of 2005 the international conference should take place, under UN chairmanship and attended by representatives of the Contact Group members, the EU, Belgrade, and Kosovo's government and opposition parties. In early 2006, approval of the constitution by Kosovo's citizens in a referendum would trigger the coming into effect of the Kosovo Accord. Desirably, to give it complete legal as well as political effect, the Accord would also be endorsed by the UN Security Council. Kosovo's de jure sovereignty, if not achieved by Serbian agreement or Security Council resolution, should be recognised by the whole international community, or at least such of its member states (including the U.S. and EU members) as are prepared to do so.

It has to be contemplated that Serbia -- and perhaps Russia as well -- will refuse to cooperate with part or all of this. But the proposed process should not be held hostage to that eventuality: the situation on the ground in Kosovo is too fragile, and the status quo too unsustainable in too many ways, for the international community to allow its future status to be put on indefinite hold. While legitimate Serbian concerns should be taken fully into account, particularly about the status of Kosovo's Serb minority, Belgrade should be cautioned from the outset that "the train is leaving, with or without you", and encouraged to participate fully in achieving the best possible terms of settlement.

Complacency has guided policy on Kosovo for too long. The potential for renewed violence is very real. The international community, in particular the member states of the Contact Group, must decide whether to regain control of the agenda or allow matters to slip until unpleasant new facts are created on the ground that they will have to deal with. The agenda set out above requires political courage as well as energy. But the alternative is worse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As soon as possible:

- (a) The Contact Group countries (highly desirably including Russia, but if necessary without it), as a confidence and momentum building measure, should issue a statement identifying a timeline for the resolution of the status issue.

- (b) That statement should make clear that the protection of minority rights in Kosovo is the issue on which progress will most depend and that neither Kosovo's return to Belgrade rule nor its partition, nor any possible unification of Kosovo with Albania will be supported.

- (c) The UN Secretary-General, in consultation with the Contact Group, should appoint a Special Envoy to begin consultations on the structure of a final status process and the content of a draft settlement.

- (d) The Kosovo Assembly, with support from international donors, should begin to draft a constitution, including provisions for the protection of minority rights and a number of internationally appointed judges in the Supreme and Constitutional Courts.

- (e) The Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) should launch a series of specific programs aimed at accommodating the Serb minority, including a "Pristina - Open City" campaign.

2. By mid-summer 2005: The SRSG should conclude a review of the PISG's commitment to meeting standards -- with subsequent steps being premised on that review being positive.

3. By autumn 2005:

- (a) The Kosovo Assembly should finalise the text of the draft constitution.

- (b) The Special Envoy should produce a draft settlement text -- the 'Kosovo Accord' -- and the details of an international conference to endorse both it and the Kosovo constitution.

4. By end 2005: The international conference should take place, under UN chairmanship and attended by representatives of the Contact Group members, EU, Belgrade, and Kosovo's government and opposition parties (or such of them as are prepared to do so), and endorse the texts, as negotiated, of the Kosovo Accord and constitution.

5. Early 2006:

- (a) Kosovo should conduct a referendum on its new constitution.

- (b) The Kosovo Accord should be put to the UN Security Council for approval (with that approval being a highly desirable, but not necessary, condition for subsequent steps).

6. Mid-2006:

- (a) UNMIK should hand over its executive functions to the Kosovo government and its monitoring ones to a new international

body (the 'Kosovo Monitoring Mission'). The continuing long-term role of KFOR, or a successor mission, should be confirmed by an accord agreed between NATO and Kosovo's government.

(b) To the extent this has not already been achieved by Serbian agreement or Security Council resolution, Kosovo's de jure sovereignty should be recognised by the international community, or such member states (including the U.S. and EU members) as are prepared to do so.

Pristina/Belgrade/Brussels, 24 January 2005

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