

HEARING ON
POLITICAL TURMOIL IN SERBIA

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BEFORE THE
COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1996

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Commission met, pursuant to adjournment, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, the Honorable Christopher H. Smith, Chairman of the Commission, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN

Mr. Smith. The Helsinki Commission will come to order. Good morning.

This morning's hearing focuses on the recent developments in Serbia and what the opposition forces in Serbia have to say about the republic's future. As we all know from the press daily, the streets of Belgrade have been filled with tenacious and courageous protesters, sometimes numbering over 100,000. Other Serbian cities have also experienced the protests. Milosevic and his government are unwilling to accept the results of the November municipal election in which the ruling Socialist Party and its allies lost major city governments to a coalition of opposition parties known as Zajedno.

Press coverage may give the wrong impression, and our panelists may want to comment on this, but it seems as if these demonstrations are more than just about the municipal election results. The mass protests show the frustration among the population, as a whole, about the poor economic situation, about the restrictions on their human rights, and about the lack of confidence they have that their children will have a democratic and prosperous future. The blame rests on the regime in Belgrade led by President Milosevic that has claimed to represent the interests of Serbs everywhere, but really is interested in nothing more than maintaining and building the reins of power.

Beyond the popular protest, the ability of the opposition coalition to win in municipal elections has sparked hope that alternatives to the current regime can garner support. Attempts since 1990 to change political power through the ballot box has failed. The opposition's unity, though, is fragile. The unity has been forged by necessity between genuine democrats on the one hand and nationalists on the other.

I want to stress my view that being an anti-Communist does not automatically make one a democrat. Those opposed to Milosevic and his regime are not champions of a democratic Serbia if they criticize his failure to carve out a greater Serbia, if they associate with persons indicted for war crimes, and if they express intolerance and prejudice against non-Serbs, rather than proposed solutions to differences regarding regional and ethnic questions in Serbia.

The Helsinki Commission, therefore, has a new sense of optimism but some lingering doubts about Serbia's political future. It also has a real concern that the current regime will at some point impose a major crackdown if it feels its power is threatened. If force and increasing repression is used against those struggling to bring change to Serbia, this Commission, and, I am sure, other members of Congress do more than merely condemn it. Beyond opposing such a possibility, the United States needs to build policies that will encourage democratic development in Serbia.

As was indicated in a Commission staff report earlier this year, there are questions regarding the wisdom of relying so heavily on Milosevic to implement the Dayton Accords. There are also questions regarding how best to support independent media, nongovernmental organizations, and other democratic forces in the country.

Three witnesses have recently arrived from Serbia. Each is personally engaged in different components of the opposition.

We have Miodrag Perisic, a co-founder and vice president of the Democratic Party, the first political opposition party in Serbia. Mr. Perisic has been a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and has lectured at universities throughout the United States.

Branislav Canak is president of Independents, a confederation of independent trade unions which have sought to organize workers throughout Serbia. Formerly a broadcast journalist, Mr. Canak is also founder and chairman of the Independent Union of Journalists. He received the 1995 George Meany Award for Human Rights from the AFL CIO.

Veran Matic is editor-in-chief of B92, the independent radio station in Belgrade. Despite several general limits and recent threats to his broadcasting ability, B92 has been one of the few channels known for its expression of independent views. Quite frankly, it has been effective in its work.

Finally, we have an analyst, Obrad Kesic, a program specialist for the Professional Media Program at the International Research and Exchanges Board. He is responsible for programs in Balkan countries and serves as an adviser on Balkan affairs at various U.S. and international organizations. Mr. Kesic will put the comments of the others in a broader context of Serbia's potential political development and suggest U.S. and international policy responses.

I'd like to thank our very distinguished panel for taking the time out of their very busy schedules, especially with events being so active in Serbia. I look forward, and the Commission looks forward, to hearing their testimony.

Mr. Perisic, if you could begin.

STATEMENT OF MIODRAG PERISIC

Mr. Perisic. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, let me express my gratitude for having the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. As an elected representative back in my country, I am honored to speak in the House of Representatives of the United States of America, hoping that my nation in the future will achieve high standards of democracy.

I'm coming from a proud, small nation, which has played an important role in the history of Europe at great sacrifice for itself. I belong to a people that has a long-standing friendship with the United States of

America, which fought on the same side of America in two world wars and has more than 110 years' diplomatic relationship with your country. We are still honoring our parents and our grandparents who risked and lost their lives in saving more than 500 American aviators from the Nazis.

Almost half of this century my nation suffered under the Communist rule. As a tragic legacy of the Communist rule, we had the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia and tragic civil war in Bosnia and Croatia. This butchery and bloody theater, if I may express myself like that, put Former Yugoslavia on the front pages of the international press and on the top headlines of TV networks. The outcome of this war is more or less known. There were no winners in that war, but only the tragic consequences. I think there came a time for healing the wounds and for organizing on each side reconciliation committees which can recognize its own war criminals and deliver them to justice.

But here I am, and I speak on completely different issues: democracy and freedom of the media in Serbia.

As you know, we had elections on the 3rd and 17th of November in Serbia. These elections we considered as a key political test showing whether peaceful and lawful change of power in Serbia is possible. It was the lower test task, because municipal governments by themselves do not have a great deal of authority. But by refusing to recognize defeat at the local elections in all major cities in Serbia, including Belgrade, Milosevic's regime has sent as clearly as possible a message both to the citizens of Serbia and to the international community.

At that time and just a few days before that, as you remember, there were some discussions in Brussels as to whether Serbia and Montenegro are coming back to the international community. They were talking about trade preferences for Serbia. Since Mr. Milosevic made frauds and manipulation into a power game during his elections, these discussions were frozen for half a year. So it was a clear choice that Mr. Milosevic had to make. It was the choice between Europe and the socialist rule in Belgrade and in other Serbian cities. He has chosen to keep, to preserve, the socialist rule in the local cities.

Coalition Together, which was formed first from the five parties—two small parties and three major parties in Serbia—now consists of three political parties, comprised by Serbian Renewal Movement, Democratic Party, and Civic Alliance of Serbia. The idea to bring the people out on the streets was the idea to defend the constitutional rights of the citizens and their free will. It was the idea to defend the institution of the elections itself.

As you all know, we are now protesting almost 25 days. It's 4 weeks of the protest and the regime of Mr. Milosevic is still deaf. We have a complete blockade of the political communications, and by that we have—there were tries to close the last remaining two free media: One was Radio Index, which is small media, and the famous B92, which became the hero of the citizens of Belgrade.

Political objections of the Coalition Together are economic, social and political reforms which will secure the rule of law, privatization, uncorrupted and inexpensive government, and full integration into the world economy and international institutions. So far we didn't reach our concrete goals. Our concrete goals were to recognize the real outcome of the elections of the 17th of November; second, to secure the full cooperation

of Mr. Milosevic's Serbian Government with a newly elected city government in so-called free cities, as we call them; and third, the freedom of the media.

We have now a regime which doesn't care for the warnings of the international community and which doesn't care for the voices of its citizens. So we came here to say that we are fully aware of the fact that if we do not have enough strength to persist and to oppose Mr. Milosevic, there will be no support from the international community. But I have to admit we cannot do that alone. We have very strong pressure of the international community on the Milosevic regime. But I also think that the citizens of Belgrade deserve not to reconsider imposing the sanctions against the people anymore. What we were suggesting is to consider personal sanctions against Mr. Milosevic and the very narrow circle of his supporters.

If I may comment on what is said in your introducing statement, Mr. Chairman, I have to say I'm completely convinced that I am right: On the streets of Belgrade and among the opposition leaders and among the opposition parties, the primary issues are democracy, very lofty values of the Western civilization, and economic reforms. There are no more nationalists on the streets of Belgrade. Of course, the political scene of Serbia is now very clean. From the left we have neo-Communists and neo-Titoists as we say; we have a political center in which is Coalition Together, consisting of three parties; and on the extreme right we have exclusive nationalists, which is Serbian Radical Party. Now we have more or less clean political single Serbia which was blurred during the war.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith. Thank you very much for your fine testimony.

I'd like Mr. Canak, if he would present your testimony at this point.

STATEMENT OF BRANISLAV CANAK

Mr. Canak. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, this is not the first time that I am here in this House, and I was always pleased to help present adequate information so that it is possible people in the House and in the administration of the United States of America could use in helping us to solve our problems.

Many people do forget how Milosevic has come to the power. There, right there, lies the key why all of that we have had in recent years have happened to us, both with this, what we are going through the last weeks. Milosevic has come to the power of organizing the party putsch in 1987, forced to do it, as he said, to stop liberal faction in the League of Communists of Serbia and announcing the showdown with what he has called anti-Yugoslav faction in the Federal party organization. That is his style of ruling ever after. Sorting that under the label "Communist paradigm," the opposition parties have thought that their anti-Communist contempt would be enough to open the way for the democratization of Serbia.

The second strategic mistake made by the Serbian opposition was that they have accepted the competition with Milosevic when he had, in ideological despair, stolen from the opposition their propulsive power based on national chauvinism and populism. It has brought us to the kind of paradoxical situation. The Communist captain has taken in his

hands the rudder of the Nationalistic ship and the opposition has fallen into the trap to challenge the captain. Who knows better the dark waters of hatred, him or the sailors?

So in the shadow of that competition, many important things have faded away, like for example the process of transformation of the society towards democratic state organization and market economy. Who cared for that, when the Serbian nation is surrounded by enemies from all sides?

Milosevic has used that, and, thanks to all major media, he has propagated that what he was doing is democracy and that we have had a market economy in Tito's time already, and all he, Milosevic, had to do was only to adjust it to the new circumstances. Then, from that tiny, democratic market-economy-oriented shop has come the first product, the war, one of the dirtiest wars in history, the war for the territories and against human beings, even those who had thought that they would have been saved because they were Serbs.

That explains why this war was marked with genocide, ethnic cleansing, why most of the victims were the civilians. In some cases people were forced to leave their homes with an acknowledgment or even direct involvement of their own national centers. The tiny shop continued to produce, always with the trademark of the extreme use of force, complete lack of humanity and highest possible level of Machiavellianism. The tiny shop's foreman was ready to advertise everything, even the products his shop never known before—peace, for example. But that was only when he has lost the market for his major product, the war.

Signing the Dayton peace agreement, Milosevic gave up engagement in Bosnia, but his shop is still based on the production of force. We in Serbia did not feel anything that Dayton peace agreement could have brought to Serbia as to one of the pact's signatories, except that Milosevic has exploited that fact to present himself as a saint who always was a peacemaker, only that nationalist Serbian opposition has pushed him into the war adventure. Of course, men get sick listening to someone shouting out peace as a battle cry.

Bearing the title of the key peace factor in the region is probably something that Milosevic couldn't expect, in his most optimistic dreams. But it didn't make him start dreaming of Serbia. If he was forced in Dayton to leave the principles of force in Bosnia as the only way to solve the national interest, nobody has asked so far and so seriously to do same at home. But could he be reliable for implementing the peace in Bosnia if he is not willing to do it in Serbia?

I do not think that peace in Bosnia has a chance without a fundamental democratization of all state parties to the agreement. Non-democratic regimes could always reach for the revival of the Bosnian crisis if they feel that they are facing problems at home. Of course, that imposes immediately one of the possible conclusions, that it is not good to disturb such regimes, especially not from inside. But I don't think that the Serbian opposition is disturbing regime largely because of the Dayton. Maybe they would have done earlier, but not after November 17th, after the second round of municipal elections. One could even say that some of the major opposition parties would have never stayed nationalistic if Milosevic had let them play the role that every opposition party more or less had in most of the societies created on the political ruins of the Berlin Wall.

Same goes for workers. The workers of Serbia have said they lost their basic role of measuring social threshold; that is, to limit all state aspirations exceeding democratic, economic, and social capacities. Captured ultimately before the war by enormous, well-planned and extremely well-executed nationalistic propaganda campaign, workers didn't have a minute to wake up from the 50 years' long sleep. They have not been educated to recognize their interest as workers and citizens, and that is why they have become so easy prey for nationalistic preachers, especially one of the preachers who was the head of the state and the Communist Party—that meant he was supposed to be always right. They had consciously traded their membership in the world of labor for the role of a simple subject of the fascist regime.

In this conversion of the workers to the servants and executors of the Nationalistic dreams, the major role has played as state-controlled trade union. They keep silent even today, as they do not belong to Serbia but to Milosevic himself, sharing the same silent distance from another Serbia coming its way.

The United Branch Trade Union Nezavisnost, Independents, were founded 5 years ago to search not only for the industrial democracy, but for the civil society in general. We were for the peace before anyone mentioned war, because we have already then seen happy faces of future warriors. We have lost almost two-thirds of our initial membership as a price that we were happy to pay, struggling for peace, bread, and democracy.

There are more people waiting for a job than those working in Serbia. One employed earns an average of \$150, and seven others are afraid if he loses the job, because their scholarships, pensions, and social benefits depend on him. We have more employed in the gray economy and on the black markets than in the factories. That is why we say no to the war, to terror in Kosovo, to the violation of human rights, trade union rights, and freedoms, to the destruction of the major human civilization's achievement, a possibility to live together.

We say yes to changes, and that is what was our slogan in the eve of the first round of the elections. We asked our members, their families, and friends to cast their votes, whoever they think might bring us the change. They did it, and now for the second round, it was clear that it could be only Coalition Zajedno and Coalition Vojvodina. Now we are together with students every day on the streets of the major cities of Serbia, not supporting these two coalitions, but doing something that we think we do together with them—creating a new Serbia.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith. Mr. Canak, thank you for your fine testimony.

Mr. Matic.

STATEMENT OF VERAN MATIC

Ms. Levi. My dear sirs, Mr. Matic prepared the testimony in English, which I will read to you. Later he will answer your questions, and I'll interpret for him. Thank you.

Free Media in Serbia—The Past and the Future.

It is not well known that during the last 5 years there was a strong democratic and antiwar movement in Serbia. Despite its existence and potential importance, it was often ignored by the West. It is sufficient to recall the number of people who refused to serve in the army and fight in the war. Several hundred thousand young people left the country

rather than having to participate in a war in which they did not approve. There were dozens of independent media that operated without any international support. There were also numerous pro-democracy and antiwar demonstrations in 1991 and 1992 and 1993. All these movements and the media survived with minimal or even without any support from the West.

Then, at the end of 1995, the Dayton peace agreement was signed. It is often said that truth is the first victim of war. This was the case in the wars of the Yugoslav succession as well. But in addition, the truth was, as it were, killed by the peace, too.

Soon after the Dayton agreements were signed, Milosevic decided to suppress further the independent media. Three local radio stations were taken over by the government in Serbia and Montenegro; the only independent TV was taken over as well. Western reaction was practically non-existent. Television transmission of the parliamentary proceedings, in existence since 1991, was discontinued. The opposition parties, deprived of the free media and unable to have their views known through the TV transmission of the parliamentary proceedings, were deprived of all means of communication with the public. They decided to leave the parliament. The parliamentary life practically ceased to exist.

Then the Federal and local elections took place. In conditions where the main role of the media was to vilify the opposition, and when the opposition and independent sector had to resort to an almost 19th century type of door-to-door campaigning, Milosevic's party won the Federal election. Barely any foreign observers were present. Then, unexpectedly, both by the regime and the international community, the opposition succeeded, in the most uneven of conditions, to win the local elections in key cities that account for three-quarters of the Serbian population, including Belgrade. Faced with such a defeat, the regime reacted nervously and openly falsified the results.

This led to popular anger across Serbia, regardless of social class, age, education, et cetera. Again, there was no reaction of the Western media and governments during the first week of the demonstrations. Only when it became clear how broadly based the demonstrations were and that they would not end quickly and when Milosevic resorted to open threats of violent suppression and banning of the remaining free media, including B92, foreign public opinion took notice. It then became clear that the Western policy until then had no concern for democracy as such but cared only for the apparent stability in the Balkans. But the autocrats who were responsible for the war in the first place can guarantee stability only in the very short run, never a real stability.

Only democratic societies can guarantee stability and ensure peace in the long run. Only democratic societies can strive for compromise and fit into the international scene. Such societies cannot be developed within authoritarian regimes without strong support by the democratic world, by the nongovernmental and international organizations whose role is to help democracy. No democratic process can be realized without independent professional media. The media represent the oxygen needed for normal political discourse in life. Some of them, like B92, have wider influence and importance because they represent almost social movements. We at the B92 have a wide array of activities: publishing, production of movies and theater pieces, exhibitions. B92 is particularly active in the development of the new forms of communica-

tions, like the Internet, that allows for an almost instantaneous transmission of information and for contacts between various people who might not have ever heard of each other.

It is only thanks to the Internet that the news that our radio was banned could be spread far beyond the borders of Yugoslavia and that international public opinion could speedily influence the authorities to change their decision. Information sped by the Internet regarding the demonstration also increased world awareness of what was going on. I remember about a year ago when we asked for support to develop our access to Internet, we were told that the technology was too sophisticated for our radio.

For a number of years already, the United States has has no programs to help the development of free media in Serbia. In 1996 we received no support at all from the European Union either. Our development depends on the actions undertaken from time to time by various institutions. There's no stable support at all. More stable forms of cooperation and support are indispensable for the entire non-governmental sector, and particularly for the free media. Such stable programs of support can be more easily, and sometimes only, provided by the democratic governments and international organizations which anyway have similar programs in a number of other countries.

Currently, when the desire for democratic changes in Serbia is obvious, the priorities of the media support, in my opinion, are: first, to support the development of independent electronic media, particularly at the local level where the opposition has won the elections and formed its own city councils; two, to support the printed media for the development of their own print facilities; three, to help the spread of the Internet by allowing for greater communication capacity; four, to develop programs of journalists training in a country and abroad; five, to have the creation of an independent TV.

What is the rationale for such priorities? The local media have shown themselves extremely important in the recent elections. They have contributed to the better knowledge of the candidates, the views, and the alternatives. They allowed the most efficient form of change, from within. Among them, local radio stations have been the most important. It turned out that the local elections were often the battle for the control of the local media.

Now, we have the opportunity to use the opposition win—both in the cities where it was accepted by the government in a way it was overturned—to found and reinforce the role of the free radio stations. The printing capacity, and thus the reach of the printed media, is often controlled by the government through their control of the print shops, paper, unequal taxation, et cetera. The most efficient help would be to enable the free print media to have their own printing facilities.

The current Internet communication with the rest of the world is of low capacity and does not allow the entire independent sector to have full access. By increasing the Internet's capacity, it will become possible to exchange radio programs between the radio stations within Serbia and Montenegro and between them and the world. The Internet circumvents the state limit and control on the number and power of the transmitters.

Training must not be confined to narrow specialization of the journalists. The courses must be the means for a direct exchange of ideas, ways of learning how free journalism is practiced in democratic countries, what are the relations between journalists and various institutions, including the government.

The need for an independent TV is the most obvious. It is impossible to overestimate the role that television has in forming public opinion. Since it is an expensive project, the most that can be expected now is to support the project and to help bring together commercial producers.

The proposals, the possible projects seem to exist. The budgets, hopefully, do exist, too. What is needed is the good will to help. I hope your very presence here is an indication of such a good will, of which I'm very grateful. Veran Matic.

Thank you.

Mr. Smith. Thank you for reading that statement by Mr. Matic. That does give us some very tangible things to follow up on, so I do thank you for those suggestions.

I'd like to ask our final speaker, before we go to questions, Mr. Kesic, if you could make your presentation.

STATEMENT OF OBRAD KESIC

Mr. Kesic. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to address you regarding the growing crisis in Serbia. Before beginning, please allow me to state that the views that I express today are purely my own and in no way reflect the views of the International Research and Exchanges Board.

The blatant theft of the municipal elections in several Serbia cities, most notably in Belgrade and Nis, has shown to the world the true nature of Serbia's Government, its president Slobodan Milosevic, and his ruling Socialist Party. Despite Mr. Milosevic's best attempt to portray himself as a forward-looking statesman and political leader, his actions since November 17th reveal him as an authoritarian dictator unwilling to heed the will of his people.

The popular daily demonstrations in Belgrade and several other cities throughout Serbia signal that the patience of the Serbian people for a government that is unaccountable and arrogant in its actions is quickly drawing to an end. In order to understand the situation now unfolding in Serbia, it is important to understand the nature of these popular demonstrations and the political developments within Serbia itself.

These demonstrations should not be seen as popular support for the Zajedno coalition or any of its individual members. Instead, they should be seen as an expression of deep frustration and hostility against the Milosevic regime. The theft of the elections and the arrogant behavior of the Socialist Party have served as the focal point for people who are fed up with the corruption in confidence and arrogance of a government whose policies have reduced their incomes to less than one-tenth of what they were in 1989. But that has also created a new class of wealthy ministers and government officials.

The depth of this popular discontent ensures that regardless of how this current crisis is revolved, Mr. Milosevic's absolute hold on power has been broken. Unless Mr. Milosevic makes a dramatic turnaround, recognizes the legitimate results of the November elections, allows the development of an independent media, punishes those officials respon-

sible for the grossest abuses of the law and human rights of his citizens, and begins to move toward a free market economy based on privatization, then it will only be a question of time before his rule comes to an end. This end is sure to come because of several main factors.

One, a growing and bitter rift within his own party that will lead to purges and to the defection of a number of his own party members. Unlike in previous crises where Milosevic has been able to play one wing off of the other—the moderates against the leftists, the Nationalists against the antiwar movement—this time he has fully positioned himself with the radical left of the Sociality Party of Serbia, the SPS. In doing so, he is increasingly alienating the bedrock of his political support in the party center. It was this support and his ability to portray the SPS as a centrist party, a moderate choice between two extremes of left and right as represented by the opposition, that helped him maintain his support among some of the Serbian people. His alliance with the Yugoslav United Left, YUL, the neo-Communist party of his wife, Mira Markovic, and the erosion of the center within his own party, have firmly pushed him to the extreme left, where he has ideologically been the entire time of his rule.

This, coupled with the success of Zajedno in representing itself as the new center, has succeeded in realigning Serbia's political landscape. I should add, from this point on things will never be the same in respect to that landscape.

Secondly, the promised economic boom following the lifting of international sanctions has failed to materialize, leaving many Serbs who were willing to support Milosevic a year ago on the promise of economic recovery with a sense of deep frustration and anger over their own worsening economic conditions.

Without the international sanctions, the socialists' mismanagement of the economy, the government's refusal to privatize and the corruption of its leadership are the main causes of Serbia's economic stagnation and are now obvious even to the simplest peasant. Serbia's workers and peasants have tolerated many hardships over the past 5 years and have given the socialist regime a free pass up until recently. The November municipal elections' actual results show that the socialist regime will never again be able to pass the buck for their mismanagement of the economy.

Thirdly, regardless of what happens in Belgrade and Nis, the loss of other municipal councils will undermine Milosevic's political machine. New private broadcast and print media will spring up in these municipalities, breaking the regime's control over the flow of information. The independent municipalities will be able to form a strong association and develop a joint approach in their battle against the socialist-run central government.

The key to the success of the opposition is how well they can organize at the grassroots level and how well they can develop successful economic and social recovery programs at the local level. Even small improvements in everyday life such as the paving of roads and repair of schools or hospitals will go a long way in cementing support for the new governments. In order to be able to afford these services, the new governments must be creative in their dealings with the local and international business communities in order to generate much-needed revenue at the local level.

Fourthly, Milosevic's certainty in the loyalty of his security forces has been shaken. The Yugoslav army, the VJ, has openly stated that it will not become involved in this crisis and will remain in its barracks. Privately, many of the officers of the high command of the Yugoslav army have expressed support for the demonstrations and sympathy for the democratic transition of Serbian society.

His enormous police force, over 100,000 strong, remains his only hope. However, at the local level, the police in many cities and towns have shown sympathy, and in a few cases open support, for the demonstrations. His special police has become his only usable enforcer and has been responsible for the brutal beatings of several students and demonstrators.

The United States and Europe must realize that the corner has been turned in Serbia. There is an unstoppable movement for democracy gripping the country, and Milosevic can no longer be counted on to deliver the compromises the international community seeks. The long-term interest of the United States and Europe is for a peaceful, stable and economically prosperous Balkans. This can only be achieved with a democratic Serbia, and the events over the past months have shown that a democratic Serbia cannot emerge under the rule of Mr. Milosevic.

In order to encourage the peaceful resolution of the present crisis and ensure the democratic development of Serbia, the United States should, among other things, consider the following options. One, continue to pressure Mr. Milosevic and his regime by maintaining the diplomatic isolation by recalling our representative, Mr. Miles, for consultations, and encouraging our European allies to do the same with their Ambassadors. We should continue to block Yugoslavia's participation in regional and international economic and political meetings until the government indicates a willingness to compromise with the opposition. Furthermore, we should look into the possibility of introducing targeted economic sanctions against Serbia's ruling elite and their families.

Secondly, we should include Serbia's media and nongovernmental organizations in all programs of assistance currently being funded by the U.S. Government in the region. Third, we should further our contacts with the democratic opposition within Serbia. Fourthly and finally, we should increase humanitarian assistance to Serbian refugees from Bosnia and Croatia. This would reduce an additional burden on the municipal governments and would assist them in building constituencies at the local level. The United States should not seek to reinstate economic sanctions, as this would only assist the Milosevic regime in once again painting the international community and the opposition as the cause of all of Serbia's problems.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith. Thank you very much, Mr. Kesic. Let me—both Mr. Perisic and Mr. Kesic, both of you talked about targeted sanctions on personal assets of Milosevic and other members of the regime. What specifically do you have in mind in terms of those sanctions specifically?

Mr. Perisic. Should I go first?

Mr. Kesic. Yeah.

Mr. Perisic. It's well-known in Serbia, and Belgrade specifically, that there are many assets, private assets, of certain families on Cyprus, in Cyprus banks. Also it's well-known that Mr. Milosevic bought a yacht, Lear jet, and rented a villa in Athens and on Cyprus. It was not possible to do with his average salary of the president of Serbia, so it can be the

object of the investigation. Also I think that what is to be done to investigate and interrogate the business and financial operations of Beobanka in Cyprus. It's very concrete.

Mr. Kesic. Mr. Chairman, you may be familiar that during the time of the international sanctions, there was a list published of individuals from Serbia and Montenegro who were being targeted for individual sanctions. I believe strongly that this list should be once again re-examined, looking at Mr. Milosevic, his family, the ruling elite within Serbia, to amend the list and then to continue the legislation that was in effect during the time of this international sanction.

One of the things that could be done is to look at the ministers around Mr. Milosevic. Most of those ministers also are the heads of businesses, and then to target those businesses, because the accounts of those businesses more or less have become personal accounts for his ministers.

Mr. Smith. I think that's an excellent idea and needs to be followed up on rather than an overlay of additional sanctions, which, as you pointed out, could end up actually benefiting Milosevic and swinging the pendulum away from the democratic parties back to his Socialist party. Since the elections were concurrent, and at the Federal level, his party did well, how do you account for that? Was this a surprise to everyone that at the municipal level the opposition was able to win so decisively when, as you pointed out—Mr. Matic, I think you made this point—that there was very little help coming from the outside? How do you explain it, the same day, same election, people splitting their ticket in such a way?

Mr. Perisic. I am member of Federal parliament. If you allow me, I'll answer you.

Mr. Smith. Please do.

Mr. Perisic. If we are talking in figures, Mr. Milosevic for last 4 years is ruling on the basis of 28 or 30 percent of the votes. I was leading the list of the Coalition Together in the region of new Belgrade, which is one of the biggest municipal communities in Serbia. I had to get more than 100,000 votes to get two seats in the parliament. But Mr. Milosevic's party, by the distribution of the electoral districts, could win, for example, five seats in Kosovo region in patch electoral unit by 2,000 votes.

So it was also manipulation with the electoral districts, and that's how he won this election. Also, since Mr. Milosevic is violating Yugoslav constitution, which is supposed that prime minister has to take care about the foreign policy, nobody really cares in Yugoslavia about the Federal parliament and Federal state. There was real interest to vote where the real life is, where the real problems are, communal problems, corruption of the local city councils. So that's why the broad dissatisfaction with Mr. Milosevic rule in the major Serbian cities gave—it was the decisive factor to gain victory for the coalition together.

Mr. Kesic. If I could add just one thing. In late September, I was in Serbia and I traveled among the cities and towns that I visited. I also traveled to several villages. In two villages in particular, in Lipa, which is near Smederevo and Osipaonica, one of the things that struck me at that time was that there was popular discontent brewing even amongst the peasants, who had been a pillar of Milosevic's support.

At that time the peasants that I spoke with raised an issue that I think still remains to be answered, and that was they didn't feel that the opposition parties could represent their interests effectively. How-

ever, they did like the local individuals associated with those parties much more than the socialists who had been ruling those local communities.

So in many ways this was a vote of protest, a vote against the ruling local governments and the corrupt individuals. They are very corrupt at the local levels. So that partially helps to answer why there were two different types of votes, one on the Federal level, where the voters didn't think that the opposition really could do anything effectively, or even if they could win a majority, if it would make any difference at all, and then on the local level, where people began to vote their personal feelings.

Mr. Smith. Let me ask—we've seen press reports that Dejan Bulatovic, a student, and Gojko Baletic, an actor, were detained and beaten by police for their involvement in a protest. Could any of the panelists shed light on what has happened to those two individuals and whether or not others have been mistreated by Milosevic's police?

Mr. Perisic. Well, I'm familiar with the case of young student Bulatovic. The students of the department of arts made a puppet of Mr. Milosevic and they showed the puppets on the demonstrations, and young Bulatovic student was carrying this puppet of Mr. Milosevic, the caricature puppet. After the people were going home, dismissing of the protest, he was taken by the special forces of the police, taken to municipal jail where he was beaten by the special forces police. He was really terribly beaten. He was taken naked and he was beaten on the head. His nose was broken and he was refused medical attention. The day after, when the students surrounded the city jail and city police headquarters, they allowed him to go to the hospital.

The case of the actor, Baletic, I heard this morning by the phone from Belgrade. He was terribly beaten but he was released after 2 hours in detention, and he came immediately to the party headquarters, where he showed his bruises. He didn't know to explain, so far as I know, what happened to him. He was just taken from the marching rally.

Mr. Smith. Is Mr. Bulatovic still under detention even though he's in the—

Mr. Perisic. He's in a hospital.

Mr. Smith. He's in the hospital. But still under guard?

Mr. Perisic. Yes, he's still under guard. He was sentenced for 30 days to jail.

Mr. Smith. Have there been any others that we know of?

Mr. Kesic. There have been several cases reported in Nis, in the first days of the demonstration, before the demonstrations began. I'm not—at this point I don't remember the name of the individual, but there was a serious beating and arrest of a union leader, Stolic.

Mr. Perisic. It was before the elections.

Mr. Kesic. That was before the elections. So there's been a series of beatings. To the best of my own ability, based on the information obtained through telephone conversations, what I've been able to tell is that these have been random and they've been designed to at least instill fear in the demonstrators, to try to get them to think about what could happen to them individually. So this is more of a warning at this point, but it is something that should be definitely noted in the international community.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] We should add to this list Radio Boom93, which is in Pozarevac, which is the native city of Mr. Milosevic. They're still not allowed to work, and their transmission has been cut off still.

Mr. Smith. Let me ask you a general question. Many of us were troubled when the administration, in crafting the Dayton accords, put so much reliance on Milosevic, one of the last remaining Stalinist dictators in Europe. The feeling among many of us was, "How trustworthy can he be?"

I'll never forget my first encounter with him when the war first broke out against Croatia. I had just been with another member of Congress to Vukovar, which was then under siege. MiGs were flying overhead. Tanks encircled Vukovar. When we met the next day in Belgrade with Milosevic, he denied that there was any kind of Federal involvement. No MiGs were flying. I saw them with my own eyes, so he lied really, frankly, right to our faces, which you've probably become accustomed to.

But now we have the U.S. States Government and the western allies putting their eggs in that basket of he upholding his word on the Dayton accords. Do you believe, in terms of peace, if the alliance, all of those who believe in peace, would be better off if the Dayton accords and the peace process were in the hands of the opposition, or Milosevic, who again has a very tarnished track record?

Mr. Kesic. If I may—

Mr. Smith. Yes.

Mr. Kesic.—I think that when we talk about the responsibility and the obligations under any peace agreement, including the Dayton agreement, it's important the primary responsibility and obligation rest with the parties who are involved primarily in the conflict. This includes a core of the three communities within Bosnia and then as well as Serbia and Croatia. Serbia and Croatia have to be pressured to honor their obligations under the Dayton agreement.

However, the United States, in relying on Mr. Milosevic to deliver the Bosnian Serbs, has made a terrible mistake. Mr. Milosevic's influence on the Bosnian Serbs is questionable. Mrs. Plavsic just yesterday, in a statement, indicated her support for the demonstrations in Belgrade and indicated that if the international community thinks that it is going to obtain any concessions from the Bosnian Serbs by continuing its support for Mr. Milosevic, it is mistaken; that the Bosnian Serbs have elected their representatives, for better or for worse, that those representatives have been recognized by the international community, and they will decide or make any decisions that need to be made in negotiations with that community.

She herself and the other Bosnian Serb leadership have indicated that they accept the responsibility under the Dayton accords and that there is no longer a role for Mr. Milosevic to play. Added to that is Milosevic's own desire to rid himself of the Bosnian problem and question. This has been a series of headaches for him. After the elections, in which he tried to manipulate by funneling in money and support to the Socialists within the Republika Srpska, it was clear that he had lost his patience and that he had tried to distance himself from all questions concerning Bosnia and the future of Bosnia.

Mr. Perisic. Sir, if I may add, after the elections in Bosnia, I think that there is constituency and legitimacy on the side of the Bosnian Serbs who were elected when that election was monitored by the international community. So I think that the international community has to talk to them. Also, we are stressing—our coalition and the new political forces in Serbia are stressing the close link between the implementation of Dayton agreement, stabilization on the whole region in Balkans, and its views in democracy on all these sides.

We do think that there is no real implementation of Dayton agreement, including the respect of the human rights and democracy and the freedom of the media, without new faces on the political scene, which means we have to see the back of the people who started the war, and then that they are trying now to implement without respecting a real part of the accord, which is legitimate part of the Dayton accord concerning human rights, democracy, and freedom of the media and expression of the will and speech.

So it's crucial importance to understand that only persons who really understand the new language of democracy and the language of the respecting of human rights, they can implement the Dayton agreement.

Mr. Smith. Let me ask a question regarding—you said earlier that one-tenth of the salary going back to 1989 is basically what many workers are receiving. I was wondering, Mr. Canak, whether or not you're having more success nowadays in inviting people to be unionized than previously. Is Milosevic's ability to provide goodies and salary increases perhaps or other kinds of helps, is there kind of—is there more of a trend toward people being organized in labor?

Mr. Canak. Well, I can tell you that the motivation is highest ever, but we still face the problem that we were having on the very first day. That's the collapse of Serbian economy started before the war and before the international sanctions. We have, as I said in this paper, we have more people on the streets smuggling gasoline, smuggling cigarettes, than working in the factories. So you cannot get in touch with these people because they're not in the factories. They're not in a group. Another thing is that they make more money than they would usually make in the factory.

So I'll give you one example of how serious is the problem. When we tried to organize a seminar for them, it was in 1993 when there was hyperinflation. Each of them, they were asking us to pay them 100 German marks a day for the seminar because they said that much they would lose for each day of the seminar not smuggling the cigarettes from Macedonia. They had to make it for the survival of their families, you know.

Once we have economy starting back to work in normal conditions—and that will never happen until Milosevic is in the seat, the presidency—then we can develop that dimensions totally, trade unionist dimensions. Now we have a more civic dimension in our trade union. I think we maintain only 15 percent of normal trade union activities. The rest is education of not only our members but even their families about what is democracy, what nationalism could cause, like the war we were witnessing all these years.

So we're trying to wake up the people, not only to recognize who is Milosevic and what he has brought to the Nation, but also to wake up them to look back what the Communist regime made—how the Communist regime made them become victims of ignorance of major achieve-

ments of civilization. So this is a long, long trip. That's why we depend a lot on you as a nation with a brilliant tradition of democracy, and on Western Europe. That's why I'm again pleased to be here and to have the pleasure and opportunity to talk to you.

Mr. Smith. Thank you very much. Mr. Matic, could you tell us what kind of range, what kind of broadcasting range B92 has? During the height of the war, what was the reaction and the support level of the average Serb for the war? Because obviously they were being fed propaganda day in and day out. It was mentioned earlier in testimony that hundreds of thousands of people refused to serve in the military because they felt it was an unjust aggression. I wonder if you can shed light on the knowledge level of the average Serb.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] It covers, it could be said, 80 percent of Belgrade territory, Radio B92. However, there is an association of local independent radio stations, and there were six before Dayton and now there are only three. In the meantime, the other three were taken over by the state. Therefore, they're transmitting parts of our program.

In the last few months, we're using Internet widely to widen the territory where we could be transmitted. One of my colleagues, who is a journalist for the weekly Vreme, says that a monument should be raised in Belgrade, monument for deserters. The time when you were visiting Vukovar, many units were coming back, not willing to participate in the war. Three hundred to four hundred thousand young people left Yugoslavia, not wanting to participate in the war.

We now have many problems because of that, because we need those people in the process of reconstruction of democracy. But that helped regime in '91 and '92 feel insecure about their policy. Independent media have a lot of merit in this situation. That's why local media is so important, looking at the results of the local elections.

We have to provide democracy, to recreate democracy from within. People in small communities have to feel the need for democracy to provide democracy. The same thing with the peace; peace has to be the wish of everybody. Young people have no future perspective in Serbia nowadays. The only perspective is going abroad, leaving Yugoslavia. The whole independent sector in Yugoslavia works on that, in Serbia works on that, to provide the conditions for those people to stay in Serbia, and to become real creators of democracy, of democratic future.

Mr. Smith. Just let me ask you a follow-up. Of the 300,000 to 400,000 people that have fled, and maybe others, if they were to come back, what would be their fate—some, all? Would they be—how would Milosevic's regime treat them? Where would they go?

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] At this point, it's no danger that they be persecuted by the regime, although there's no law about amnesty. What discourages people to come back is the extremely bad economic situation. In any case, their presence would contribute greatly to the reconstruction of Serbia. The majority of them are not nationalists, and they are in contact with the emigres from Bosnia and Croatia. They will be the ones to establish new contacts between new states.

The fact that they spend several years in foreign countries and they have the flavor of democracy could also help. That's why Milosevic is trying to discourage them from coming back.

Mr. Smith. Before he left—as a matter of fact, it might have been right as he was leaving—Lawrence Eagleburger, the former secretary of state, branded some of the people in the Balkans, including Milosevic, as war criminals or suspected war criminals. Thus far, there seems to be absolutely no move by the International War Crimes Tribunal to focus on Milosevic for his part in conceiving and prosecuting this war or slaughter. I wonder if you could give us, the Congress, some feedback as to how the Serb people feel when they see the United States, not just in Serbia but also in other parts of the world, working side by side with dictatorships.

It probably has not escaped your notice that this week General Chi, who is the Beijing butcher, the butcher of Beijing, who cracked down on the Tiananmen Square dissidents and those whose only hope was for democracy, and like the person who carried that effigy of Milosevic in prison garb, people who carried around the Statue of Liberty were beaten and hurt, and in some cases killed, he has gotten the red-carpet treatment by the Clinton administration, a 19-gun salute, which I think is shameless.

This is the man who is directly responsible for thousands of people dying and for putting and being part of a dictatorship that has put thousands of true democrats, small 'd', people who believe in democracy and human rights like you do, into the laogai or the prison camps in the People's Republic of China. He is being feted now by the Clinton administration.

The people of Serbia see that. They saw also when Warren Christopher visited Serbia and, for whatever reason, did not meet with the opposition to find out what was on their mind and to show some solidarity with the democratic process. What kind of message does that send to the people who are putting their lives literally on the line for their beliefs? To that student, that actor and you, who are out there fighting for democracy and freedom?

Mr. Canak. I can tell you that we feel betrayed. We feel we wasted our lives for principles that somebody tells us he or she recognizes; but the facts presented to us show that actually they really don't recognize those principles, they don't see our deeds as important as some other interests are important for the country. I think both interests could be fulfilled.

I think in return, you should never barter with democratic principles. It doesn't matter how much you need something. We all felt betrayed back in Serbia. We've seen Milosevic in London, in Geneva, and in Paris, warmly welcomed by the U.S. and West European leaders. We understand the European and U.S. interest in stopping the war at that time in Croatia and, after that, in Bosnia. But we never understood the readiness to pay such a steep price.

If you give up something very valuable to stop something which is also valuable, you're down to zero actually: you sacrifice democracy to stop the war. That means you will never stop the war, for you have sacrificed democracy. That's why we always suspect that too many preconditions were given to Mr. Milosevic and other dictators around the world. But they all served the interests of those putting the preconditions on the table, not the people who are ruled by that dictator.

Why did you never include in your basket of preconditions something like, for example, human rights in Serbia—trade union rights and freedoms, and free media—just two things, two very important things—

and ask Mr. Milosevic, if he could give you exact and immediate answers to that? Because he can do that if he wants. It's not that he has to convene the parliament, to convene the government, to adopt new laws. He can do that tomorrow morning if he wants. So you can see immediately what cooperation you can expect from that man. It's simple—human rights and freedom of media, nothing else. Thank you.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] As different as possible, we saw 10 days ago with our radio station. We just needed to organize several hours of very broad media campaign, and Deutsche Welag, Voice of America took part in that—a number of smaller media and journalists as well. After them, politicians came by. The radio was cut off only for 51 hours. So if we all keep the universal principles and if we stand together, we can very easily win.

Mr. Kesic. Mr. Chairman, as an American, I'm deeply concerned about the message that we send to the international community. To give you an example, this summer I was in Albania on an official visit and meeting—this was after the elections in Albania—meeting with one of the new members of parliament from the democratic party there. We were talking about the accusations that the election was not free and fair.

The new parliamentarian looked at me and said, "Why are you Americans so concerned about this? Whenever you have a choice between democracy and stability, you choose stability." I think we've been sending out that message for many years. Somewhere along the line we have to change that and show that we stand fully behind democracy, because only in doing so will we have that stability that we seek.

Mr. Perisic. If I may, Mr. Chairman, you had started to speak about what has become a big issue: We see from time to time the relationship between pragmatic administrative policies and reaching short-term goals such as peace in the Balkans. But there is also the big issue, as you said, concerning war criminals and the standards of the prosecutor of the International War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague. That means there is no possibility to reward somebody who cooperated, for example, during the Dayton agreement, and to punish somebody who did not cooperate during the Dayton agreement. If someone is a real war criminal, he must face justice. This is one issue.

The second is if we are talking about the lofty principles of democracy in Serbia, in the Balkans, in this region, there is a very close link between stability and democracy. The implementation of democracy means that there will be an open dialog to decrease the tensions of the ethnic groups there; it means also that there must be a the network of democratic institutions to help mediate every open question there is. Instead, if we are working through dictators and tribal chiefs, perhaps we can reach short-term stability, but we cannot reach long-term stability and democracy in the region. Thank you.

Mr. Smith. Thank you. Mr. Matic, let me ask you, what has been the impact, if any, of the freedom broadcasts coming from the United States and also the informational broadcasts like the BBC? Anyone else who would like to answer that.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] Are you referring to Serbian stations?

Mr. Smith. No, I'm talking about freedom broadcasts like Voice of America, Radio Free Europe.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] It's still very significant. But they will be fully efficient only if they're done in cooperation with the local independent media. The majority of the listeners are listening to the FM station. So our radio station is re-emitting programs of Radio Free Europe and Voice of America and BBC. That gives those programs a chance to have much larger audience, in other words. Radio Boom93 from Pozarevac, to which I referred earlier, also did the same thing when they were broadcasting. That was one major reason for it to be cut off. So my message is that it's very important that these programs should be done in cooperation with the local independent media.

Mr. Smith. Let me ask you, if Milosevic were to crack down further, over and above some of the beatings that he's initiated through his secret police, what should be the response of the international community? Because I know within the Congress there would be no division whatsoever among Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives or moderates. It would be one of outrage. We would be demanding, I know, that the international community take swift and decisive action, perhaps along the lines of what was mentioned earlier with targeted sanctions against individuals and further isolation for this regime. Perhaps the international tribunal could open a case, finally, against Mr. Milosevic, now having probably right in front of the TV cameras more evidence of violence. What message should we be sending? Zero tolerance? Have we sent that message so far? When I say us, the United States, Britain, France, other nations. Have we sent that?

Mr. Perisic. As far as I know, Mr. Milosevic was warned in London, during the London conference, through his foreign minister, Mr. Milutinovic, that the United States would not judge him according to his promises but his to the actions. So he got the warning. What he's trying now to do, he will not commit major crackdown as you say, but he's trying to bite the group of demonstrations by taking individuals, trying through the individuals to frighten the group, in which he did not succeed so far. As we can see, the people are determined to fight for their rights.

But the main message so far is that the U.S. administration can publicly say that they are not recognizing the third round of elections in which Mr. Milosevic tried to gain the results of his fraudulent actions in the second round as the U.S. administration did in Belarus, saying that they are not recognizing the referendum. So it is a very strong message not to recognize the third round of the elections organized by Mr. Milosevic—so he can see that there will be no more dialog with him.

Mr. Canak. I would say that most people think that Mr. Milosevic was always something what's happening back home, you know. He could play games with the United States and Europe. He could play games with Bosnian and Croatian Serbs and Tudjman and the rest of the people. But he was never able to play games with his own people, his own nation. He was most afraid of from what we democratic forces in Serbia are able to do. So, if so far you support democratic forces in Serbia, of that much you can send him a very precise warning regarding what side you are on. I think that he started to lose his final battle. He was not expecting such results as he got: that is, serious turmoil within the ranks of his party. That will finish up. I don't know when;

probably next year, maybe the first half of the year. But as any wounded beast, he might be every dangerous. At that time you must find a way to be present and help us directly. Thank you.

Mr. Kesic. I'd like to add that so far the administration has been very consistent in its message that violence will not be tolerated. Just yesterday we saw that Secretary of State Christopher, as well as several other members of the administration, sent messages along these lines. I think that the administration was slow to get started, but since it has diverted its attention to what's happening within Serbia, has portrayed a consistent message, one that Mr. Milosevic is taking heed of. I think that the Europeans are very consistent in the message that they've been sending.

One of the things that should be done, and unfortunately has so far only been done in a token fashion, is that the president, as the leader in the international community, who is looked to establish leadership, should make a statement concerning the situation in Serbia. He mentioned it the other night in a press conference in response to a question that a reporter asked, but he has to also get involved personally and make a statement.

Mr. Perisic. Well, let me add for the sake of justice, Mr. Chairman, that the United States of America, both the administration and the Congress and the representatives in Congress, did the best comparing to Western Europe and European Union. First of all, during the journey of President Clinton, there was a very clear message from the spokesperson from the State Department. Then we had—it was a private visit, but we had four members of Congress. When they showed up at the fourth floor window, where we stand, make our speeches in addressing the demonstrators, everybody was shouting "USA." It was a very clear message given by your colleagues from the Congress and also very consistent and continuing messages from the administration.

Mr. Smith. That underscores—and I think this is important to say—the solidarity that we feel with the Serbian people and their aspirations for democracy, but not with the current dictatorship that is in power. So I'm glad those four members were there. When I saw that, I was very much heartened, as were other members, too, as to the response to them, because our fight and argument has not been with the Serbian people but with the government.

Let me ask just two final questions, and I'll yield to Mr. Hand. How long do you think the protests will go on? If the elections were to be recognized, would that be sufficient to end the protests and then move to the next level of activism? Or do you think these will go on indefinitely?

Mr. Canak. Let me say first, since I started on this republic in Belgrade. Today, the coalition together, the leaders of coalition, together, have the last chance. I think it's the last opportunity. They are meeting the Italian foreign minister, Mr. Dini, who is in Belgrade, and he's bringing European Union messages both to Milosevic and to the opposition. If it fails, I think we will have to redesign and redefine our process.

We have to spare the energy of again the Serbian people, because this moment will not repeat itself in the close future if we do not gain the momentum and if we do not use this energy. So what we can do is to form, which we did, the Association of the Free Cities in which opposition wants to establish an independent media there and to move some

activities there, organizing parallel organs, parallel forums and discussion forums, and even maybe parallel parliament in the free city of Kraguwtatz, for example, or Uzice.

Secondly, what we can do is to choose one day in a week to gather together to show that we are continuing our protest.

Third, we have to organize all people in Serbia. We have to travel around, and we have to start to overthrow this dictator, because the only force that we can use, besides the pressure of the international community, is our own democratic forces. I'm looking forward to go back on Sunday to inform what we heard here and to talk to my colleagues and to talk what we have to do to reach achievable goals and to take reasonable actions against Mr. Milosevic.

Mr. Canak. I called yesterday my office, and it seems the students are—their headquarters are in our offices. They were expelled from the university almost the first week of the protest, and anyone who is expelled from anywhere comes to us. We have room for everyone who is for democracy. I called them yesterday, and both my members and members of the student movement said, "We are just warming up for the next year." But, of course, it's just motivation. I'm sure that they will not go against rationality.

We have announced a couple of strikes. Some of them could be strategic. One will be in 10 days, starting in a public transportation company in Belgrade. We started five strikes yesterday in five metal-working companies, the only five big companies working in Belgrade at the moment. That is the message from outside. Of course, we do follow what Coalition Zajedno is going to do, because we are also not ready to waste our force and to keep it for days to come, and we expect that might be sooner or later next year, maybe in the springtime. So that's the plan for now.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] We have still to reestablish the work of Boom93 programming in Pozarevac. Although it might look like a small radio station, comparatively insignificant, it is extremely significant as a symbol because it operates from the native city of Mr. Milosevic. I also want to stress while I am here, and that's what I'm doing, too, that it's extremely important to have monitors from foreign countries, including the United States, that will be there to monitor the freedom of the media, constantly, not just from time to time. Mrs. Kati Marton came immediately to Belgrade. She's from the Committee for the Protection of Journalists. She came immediately. It meant a lot to us and meant pressure to Milosevic.

I know that you believe us when we come and report on the breeches of freedom and of human rights, but the reason we have to have monitors is we cannot continually report what's going on. That's the reason why we need to have monitors.

Mr. Smith. One final question. Is there any possibility that Milosevic will attempt to create a crisis, for example, in Kosovo to divert attention away from what's going on in Belgrade and elsewhere and try to shift the National focus somewhere else?

Mr. Perisic. No, he's from Kosovo. He's in Belgrade mostly, so he will not do that. He will not do that. He's now concentrated to a take revenge steps against his own people because they didn't work for him.

Mr. Canak. Another reason, he's quite aware that he would not control Kosovo if he starts anything. He knows that.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] Yeah, I don't think it should be good to now divert the attention that this creates pressure on Milosevic created to resolve other issues, such as Brcko or Kosovo. I think that we should first achieve democracy in Serbia and then go on resolving these other issues.

Mr. Kesic. I would just add one thing, and that is that Milosevic, in forming the coalition with YUL, has more or less thrown away the Nationalist card, because if now he was to try to regain the position of the symbol of populist nationalist politics in Serbia, I don't think it would work for him, simply because he has already alienated the Nationalist wing and has purged the Nationalist wing from his own party. He has alienated those nationalist leaders within other political parties to the point where there's no way that at this point he can regain the legitimacy in their eyes that he had in 1991.

Mr. Smith. Mr. Hand?

Mr. Canak. Excuse me. If you will allow me, I would ask you for a favor. We have a serious problem which is not normally in other countries in the world, but in Serbia it is a serious problem. We have a lot of friends in the United States. Some of them are sitting behind me. They are not getting visas to get into the country, so they cannot be with us. They cannot monitor what we are doing. They cannot help us on the spot. That is a serious problem.

I'm asking you if you can find a way to ask the Yugoslav Government to do it as is normal under the Vienna convention and other international rules concerning diplomatic exchanges and renewing visas. This is a complete privatization of foreign policy of Yugoslavia, because all people rejected for visas were rejected without any explanation. Actually, they were not rejected. They have been waiting at the embassy in Washington DC, were waiting until they wasted the time planned for the visit to Serbia. Then they were offered the visas; they could not travel because they had other obligations. So this is a very serious problem.

Mr. Smith. Thank you. The Commission will look into that. I appreciate that. Mr. Hand?

Mr. Hand. Bob Hand, Helsinki Commission Staff. At about the same time that the demonstrations in Belgrade and Nis and elsewhere were really first taking off in late November, there were also massive demonstrations in Zagreb against the government because of the reassigning of the frequency for Radio 101. It seemed in many ways to be a coincidence of events. But I'm wondering if the panelists could comment on any relationship that exists politically between Zagreb and Belgrade, both in terms of the governments as well as in terms of the opposition. Does the political opposition in Serbia try to make contacts with that in Croatia or trade unions or media? Or was this purely a coincidental effect?

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] I can say for B92 we had a long cooperation with Radio 101 in Zagreb before. That was before the telephone lines were cutoff. Now, since that happened, since that has been re-established, we have started our cooperation again. Very soon we found ourselves under similar circumstances, where we were repressed severely by the regime. The two regimes are counterparts. They're very similar. At a factual level that's obvious as well. You have the similar treatment upon the media and you have very similar treatment of the local elections. Namely a year ago, opposition won in Zagreb, the capital

of Croatia. Tudjman has not let the local government get established. However, Croatia has been let into EU. That's what worries us, the Council of EU. That's what worries us. Because a similar thing might happen to Serbia as well. Is this peril going to continue?

Mr. Perisic. There is not a connection between the oppositions in Croatia and Serbia, but if we are judging according to the behavior and gestures of two presidents, they are twin brothers, Milosevic and Tudjman, and there are fragmented contacts like B92, Radio 101. There are, of course, individual contacts, but the war really damaged the global communication between countries. We do hope that healing the wounds, as I earlier said, and organizing a nongovernmental reconciliation committee will start the communication from the beginning, since we are suffering the same consequences of the autocratic regimes.

But still I think that there are also some differences. There is broad dissatisfaction with Mr. Milosevic in Serbia, meaning in provinces and in the capital city. There is only dissatisfaction with Mr. Tudjman only in Zagreb. So we do hope that there will be some communication in the future.

Mr. Canak. We had communications and a very good relationship with all three trade unions in Croatia and one in Bosnia. What is most important, we have established communications and relationship right in the middle of the war. We insisted on that because we wanted to have at least one bright spot in the tunnel, the dark tunnel. We succeeded. It was a hard job to do, because at the first meeting our Croatian colleagues didn't want to shake hands with us. But now we are very, very close.

We have a very close relationship, that close that we're going to start to establish a series of seminars in Bosnia, together with the Bosnian colleagues, and, which is the most important for them and for us, they asked us if can become mediators to establish relationship between trade unions of Republika Srpska and in the Bosnian federation, because the wall between those entities is still too high for people starting to talk to each other, not to cooperate.

We don't have very much friends because we are the traitors of the Serbian cause as we were labeled at the beginning of the war. We don't have very much friends in Republika Srpska, but we'll try to find some reasonable people who will be ready to cooperate with the Bosnian federation.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] It's important to say that a number of nongovernmental organizations have connection and are cooperating with nongovernmental organizations in Croatia. It is also important to state that some of the opposition leaders of Kosovo Albanians gave open support to the demonstrations, which shows that in the future, if the opposition wins, if there's democracy established, there will be much more intensive contacts between the representatives of the Serbian and Albanian ethnic groups.

Mr. Hand. It was predicted back here, I don't know how accurately, before these demonstrations took place, that prior to the elections next year Mr. Milosevic might move to the Federal level and become the president of Yugoslavia, because he apparently can't run for re-election as Serbian president. Assuming he stays in power for that long, which might be quite an assumption, where do you see him going from here in terms of his position and his power base in 1997, leading up to republic elections?

Mr. Perisic. Mr. Milosevic now is a deserted dictator. He is supported by a narrow group in Serbia. If you know that the Montenegrin president and prime minister and the speaker of the parliament said very clearly that they are not supporting Mr. Milosevic in this electoral fraud, it's very clear that Montenegro will not vote for Mr. Milosevic to become the Yugoslavian president. So Milosevic also does not have a legal and constitutional opportunity to re-run for the presidency of Serbia, so I think that the best solution is exile somewhere.

Mr. Smith. Just let me ask just one final question. With regard to refugees who have returned to Serbia, how have they been assimilated back into society? Do they tend to join up with the opposition parties? Are they outcasts, ostracized? Are they living from hand to mouth, so to speak? Are they impoverished?

Mr. Perisic. They are very impoverished. They have had very bitter experience with Mr. Milosevic. If I give you the fact that they were allowed to vote during the '93 elections and they were deprived of the same rights during these elections, it is very clear that Mr. Milosevic counted very precisely that they will vote against him. So what we have to do is, as Mr. Kasic said through the international relief agencies, to try to strengthen their economic position, and then they can reintegrate back where they belong.

Mr. Canak. You know that the problem of our experience with them is that in Vojvodina, because most of them are settling in Vojvodina, is that they have been left alone the first months, you know. Most of the humanitarian organizations, they didn't care for that part of country because it was Bosnia as priority, which was normal. That made these people feel completely alone, and that made them very aggressive. As I said earlier, that we are doing 15 percent of trade union activities and the rest is civic activity. We spent most of these months trying to protect local Slovak population, Hungarian and Croatis from these angry people, from Serbs from Croatia who were searching to find a roof because there was winter coming, you know.

So that is the very serious situation. I'm afraid that another wave of refugees that could come soon if the situation would not be controlled is from a region of eastern Slavonia. That part of the country, of Croatia, should be carefully taken because of another wave of refugees to Yugoslavia. Another wave of refugees to Yugoslavia could cause serious problems, and added to these problems could make another crisis spot in that part of the world.

Mr. Matic. [Through interpreter.] I think that the situation might be used also to help the refugees in Serbia establish legal rights that are guaranteed by international organizations. We think it's extremely important at this point, because those people feel abandoned, utterly abandoned, and they have no rights. Their economic situation is even worse than what's standard in Serbia, which is already very bad.

Mr. Kesic. I also concur with what was just said. When I mentioned traveling to the villages, one of the things that I did notice was that there was a number of refugees who were being hired by the local farmers to go out and to do some of their field work. One of the intentional policies of the Milosevic government has been to try to keep these people away from the cities, away from the potential for adding to the unrest, especially in Belgrade.

There's been kind of a corridor built not to allow them to come into the cities. There's been a small handful, a trickle into Belgrade. If you remember the tragic scene of the Serbs leaving Krajina, the column that stretched for hundreds of miles, when that column was passing through Serbia, they closed on the highway the exits to Belgrade so that those refugees could not go to Belgrade. Instead they funneled them into centers where Milosevic has tried to absorb them, to try to build on their poverty, to totally dispirit them so that they wouldn't play any political role in what was happening within the country.

Mr. Smith. I want to thank you very, very much for your excellent testimony. Hopefully the message goes out to Belgrade and to Milosevic that, Democrats and Republicans, the Congress is united. The administration hopefully is sending all of the right messages that a crackdown will have zero tolerance in this town and that there will be repercussions if people are beaten, if the democratic opposition is attacked in any way. you know, there have already been a few, and I think the message is being sent that it just will not be tolerated.

There are tools, and you've provided us some additional insights on what we might do in crafting policy. I know I'm very appreciative of that. We're going to stay at this. I'm deeply appreciative for the work you're doing, and I know I speak for the entire Commission that we have a great deal of admiration for the risks all of you have taken. You've put your very lives and all that you are on the line for freedom and democracy and human rights, and I want to thank you for doing that.

Without any further ado, this hearing is adjourned.