

MR. PRESIDENT, MILOSEVIC IS THE PROBLEM

PROJECT FOR THE NEW AMERICAN CENTURY • INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP
BALKAN ACTION COUNCIL • COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

September 20, 1998

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing out of deep concern for the plight of the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo, many thousands of whom, having been driven from their homes and farms by the latest Serbian offensive, now face the possibility of a winter of starvation. Over 15 percent of the Kosovo population is already homeless. It is inexplicable to us that the West simply watches as this disaster grows daily after watching similar disasters unfold in Bosnia between 1992-95.

Stopping the carnage in Kosovo is essential and requires decisive action by the West. But this will not by itself provide a solution to the continuing Balkan conflict.

Mr. President, the events of recent months, when added to the history of the conflict since 1991, lead to one inescapable conclusion: There can be no peace and stability in the Balkans so long as Slobodan Milosevic remains in power. He started the Balkan conflict, and he continues it in Kosovo. He has caused untold suffering to millions; he has severely damaged his own country. We must face the facts.

We understand that the United States has sought and on occasion achieved Milosevic's cooperation in carrying out the Dayton settlement; and there is no guarantee that a successor to Milosevic will be significantly more committed to peace. Nevertheless, we believe the time has come for the United States to distance itself from Milosevic and actively support in every way possible his replacement by a democratic government committed to ending ethnic violence. Our "pact with the devil" has outlived whatever usefulness it once had.

At a minimum, the United States should lead an international effort along the following lines:

- First, the humanitarian crisis needs to be addressed urgently. Milosevic must order his police and military forces to stop all violence immediately. However, the crisis cannot be ended without an agreement on a new political status for Kosovo. And that will require massive Western pressure on Milosevic.
- Second, the administration should seek, and the Congress should approve, a substantial increase in funds for supporting the democratic opposition within Serbia.
- Third, the U.S. and its allies must do everything possible to tighten the economic sanctions on Serbia to help undermine Milosevic's ability to maintain his power in Belgrade.
- Fourth, the administration should cease attempting to strike diplomatic bargains with Milosevic.
- Finally, the U.S. should vigorously support The Hague tribunal's investigation of Milosevic as a war criminal.

Mr. President, we are under no illusion that the steps we recommend are easy or guarantee success. We are certain, however, that after seven years of aggression and genocide in the Balkans, the removal of Milosevic provides the only genuine possibility of a durable peace. We urge you to act forcefully in this crisis, and we offer you our full support should you do so.

Sincerely,

<i>Morton I. Abramowitz</i>	<i>Elliott Abrams</i>	<i>Richard L. Armitage</i>	<i>Nina Bang-Jensen</i>	
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