

Serbia's Bulldozer Revolution: Conditions and Prospects

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The change of regime in Serbia in October came as a surprise to most people both inside and outside the country. Although surveys in the months before the election were fairly consistent in suggesting that the opposition would win at least a plurality, this was by no means universally accepted as a prediction of the future. In the first place, voter surveys of this type are notoriously unreliable when they are carried out in environments where answers are heavily consequential and might not be given freely, like Milosevic's Serbia. In the second place, experience from previous elections persuasively suggested that there was no reason to expect that the results would be consistent with the way people voted. In the third place, there was no confidence that Milosevic would recognize the results of an election he did not win. So in the two months leading up to the election, it was the consensus in reports by several international governments and monitoring agencies that no great changes ought to be expected from the elections which took place on 24 September.

I can also count myself among the people who were surprised. Of the visits I have made to Belgrade over the past ten years, the one I made in the summer of 2000 (I left the day before the elections were called) was the most depressing and dispiriting so far. The political opposition, which had achieved a measure of unity earlier in the year, divided again after another conflict between SPO and the rest of the opposition parties. The regime was making extensive use of repressive laws on media and university regulation which had been forced through during the "state of emergency" over Kosovo in 1998, and was prepared to put through a new "law against terrorism" which defined terrorism extremely broadly. With the takeover of Studio B and Radio B92 in May, and the constant jamming of Radio Index, there were no independent electronic media available in the city. The signs of what appeared the success of the regime in the destruction of alternatives seemed to be reflected in the cultural scene as well. People I knew who had been actively engaged in various kinds of antiwar and antiregime activities had withdrawn. Among the few new offerings of independent rock 'n roll music available was an album by the group Jarboli with the single track "Revolucija," which featured the chorus "u nama je zauvek umrla" (it has died in us forever). One factor which provided a consistent contrast to this was the student resistance organization "Otpor!," whose members continued to produce clever and pointed materials and public manifestations despite harassment which included the arrest of over a thousand of their members in the period between May and August. Nonetheless it was hard to find exceptions to a general atmosphere of hopelessness and defeat, and the sense that the regime could very well travel a long distance further on the power of inertia.

By now I think everybody here knows what happened in the meantime. Elections were held on 24 September, with the opposition coalition DOS (Demokratska opozicija Srbije) gaining a convincing majority of votes. The regime attempted by a variety of means to falsify the results, to prevent their publication, to force a second round, and finally, in a Supreme Court decision on

4 October, to nullify the election. The following day protesters from around Serbia converged on Belgrade, and by the end of the day they had taken over the federal Parliament and the state television, and had faced down threats of intervention by the military and the police. One action--the breaking of the police cordon around the state television headquarters by a driver using heavy construction equipment--gave the events a name: the "Bulldozer revolution." Within a week they had at least nominal control over most civilian centers of power and secured the exit from power of Slobodan Milosevic.

The questions I want to ask now are general ones. First, what happened to make the opposition finally come together in October of this year? And second, to what extent is the change of regime a real historical break with the Milosevic regime? I want to ask, that is, why did the "bulldozer revolution" happen, and did it matter?

Why now?

The first question we need to ask is why Vojislav Kostunica, a second-rank opposition figure who in past years was noted neither for his powers of innovation nor his charisma, was able to defeat the apparently entrenched Milosevic. Here I want to suggest some developments over the past two or three years which contributed to the defeat of the regime.

1. Polarization

Political analysts and opposition politicians have spent much of the last decade trying to project when the population of Serbia would become polarized in relation to the regime. The general thesis behind this has been that although the regime has been generally unpopular for some time, none of the opposition parties by themselves, or even some number of them in a coalition, could claim enough support to change the political scene solely on the basis of their program or the appeal of their political leaders. But the perception has been widespread that if the choice offered citizens could be cast as a referendum on the regime, then a majority would favor getting rid of the regime.ⁱ This has at least been the general conclusion suggested by surveys for a long time--they have generally found that Milosevic and his party could never lay claim to more than a minority level of support, usually more than twenty and never more than thirty percent, while at the same time no single opposition party has consistently broken beyond the five to ten percent range.

A crude but very popular interpretation of this repeated finding argues that the regime was never popular enough to keep itself in power, but always relied on the weakness and the consistent failures of the opposition.

On the one hand, we can talk about polarization as a sort of cumulative process, in which each failure or defeat of the regime sends more people into the opposition. Milosevic's base has been in a steady process of decline from the beginning.ⁱⁱ However, this has not always been met by a corresponding growth on the part of the opposition. The response to people's disgust with the regime has more often been demobilization,ⁱⁱⁱ in the form of abstention or emigration,^{iv} rather than engagement. It is worth pointing out that the political opposition has invariably punted on several occasions when public engagement offered it an enormous opportunity (for example after the protests of 1991 and 1997).

So why did polarization finally take shape this year? First, all reserves of nationalist support have finally been spent after four losing wars. Second, the concentration of regime support in the older generation has been steadily weakening, and 2000 was the first year in which

young people who grew up under the Milosevic regime had the opportunity to vote. Third, one of the main sources of division in the opposition has all but disappeared with the decline of Vuk Draskovic's SPO (Srpski pokret obnove). From the time the Zajedno coalition collapsed in 1997, SPO has steadily lost support as it moved in and out of alliance with the regime. Despite Draskovic's longstanding claim to lead the largest opposition party in Serbia, it seems that on balance the public came to perceive SPO as a mostly pro-regime party. As a result, it is out of the competition for leadership of the opposition (I would predict that it also has little hope for a future as a major party). This removes one of the chief barriers to forming coalitions in the opposition, which was the competition between the leaders of the two largest parties, Draskovic of the SPO and Zoran Djindjic of the DS (Demokratska stranka). In addition, whether fairly or not, it seems that public opinion has now offered an answer to the question of which of the two is to be blamed for the failure of the 1996-1997 "Zajedno" coalition.

2. Rural opposition

The base of opposition to the regime broadened significantly between 1997 and 2000, in a way which escaped the attention of many international observers. To recap a bit: when local elections were held in November 1996, "Zajedno," an opposition coalition, won power in local governments in every major city in Serbia. Milosevic attempted to nullify the results of that election, and gave in only after 88 days of continuous and massive protests. The aftermath of that opposition victory is generally regarded as a fiasco. Within six months, the opposition coalition fell apart, and when presidential elections were boycotted by most of the opposition the following year, Milosevic was able to consolidate his control of the republican government in Serbia.

But the collapse of "Zajedno" was most pronounced in Belgrade--the coalition did not collapse everywhere. Where it did not collapse, opposition city governments gained control over some important assets: television stations, radio stations and newspapers which were owned by local governments. Radio B92 met the challenge by forming the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM), which provided news and other programming to these newly independent local stations. The most important result of this was a massive change in the information available to people in the interior of the country. Before 1997, access to independent media was more or less limited to Belgrade and a few other large cities. By 2000, some form of independent information was available to people in almost all of Serbia. This probably contributed to mobilizing people who were not already jaded by the enthusiasm and subsequent disillusion of earlier protests.

One of the ways this was visible in the period after the elections was that the opposition organized daily protests after 24 September to pressure the regime to recognize the election results. Turnout for these demonstrations in Belgrade was often disappointing, and there were suggestions that the opposition may have overplayed its hand. But in provincial towns and cities, some of the protests attracted half the population. The theme of the protests on 5 October was "Serbia comes to Belgrade," and protesters from the rest of the country were invited to join demonstrations in Belgrade. As it turned out, about 500,000 people came to the city, many of them energized by facing down police barriers en route. Among the visitors from the provinces was a group organized and armed by the mayor of Cacak, Velimir Ilic, who were resolved to put an end to the story that day or not return.

3. Divisions in the regime coalition

Before the election there were signs that the regime coalition was far from stable. The three parties of the ruling coalition included the dominant partner, SPS, which was in most

respects the heir to the remains of the old Communist party machinery. Politically SPS never had much of a profile: though nominally a socialist party, it operated essentially through patronage and corruption, and effectively represented the property of the old Communist party rather than any particular political principle. Its junior partner, the extreme-right SRS (Srpska radikalna stranka), was largely created by SPS as a political home for the extreme nationalists, and as a kind of Praetorian guard responsible for intimidation of opponents. Also in the coalition was JUL (the "United Yugoslav Left," a leftist party in the sense that it has the word "left" in its name), headed by Milosevic's wife, a party with little to no popular support which operated primarily as an association of the directors of state-owned corporations and military officers.

SRS seemed to be looking for a way out of the ruling coalition. It could claim responsibility for some repressive measures such as the Law on Public Information and the Law on the University of 1998. Otherwise, while it was permitted to operate its own smaller-scale patronage and corruption operation (especially in Zemun), it was increasingly marginalized from the workings of the regime and from regime-controlled media. Unsurprisingly, the Radicals came to resent this situation, and to tolerate their position in the regime with apparently increasing discomfort. Before the elections, rumors were already circulating about negotiations between SRS and SPO about forming a coalition to force SPS to dissolve the republican government of Serbia (the two parties together would have enough deputies to form a new government). The SRS presidential candidate, Nikolic, announced that in an eventual second round SRS would not support Milosevic. On the day of the election, SRS surprised observers by offering generally reliable estimates of results, and the television station (Palma) closest to SRS surprised viewers by broadcasting these estimates.

Meanwhile, tensions between some factions of SPS and JUL were also increasing. JUL was represented in government ministries far out of proportion to its size and importance, and rumors increased regarding a growing rebellion among SPS members about the influence that JUL had over that party as well. These were generally unverified rumors, but it may be worth noting that there were a lot of these in the days since the election. Among these were rumors of fights and firings, of high officials fleeing the country, and of demands from high-ranking individuals in SPS that Milosevic recognize the results of the elections and resign.^v A pseudonymous Belgrade journalist suggested in an article that JUL advocated declaring a fraudulent first-round victory, but was overruled by more moderate heads in SPS.^{vi} However, some facts are public: JUL released figures predicting a large first-round victory for Milosevic on the night of the elections, while SPS released far more modest estimates.^{vii} Some prominent individuals from SPS (such as the actor Milorad Mandic-Manda) and JUL (such as Novi Sad university rector Svetolik Avramov) issued statements calling for recognition of the results, as did a few local party organizations. These stories do not offer a sound basis for conclusions, but did suggest that there were divisions and defections in the SPS-JUL alliance.

4. Desperation of the regime

During most of the last ten years, the regime managed to carry out repression in Serbia without the kind of open violence and intimidation on which dictatorships usually rely. This began to change noticeably around the end of 1998, and dramatically around May of this year.^{viii} In 1998 the regime moved openly against the two institutions whose independence threatened it most directly: the universities and the outlets of independent media. After the takeover of independent electronic media in May 2000, the regime put down protests with large-scale violence for the first time since 1991, and began initiatives to invent new crimes under which opponents and critics could be charged.

These efforts were for the most part counterproductive. In the first place, regimes generally need to use police power to maintain their positions only if they are not secure about their popular support. Many observers interpreted the use of violence as a sign of the regime's desperation, and as an indication that its future was limited. In the second place, many people understood the violence as a motivation for outrage, and a reason to want to get rid of the regime by any available means. For example, when police began harassing and sometimes beating members of Otpor! in May, they were faced with threats and lawsuits from the relatives of the students, and with a wave of parents and grandparents joining the student movement together with their children.

5. Otpor!

The student resistance movement Otpor! achieved tremendous prominence since its emergence in 1998. This was partly because of its outraged rhetoric, which hit a broad public chord (the movement announced its emergence in a poster with the slogan, "This is not a system, it is a sickness"), and partly because of the youth, energy, creativity and humor of its members, who were not associated with Serbia's lifeless and moribund opposition. Otpor! directed its critiques not only against the regime, but also against the opposition political parties, which it saw as prolonging and aiding the regime through their fractiousness and passivity. By the time Otpor! presented the leaders of the opposition parties with an ultimatum to present a united front, this was a demand which came from a popular and well-regarded association. By the time elections came near, it was also an organization which pledged to mobilize large numbers of young voters.

Otpor! also helped to point up the character of the regime by the responses it provoked. An illustrative example: when the group applied in June to register as a legal organization, its application was predictably rejected. In explaining the rejection, the Ministry of Justice released a document accusing Otpor! of "calling for the destruction of the constitutional order," and as evidence of the charge quoted statements made by political party leaders (Nenad Canak and Vuk Draskovic) who were not associated with the students.^{ix} This was a minor event, but it may have encouraged people opposed to the regime to think that if the regime makes no distinctions among the people who are against them, it is poor strategy for them to make distinctions among themselves.

A couple of additional notes might be made to these suggestions as to why the change of regime happened when it did. First, the loss of control over Kosovo had a practical consequence for the regime--it meant that they could no longer rely on Kosovo as a source of cheap parliamentary seats. Second, there are strong indications that the election results showed that the regime did not have the support of members of the police--the state electoral commission stopped its count just as absentee ballots from the military and police arrived. This meant that two crucial things were not reliably available to them: a source of fraud and a line of defense.

Do the elections mean change?

One of the most important facts that needs to be kept in mind is that a consensus developed in Serbia for a change of regime, but that there is not necessarily any consensus on the question of what this change can be expected to imply. On the one hand, DOS is a broad coalition which does not necessarily have firm programmatic positions. On the other hand, the citizens who voted against Milosevic had varying motives for doing it. Economic motives, especially the hope that a new regime might bring an end to sanctions and international isolation, were undoubtedly among the most important. The intensified repression by Milosevic's regime suggests that motives of internal democratization were also important. But it would probably be an

overinterpretation of the political moment to say that there is a strong consensus for a break with nationalism or for a rejection of the criminal legacy of the recent wars which made the old regime so distasteful to most of the world. The DOS coalition will probably be short-lived, but as long as it does exist it includes both liberal parties (GSS) and minority parties (LDSV, SDA) intensely interested in human rights issues, and right-wing parties (PDS, DSS) which energetically reject these concerns. Eventually it is likely that both the ruling party and the opposition will emerge from this coalition, while older political players (SPS, SRS, SPO) gradually disappear. But in the meantime, at least until a sort of new political reality becomes normalized, the mixed character of the governing coalition and of public opinion will act as a limiting factor.

1. Can DOS consolidate power?

DOS made several major compromises in order to be able to take power under cover of legality and without violent conflict. It agreed to a form of cohabitation with the remnants of the formerly ruling parties both on the federal level, where it is in coalition with the pro-Milosevic SNP from Montenegro, and on the level of the Republic of Serbia, where it is coalition with SPS and where SPS member Milan Milutinovic remains president of the republic. The Serbian parliament continues to be dominated by SPS, SRS and SPO. President Kostunica has either refused to replace or been prevented from replacing leading military and police commanders associated with Milosevic --including Nebojsa Pavkovic, the army chief of staff charged with war crimes in Kosovo, and Rade Markovic, the head of the security police who is widely believed to have been directly involved in the kidnappings and murders of opponents of the Milosevic regime. It is hard to avoid the sense that these compromises have imposed serious constraints on the ability of the new regime to act.

Challenges to the legitimacy of the Yugoslavian state also remain, although it has been recognized by several states, including former Yugoslav republics, in the months since 5 October. The status of Kosovo remains unresolved, with no answer to the question of whether it is still a province of Serbia (which is energetically rejected by an overwhelming majority of its residents) or an independent territory (which is rejected by Yugoslavia and by international institutions). In addition to this, Montenegro boycotted the federal elections in September and is effectively not represented in Kostunica's government. As long as these questions are not resolved, it means that Yugoslavia still does not have a legitimate federal government. Some of these questions might be addressed in a new round of federal elections, but these have not been scheduled. The question of how people in Montenegro and Kosovo participate in these elections is likely to be controversial.

The continued power of SPS in the Serbian parliament will probably end when republican elections are held on 23 December. Leaders of DOS have declared that several reforms which they are currently unable to carry out will be possible after these elections, and if surveys are to be believed, DOS should receive a large majority in these elections. But even after the elections some obstacles will remain. In the first place, Milutinovic will still be president of Serbia, and although he has been fairly inactive since taking office, the constitution gives him considerable power. In the second place, once the question is resolved as to whether DOS is able to act independently, the question will be raised as to what they are willing to do. Finally, the control which DOS has over the military and police remains insecure, and this can become an important question if the government makes an effort to try or arrest figures from the Milosevic regime, in particular Milosevic himself.

It might be useful to think of comparative cases. Not surprisingly, the most appropriate analogy to contemporary Serbia is probably contemporary Croatia. There, too, a coalition of ideologically quite different opposition parties gave in to the realization that they could only win

if they were united, and voters decided to overlook any objections that they might have to the leading personalities of the opposition in the interest of the larger goal of getting rid of the old regime. This strategic combination was successful, but the new Croatian government has been faced with several problems, of which the major ones probably are:

1. Although the six-party coalition which won in the elections controls the parliament and the top level of the ministries, they do not control the state apparatus. In particular, the military and police continue to be dominated by people who attained their positions under the previous regime, and are in some degree loyal to it (or, in the case of war criminals, complicit with it).
2. The objective possibilities for economic and political reform are severely limited by the fact that corruption effectively bankrupted the state and many state-owned or quickly privatized businesses.
3. Some members of the governing coalition (in particular Drazen Budisa and Zdravko Tomac) have taken to adopting provocative strategies to try to win over supporters of the formerly ruling party, which largely disintegrated after losing the elections. This has had the consequence of severely weakening, and sometimes discrediting, the new government from within.
4. With the exception of President Stipe Mesic, most of the new high officials are in their posts not because of their personal popularity or the popularity of their programs, but because of compromises. If they are not regarded as controversial figures, then many of them continue to be regarded as figures of no consequence.

But there are important differences. First of all, while Mesic has fairly actively released documents and used institutions like the ICTY to discredit his predecessors, Kostunica is both more cautious and has fewer ideological differences with his predecessors. Second, Mesic is at a distinct advantage since the person who characterized the former regime is dead, leaving no politically popular successors and having no ability to defend himself. Milosevic is alive and attempting to regroup, and although he is marginalized for now, there are people who because of their complicity are potentially motivated to help him obstruct the new regime.

2. Is the new regime politically distinct?

The opposition came to power with the aid of several promises, probably the most important of which were pledges to improve economic conditions and to establish legal institutions which would allow people to "live like normal people in a normal state." These promises mean that Kostunica and DOS begin governing with expectations not only of economic and legal reform, but also with a broader expectation that a new kind of political life will be possible, characterized by autonomous institutions, equal treatment of citizens, accountability of public officials, an end to corruption, and the possibility of peaceful transfers of power.

Economic prospects are not very bright at the moment, since the Milosevic regime effectively bankrupted the state and state-owned corporations. The currency is not stable, foreign currency reserves are probably negative at the moment, and the state is in arrears to pensioners and other recipients of government payments. One area where the beginning of winter is making this problem especially visible is in the supply of energy, as the new government has already begun to ration electrical energy and has not yet secured fuel for heating over the winter. In addition, unemployment remains high, factories which have not closed are operating well below

capacity, and average salaries have not moved above the equivalent of 40 to 50 dollars a month. Any serious efforts to move against corruption in this environment could have negative economic consequences, as a large number of unemployed people have been making their living by illegal means, especially the trade in smuggled goods. If the government wants to cut off this trade, it will need to be in a position to offer these people jobs.

Obviously the question of political and structural reform will depend on what the new government is able to do on the economic front. If economic conditions do not improve significantly, it may not be in power long enough to achieve much. Early signs do suggest that the upcoming elections are likely to be carried out with international and domestic observers, and so will probably be more "free and fair" than previous elections. However, this is an easy offer to make at a time when DOS has overwhelming popular support. The coalition is not likely to survive long past the December elections, and is also not likely to maintain majority support as euphoria gives way to the practical problems and conflicts of governing. The real test of how the new ruling parties behave in elections might not come until federal elections are called.

A larger question is raised with regard to the autonomy of institutions. The independence of the judiciary was under constant attack during the last decade, and has yet to be seriously tested. With regard to the media, there have not been the sorts of prosecutions which became frequent during the last two years of Milosevic's rule, but the parliament has not got rid of the punitive law on public information either (indications began to be made in December that the high court might declare the law unconstitutional). In this area the greatest controversy is likely to emerge over control of media owned by the state. The general practice to date has been to appoint editors and directors according to political party affiliation--some parties would like to maintain this practice, but journalists have been demanding independent directors appointed on the basis of professional criteria. At the moment this question is the object of competition between the new and old elements in the transitional governments of Serbia and Yugoslavia, and we will probably not know how DOS will behave until after the elections. There is one encouraging sign: DOS asked the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) to nominate a candidate for the position of Minister of Information in the transitional government.

To the structural question of whether a political system with a governing party and a "loyal opposition" is likely to develop, we may have to wait to find out who is likely to be the opposition. The parties which ruled until recently, SPS and SRS, would certainly be more likely to be an obstructionist than a "loyal" opposition, but most observers do not expect these parties to survive long without the controlled media which made their exercise of power possible. My guess would be that both the ruling parties and the opposition will develop out of DOS as the political scene develops, in which case both sides will have an interest in preserving legitimacy and continuity. But this is by no means certain, especially since the possibility of obstructionist parties relying on armed support cannot be eliminated.

3. Is the new regime qualitatively distinct?

In addition to the concrete expectations which the new regime is faced with, there are expectations of a different character. Kostunica and DOS are expected to demonstrate that the Milosevic era is over by making a qualitative break with the rhetoric and actions of his regime. We can call these moral demands, and most of them have to do with condemning the behavior of the Milosevic regime and bringing legal charges against its members, and also with assuring that members of the regime be politically marginalized. These expectations deal on the one hand with symbolic and rhetorical actions that can be taken in regard to recent history--release of documents, a possible "truth commission," demands for apologies and the like. On the other hand

there are some demands which are concrete, having to do with cooperation with ICTY and possible war reparations and restitution.

Here it is probably important to make a distinction between two sets of charges which are leveled against the Milosevic regime: first there are charges for corruption, repression, fraud and abuse committed against citizens of Serbia in Serbia, and second there are charges for war crimes, crimes against humanity and potentially genocide committed in the course of wars of succession in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

There is every reason to expect efforts to bring charges against Milosevic and his associates for internal repression and corruption, probably not long after the elections on 23 December. Several individuals have already brought lawsuits, and some groups such as Otpor! and the Fund for Humanitarian Law (Fond za humanitarno pravo) have declared their intention to push as strongly as possible for legal accountability. Although Kostunica himself prefers to avoid the question, several political parties have also declared themselves in favor of prosecutions. The motivations for this are partly legal, and also partly political--prosecutions can be effective instruments for assuring that some people will not be able to return to active political life. Within some institutions, too, there are efforts to marginalize the old directors--new corporation boards are bringing charges against former directors, and there is open discussion among journalists about how to treat people who carried out propaganda for the former regime. I feel secure in predicting that there will be legal cases related to these questions in the next year or so.

The question of how international charges will be confronted is much touchier, and any prediction has to be less secure. We do not know how a new government will face up to this largest and most difficult challenge of the immediate future. In one way or another, the end of the Milosevic regime will provoke people to ask themselves what has happened to them over the past ten years, and to ask themselves whether they faced what happened responsibly. A part of this questioning will involve coming to terms with violations of human rights, war crimes and acts of genocide which Milosevic and his clients carried out in the name of the Serbian people. If this questioning is engaged publicly and intensively, it is inevitable that self-perceptions will be challenged, reputations destroyed, and institutions undermined. For more than a few people the process will be humiliating. The process of coming to terms cannot be anything but controversial and painful, and much of the future of Serbia depends on how a new regime handles it.^x

Kostunica has not been entirely clear on his intentions in this regard, and though his lack of clarity has probably been strategically astute, he will soon have to offer some answers. In the pre-election and immediate post-election period DOS offered three distinct positions:

- 1) On the one hand, he has declared that he is opposed to cooperation with ICTY, declaring that the Tribunal's political nature makes it an illegitimate institution.^{xi} This position does not, of course, exclude other means of addressing the responsibility of individuals and institutions for human rights violations.
- 2) At the same time, other representatives of the Serbian opposition have indicated that the transfer of power would be an easier task if they were able to avoid the question for the time being. In this interest, Kostunica has pledged several times that his accession to office would not be followed by revenge. Zoran Djindjic avoided the question by declaring, "we have enough problems for the future, we don't have time to deal with the problems of the past."^{xii} It may also have been with this in mind that opposition leader Mladjan Dinkic declared that "people from the ruling coalition need to understand that defeat in the elections is not a death sentence."^{xiii}

3) Kostunica told Steven Erlanger of *The New York Times* that he would advocate the formation of a "truth commission" modeled on the South African example, "to examine the crimes and victims of all the parties to the Yugoslav wars."^{xiv} However, if Kostunica offered any details about how he envisions this commission operating, Erlanger did not pass them on.

Since taking office, Kostunica's position on extradition to the ICTY has become to state that this question is "not a priority." One motivation for this reticence: among the challenges of persuading the old regime to stand down peacefully has been to confront its members' fear of what might follow a transition, and to promise that there will not be any sort of revenge. But there could be many factors which could change Kostunica's position, and his position is not necessarily a consensus position in DOS. It has been openly opposed, for example, by Nenad Canak, presiding officer of the Vojvodina parliament, and by Sead Spahovic, the Justice minister appointed by Kostunica.

There are already compelling political reasons for the new government to offer an answer as soon as they are able. As the Otpor! leader Vukasin Petrovic declared enigmatically shortly after the election, "When Milosevic and his regime go, we will still have to realize our second goal, which is to change the system in this country. According to our assessment, we need thirty or forty years to achieve this change which would eliminate all possibility that a new Milosevic might appear in Serbia."^{xv} The statement is vague, but not entirely metaphysical: one of the reasons Serbia needs to confront the horror of the past ten years is that it needs to establish responsibility and attach what is now widely perceived as "collective guilt" onto the people to whom guilt belongs. If those people continue to try to engineer a political comeback through provocative means, the Hague tribunal might appear to be a convenient mechanism for removing from the scene as well.

4. Does the new regime mean a change in the region?

Obviously enough, one of the reasons for the international enthusiasm over the defeat of Milosevic has been the prospect that relations between Balkan states might improve, and the main obstacle to programs for development and integration in the region might be removed. In general, this optimism seems to be at least partially justified. Agreements about mutual recognition with Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been completed, and negotiations about the division of property of the former Yugoslavian federation have begun in earnest again after a decade of delay. There is every reason to expect that trade and travel will follow, along with the regulation of questions like residency status and pensions, which have affected the lives of many people.

Some other questions are not likely to be resolved quickly, despite the change of regime. The status of Kosovo remains controversial, and in November and December there was a resurgence of armed conflict. There is also every reason to expect continued conflict over the question of guilt and responsibility in the recent wars. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia are likely to demand apologies and reparations which Kostunica is unlikely to be willing to give.

Serbia's size and relative importance in the region has put it in a position to receive favorable treatment from powerful countries, which has already led to some resentment in neighboring states. In particular, statements from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia have complained that Serbia is quickly gaining the benefits of international recognition without having to pay the price they have had to pay, especially with regard to cooperation with the ICTY and the return of refugees. This emotional and political enthusiasm for Serbia has some practical consequences for its neighbors as well--here the concern is that political support and economic

aid will be massively directed toward Serbia at the expense of other states. This is most strongly felt in Montenegro and Kosovo, where political movements which received international support as a part of a general campaign against Milosevic are being abandoned now that he is out of power. For now it is too early to say, however, whether this is a long-term direction in international policy which might create an imbalance that leads to ongoing tension.

Some preliminary considerations

The term "revolution" has been used to refer to the change of regime in Serbia, but like elsewhere in Eastern Europe, what is in question is not a revolution. We now seem to be witnessing a slow process of removing legacies of the old regime and an even slower and altogether uncertain process of building a foundation for a new political system, which will involve long-delayed changes in social structure and in the form of relationships between the new states in the region.

I am not prepared to say that a new era has begun, in particular because of the forms of nostalgia which are certain to play a role in this process. In the first place, some nostalgia for the Communist period, some of which is likely to be carried by people associated with Milosevic, is likely to play a role. This is more likely if the new government is unable to quickly lay a basis for basic economic security. In the immediate future, if problems with heating and electrical energy continue through the winter, patience is likely to run out and turn into a perception of incompetence. State institutions are thoroughly bankrupted, so that major efforts will have to rely on economic assistance from abroad for now. This is a moment for powerful and wealthy states to demonstrate whether they take their rhetoric about promoting stable democracies in the region seriously.

Another form of nostalgia is already a source of controversy. Part of the rhetoric of the more conservative elements of the opposition--which is embraced by Kostunica--relies on invitations to monarchism and clericalism. Calls for the restoration of the Serbian monarchy are for now probably fairly harmless, but the association of religious and national rhetoric is already becoming a source of controversy. Kostunica himself has made several prominent religious "pilgrimages," and his government seems to be leaning toward moves such as introducing religious instruction in schools. If this happens, it is likely to contribute to reigniting ethnic tensions which have been fairly muted so far, and to raise questions of citizenship and equality.

Finally, we will not know until after the elections of 23 December, and maybe not quickly after that, how prepared the new government is to make a clear and public break with the recent past. So far its objective limitations have allowed it to evade the question, but it will be appropriate to pose it directly very soon. Whether a democratic state is going to be built, and whether there is going to be peace in the region, depend on the answer.

Endnotes

¹ The point has been implicit in a number of surveys over the past decade, but was explicitly offered as a conclusion in Srećko Mihailović (ed.), *Javno mnjenje Srbije: Između razočarenje i nade* (Beograd: Udruženje za unapređivanje empirijskih istraživanja, 1999).

ⁱⁱ In my *Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), the results of elections from 1990 onward are reviewed. Among the points in the discussion: SPS has never received a majority in an election, has faced an increasingly declining plurality in each election, and has not had a majority in Parliament since 1992.

ⁱⁱⁱ I am indebted to V.P. Gagnon for introducing this term into the discussion about political developments in the Balkans and the political consequences of nationalism. See V.P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Conflict as Demobilizer: The Case of Serbia," *Institute for European Studies Working Paper no. 96.1* (Institute for European Studies, Cornell University, 1996). The paper is available at the URL <www.ithaca.edu/politics/gagnon/articles/index.htm>.

^{iv} The abstention rate is discussed in my book, presented above. I also recommend the summaries of Vladimir Goati's forthcoming *Analiza izbornih rezultata u Srbiji* (Beograd: CESID, 2000). As for emigration, there are no reliable figures on its extent, but estimates on the emigration of young, urban, educated people from Serbia range between 200,000 and 600,000 over the last ten years.

^v One such rumor was reported by FreeB92 Vesti on 29 September, attributed to "a source close to SPS who wished to remain anonymous."

^{vi} Zdravko Petrovic (pseudonym), "JUL Plotted Poll Coup," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Balkans Crisis Report no. 178*, 28 September 2000. The IWPR Balkan reports can be found at the URL <www.iwpr.net>.

^{vii} The various estimates were reported on line by FreeB92 <www.freeb92.net>, by the Democratic Party <www.ds.org.yu> and by FreeSerbia <www.izbori2000.net/index.php>.

^{viii} Extensive violence was used in Belgrade against citizens protesting the takeover of the television station Studio B on 17 May 2000, while estimates from the student organization Otpor! <www.otpor.net> are that in the months before the election over 2000 members of the group were detained by the police. In some cases these activists were beaten, and in at least one case in the town of Vladicin Han, activists were tortured.

^{ix} See N.D., "Odbijena registracija Narodnog pokreta Otpor," *Danas*, 14. jun 2000, p.1; A.C., "Pozivali na vesanje," *Blic*, 14. jun 2000, p. 2; R.B., "Najava zabrane opozicionih partija," *Danas*, 15. jun 2000, p. 3; A.C., "Resenje doneto pre zahteva," *Blic*, 15. jun 2000, p. 3.

^x The principal responsibility and obligation for this clearly lies with any new government, but I do not mean to suggest that only a Serbian or Yugoslav government can influence the process. A persuasive case can be made, for example, that the utter failure of UN forces in Kosovo to prevent atrocities against Serbs remaining in the province strongly influences perceptions about responsibility in Serbia.

^{xi} FreeB92 Vesti, 5. septembar 2000.

^{xii} BBC World Service interview, 27 September 2000.

^{xiii} FreeB92 Vesti, 18. septembar 2000.

^{xiv} Steven Erlanger, "The Yugoslav Who Could Be Leader Sketches the Nation He Envisions," *The New York Times*, 29 September 2000, p. A12.

^{xv} FreeB92 Vesti, 26. septembar 2000.