

INDEPENDENCE OF MONTENEGRO: WHY DID NOT FALL OF MILOŠEVIĆ HELP SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

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Montenegro consists of about 5 % of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro both in terms of its area (13.812 km²) and population (630 000). Ethnic Montenegrins compose 61.7 % of the population. Other ethnic groups are mainly Bosniacs (14.5 %), Serbs (9.3 %) and Albanians (6.5 %). Croats are the most important among the rest. There are also about 60.000 refugees, mainly Serbs and Montenegrins, but also Bosniacs and Albanians, who fled from the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo.¹ The name and identity of Montenegro was defined by its mountainous geography, which also produced the Montenegrin nationality through a centuries-long political tradition. Its neighbours are Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the north, Serbia (eastern half of Sandjak) on the east, Kosovo on the southeast and Albania on the south. On the west is the Adriatic Sea.

Serbs and Montenegrins are generally accepted to be the same nation, with the same religion and language, as well as Slavic roots. But Montenegrin dialect is nearer to the Bosnian and Croatian ones (ijekavica), rather than the Serbian speech (ekavica). Besides, Montenegrins developed their own state tradition, thus ethno-political consciousness, independent of the Serbian way.

Just after the Dayton Agreement (November 1995), Montenegrin political arena started to change in favour of integration with the international community, which was associated with a total anti-Milošević political development: Leaving extreme nationalism, exalting democracy and human rights, favouring peace and confidence-building processes, transiting economy into a liberal structure, etc. This led to clash with the

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¹ <http://www.montenet.org/profile/profile.htm>

Milošević regime in Belgrade, thus showing to the Montenegrin moderate forces the impossibility of reforms and changes under the Milošević mentality, which was mostly read by the Montenegrin elite as 'under Serbia'. Independence was brought to agenda especially by the young and dynamic president of the country, Milo Đukanović, once Milošević ally, from 1997 on, of course, enjoying a strong international support.

Strategically, secession of Montenegro was more important, and dangerous for Belgrade, than the leaving of other ex-Yugoslav republics: Yugoslavia would end, and Serbia would remain home alone; Belgrade would loose exit to the sea, thus being deprived of naval forces; the way for independence of Kosovo would open, as the Albanian claim that they should not have expected to live together with/under the Serbs, while the Montenegrins, local 'Serbs' of Montenegro, could not do it, etc. But, what if Milošević had gone and Serbia had chosen the same way as Montenegro? That is, was the independence preference of Montenegro structural and provoked by Belgrade?

This happened in 2000, when popular upheaval, or the 'October Revolution of Serbia' overthrew Milošević, who was delivered to the war criminal court in the Hague a few months later. As expected truly, the fall of Milošević opened a new phase in the independence contention of Montenegro. Although nationalism continued to be the characterising political discourse, the new Yugoslav-Serb regime, associated with the names of Vojislav Koštunica, the federal president, and Zoran Đinđić, the premier, started efforts to reconstruct the country socio-politically in accordance with universal democratic means and to present itself with the aim of integration to the West, in contrary to the isolationist and anti-Europe policies of the former regime. So, Montenegro lost its ground for secession and also international support, which really never meant in encouragement of separation even under the most difficult circumstances under the Milošević rule.

Montenegro, together with Serbia established the (last) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the beginning of 1992, after the leave of four former republics, and became a loyal ally of Milošević policies during the wars between 1991 and 1995. Beginning in 1996 and getting sharper in 1997, it tended to become independent like the others. In the Kosovo war of 1998-1999, Montenegro criticised the Belgrade regime and did not support the Serbian position. The late 1999 and first half of 2000 passed with anxiety of a new war, now between the classic allies Montenegro and Serbia (Yugoslavia); however, thanks to NATO threats and international efforts to calm down the crisis, also to the very weakness of

Montenegro, the sides did not use their weapons, except some provocative cases. After the 'October Revolution' of Serbia, which removed Milošević from power, the war option got out of matter, but the change of government in Belgrade did not provide with any solution, it seems, for the crisis between the two republics.

Internal Political Situation

During the resistance to Milošević, Montenegro was governed by a three-party coalition (*Da živimo bolje*, "Let us live better") which came to power after the general elections on the May 31, 1998. The Democratic Party of Socialists (*Demokratska Partija Socialista*, DPS) was the main political force.² Milo Đukanović, president of the republic and the party, Svetozar Marović, president of the parliament, and Filip Vujanović, premier, are of this party. The DPS was once collaborator and reflector of Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socialistička Partija Srbije*, SPS) in the attempt to serbify ex-Yugoslavia, marked by the so-called 'bureaucratic revolution' on the eve of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. In 1997, the party split into two, driving away Momir Bulatović, its president and president of Montenegro till January 15, 1998, to cause him to set up a new party. Although the name of the president Đukanović was associated with the country's search for independence, the DPS indeed used to want a union of two independent states, based on equal rights and positions.

The other two parties were the Social Democrat Party (SDP) and the People's Party (*Narodna Stranka*, NS), with lesser public support. The SDP, which continued the coalition after the October Revolution, did not accept any option, except full and unconditional independence.³ It was in concurrence with the liberals following the same policy.⁴ The NS was on the opposite side. After changing its president Novak Kilibarda, who then became the country's representative ('to be' ambassador) in Sarajevo, with Dragan Soč, the party left first its secessionist discourse, and then, after the change in Belgrade, the ruling coalition. It claimed that the problem was Milošević himself, and now, without him, there was no reason to destroy the latest Yugoslavia. Although it was fiercely against Belgrade from the beginning of its political life and multiparty system in Yugoslavia, The NS always believed that Montenegrins were actually Serbs, and

² For details see official page of this party at <http://www.dps.cg.yu>.

³ For details see official page of this party at <http://www.lscg.crnagora.com>.

⁴ Vuković, Dragoljub, "Prva dečenija višestranačkog eksperimenta", *Monitor*, n.532-533, December 30, 2000.

not a different nation. Even its ex-president Kilibarda, presenting himself as a 'citizen democrat',⁵ was once known as a Serb nationalist. Apparently, the DPS was situated between its two political partners to manage with their blackmails to leave the coalition if their policy was not carried out, till the NS left the coalition due to disagreement on the status of Montenegro.⁶

The Liberal Union of Montenegro (*Liberalni Savez Crne Gore*, LS-CG) was the second political force in the country before and during the wartime.⁷ It has always been for independence from Yugoslavia like the other republics. But after the change of mentality in the ruling DPS, it lost its public ground, as well as monopoly in seeking for democracy and independence. The DPS never wanted the LSCG to see in the government ranks, but the latter continued to support the former in its quarrel with Belgrade. The main feature of this party was to remain as an acute opposition to everything by any political force, except gaining full independence and keeping Montenegrin nationality.⁸

The Socialist People's Party (*Socialistička Narodna Partija*, SNP) was formed by Momir Bulatović, who was overthrown first from the DPS, then from the presidency of Montenegro.⁹ Bulatović is famous with his loyalty to Milošević, to be called his 'apparatchik'. The SNP always supported the idea of common state, regardless of federal or unitary, with Serbia, due to which it is accused of fighting for the so-called 'Greater Serbia', which it never rejects. It was the biggest party in the country, but, having no majority to establish government, destined to remain in opposition. When he lost in Montenegro, Momir Bulatović was awarded by Milošević with prime ministry of Yugoslavia. After the federal elections of 24th September 2000, the federal government was formed by his party together with Serbian counterparts, and the federal prime minister was still from the SNP, but not Bulatović, who lost his political career after the fall of Milošević. In fact, living in Belgrade, he was president of the SNP only in formality, while the two rival vice-presidents Predrag Bulatović, with no kinship with Momir Bulatović, and Zoran Žižić were on the first rank to hold executive power.¹⁰ Predrag Bulatović was nearer

⁵ Vuković, *ibid.*

⁶ *Radio B-92*, December 28, 2001.

⁷ For details see official page of this party at <http://www.sdp.cg.yu>.

⁸ Vuković, *ibid.*

⁹ Bulatović was accustomed of this political fate, being eventually expelled from the SNP.

¹⁰ Vuković, *ibid.*

to the Podgorica administration, while Žižić, then federal prime minister, to Belgrade and Momir Bulatović. This confrontation consequently resulted in a cup in the party, which brought down Momir Bulatović from his position and made Predrag Bulatović the new president.¹¹

Other important parties are ethnically based. The Serbian Peoples Party (*Srpska Narodna Stranka*, SNS) normally supported the SNP policies in keeping the last Yugoslavia. The Democratic Action Party of Bosniacs (*Stranka Demokratska Akcije*, SDA) is known as a branch of the Sarajevo party with the same name. This party supported the ruling coalition¹², like the Democratic Union of Albanians (*Demokratska Unija Albanca*, DUA), which created great difficulty and anxiety for the independist forces. Adding to the Kosovo wars in 1998 and 1999, Montenegrin doubts rose with the events in Macedonia at the beginning of March, 2001, in which ethnic Albanian and governmental/Macedonian forces started to wage (for now) the last Balkanic war.

At the apex of tension with Belgrade, the Montenegrin ruling coalition was to enjoy some 55 % public support. This meant that only half of ethnic Montenegrins agreed with the policies of Đukanović, while the other half wanted to keep unity with Serbia. Adding to it the facts that parts of the DPS voters were hesitant of seeking independence, and the Bosniacs, habitants of the western part of Sandjak region, worry about aftermath of any de facto independence¹³, which would lead to a Bosniac-terminating war, percentage of those who really wanted independence was very low, just about 40-45 %. Therefore, the widespread discourse "*Montenegro looks for independence*" had no, first of all, internal political and public ground, with the very lack of absolute support. In other words, the coun-

¹¹ *Vijesti*, February 1, 2001.

¹² The Bosniacs were in a great dilemma. If Montenegro became independent, then the Sandjak region, which is divided between Montenegro and Serbia, and where the Bosniacs live en masse, constituting majority of the population would be divided once de facto, which would give harm only and primarily to the Bosniacs. A lot of high level functioners of the SDP with Bosniac origin shared this anxiety, contrasting to the unconditional independist policy of their own party. The SDA Montenegro, doubtful of Đukanović due to that he expelled this party from the coalition 'For a Better Life', was to support independence in the condition of entering in the coalition (*Vijesti*, February 12, 2001).

¹³ This might lead to a war, of which battlefield would certainly be Sandjak, which might mean a new genocide. The NATO intervention would save Montenegro, but not Bosniacs living along and on the both sides of the Serbo-Montenegrin borderland.

try had its own dynamics effective enough to prevent secession from Yugoslavia, not leaving any room for interference of Serbia.

Power of those opposing to Belgrade comes, first of all, from the fact that they are in power. They control 20.000 policemen, equipped with heavy weapons to fight any professional army, and media. The Montenegrin state TV and radio, as well as the two leading dailies 'Vijesti' and 'Pobjeda' were controlled by the government (or the DPS). The very influent weekly 'Monitor' kept its independent stance, but heavily criticising Belgrade and supporting Đukanović. Serbian TV and radios were prevented to broadcast in Montenegro, and distribution of Serbian press was restricted. The daily 'Dan', which the SNP began to publish, had no professional level of journalism and was virtually nothing more than a party bulletin. So, one might speak of a media monopoly by the anti-Serbian side. This deeply influenced public opinion, which wanted "re- definition of relations between Serbia and Montenegro" with a percentage about 70 %. This is apparently more than accumulative public support (55-60 %) to all Belgrade opponents.

Under the light of the up to now socio-political tendency of the people, the best definition of the behaviour of an ordinary Montenegrin was that he neither wants full independence, nor to live in the current federal state. Redefinition of relations between the republics was essential in his/her mind. The DPS, with its discourse, indeed represented this wing of political thought in the country. But both the DPS and the ordinary man seemed to start to shift toward independence, as the new ruling circle of Serbia and Yugoslavia, which was still called 'Democratic Opposition of Serbia' (DOS), produced nothing important and different to solve the problems.

The Change in Belgrade and the Montenegrin Reaction

The latest year of the previous millennium was marked by the war between the Milošević's Yugoslavia and the West. He was regarded symbol of non-stability and the 'last Mohican' of Communism in Europe, and there happened a lot of efforts and plans to get rid of him, but no one succeeded. The main reason was certainly the weakness and disunity of the Serbian opposition, in contrary to Milošević's well-settled administration, enjoying enough public support. Things started to change in the summer of 2000, when the Serbian youth rose its voice against the regime and the liberal/democrat forces were consequently united under the name of DOS, with the exception of the biggest opposition party, the Serbian Renewal Movement (*Srpski Pokret Obnove*, SPO) of Vuk

Drašković, who was accepted as Milošević ally by the rest of the opposition. It was the most appropriate act of the DOS to make Vojislav Koštunica candidate for the federal presidency. He had nothing with the accusations of the socialists (of Milošević) and the radicals of Vojislav Šešelj, the extreme rightist supporter of Milošević; namely, he was not Western (whether American or German) 'agent' like the other democrat leaders, and known as a Serb nationalist.

The DOS swept away not only Milošević, but also Šešelj and Drašković in the federal elections held on September 24, 2000. The Federal Election Commission, controlled by Milošević officials, did not rule out that Koštunica had got more than half of votes to be elected on the first round, and decided for a second round. The DOS did not accept this decision, and insisted on victory of its candidate. Fiercely debates rose tension, which led to a public upheaval on October 5, 2000, when people occupied important public buildings in Belgrade. The Milošević sided army and police did not intervene and the socialist leader resigned from his post, accepting victory of Koštunica.¹⁴

Montenegrin parties, with the exception of the pro-Serbian SNP and the Serbian SNS, protested the elections, claiming that the existing federal administration was illegal and its decisions could not be accepted in Montenegro. The Podgorica government, however, allowed elections to be held in the country, but without permitting use of state buildings and facilities. Thus, the 10 seats reserved for Montenegro in the upper wing of the federal parliament were gained by pro-Milošević parties, nine of them being of Bulatović's SNP, which led to the SNP hegemony in federal government and administration.

Serbian (republican) administration was, from some aspects, more important than the federal one, because of its executive features. So, the DOS victory did not mean all in its administration, especially due to the obligatory federal government partnership of the Montenegrin SNP. Early republican elections held on December 24, 2000, provided the DOS with the necessary executive power. The democrats got about 10 % more votes (64.08 %), or 176 seats in the 250-member parliament, than those in the federal elections, stiffening their position.¹⁵

¹⁴ For the elections and pre-election political situation see: Türkoğlu, Emir, "Seçimlerin Ardından Yugoslavya'da Demokrasi, Balkanlar'da İstikrar Umudu", *Stratejik Analiz*, V.I/6, October 2000, pp.19-33; for the October Revolution see: Karatay, Osman, "Yugoslavya'da Ekim Devrimi ve Karadağ'ın Tutumu", *Stratejik Analiz*, V.I/7, November 2000, pp.20-25.

¹⁵ *Radio B-92*, December 27, 2000.

Montenegrin democrats were hardly happy of these results. They protested federal elections, because they declined legality of the current federal administration, as well as its decisions.¹⁶ The factual reason for the protest was likely the 'foresight' that Milošević would again win the elections. International support to Montenegro stemmed mainly from its opposition to Milošević, the common enemy, rather than any desire to dismember the remaining Yugoslavia. The Western forces in fact never stated that they wanted and supported independence of the tiny republic, which would make the situation in the region more complex to find a solution for durable peace and stability. The USA even tried too much to persuade Đukanović to participate in the September elections, which resulted in vain. When the so-called friends of the West won in Belgrade, Montenegro seemed to lost its ground to pick some relative support from the Atlantic world. To approve this, when Đukanović stated that he did not recognise Koštunica as federal president, Western media commented that he might be the 'persona non grata' of the Balkans.¹⁷

¹⁶ According to the Montenegro administration, the making of Momir Bulatović federal prime minister in 1998 had been one of the most important indicators that the federation was operating illegally. There were a lot of constitutional violations, but Podgorica broke with the last remnants of the 'legal federation' on July 7, 2000, when it issued a declaration on the protection of Montenegrin people and state, as a reply to the 'illegal' constitutional change in Belgrade, enabling Milošević to be reelected for federal presidency. This change made the constitution itself illegal, as Montenegro did not affirm as the federal partner; so the state with illegitimate constitution was illegitimate itself. This meant in, according to a Montenegrin scholar, statutory independence of Montenegro (Bogičević, Čedomir, "Stav: Državnopravni status Crne Gore", *Monitor*, n.518, October 29, 2000).

¹⁷ *Independent*, October 8, 2000. There were a lot of claims by some western media, accusing Đukanović and his companions of smuggling and organising mafia formations. These were exaggeratedly cited by Serbian press. This case was mainly related to Italians. Italian government possessed documents, including recorded phone calls and faxes, which seriously showed ties of Đukanović. These records revealed an extensive history of the Montenegrin president's involvement in cigarette smuggling and close relations with the Italian Mafia (*Radio B 92*, January 13, 2001). These claims were proved by Italian FinMin. But Đukanović fired back at Italian Finance minister Ottaviano del Turco in response to del Turco's accusations of heavy organised crime activity in Montenegro. In a statement for the Rome daily *Republica*, del Turco said that an expose of the extent of complicity between the Montenegrin government and Montenegrin organised crime would "cause a political earthquake", and might result in Đukanović being ousted from the presidency of that republic. Đukanović accused del Turco of "gutter-like" conduct, and told Belgrade daily *Večernje Novosti* that his ongoing attacks would severely impact Italian-Montenegrin relations. Unless del Turco could go public with concrete evidence of Montenegrin state

Although Montenegro was de facto an independent state with its all institutions, including foreign ministry and a currency policy fully separated from the federal will, but excluding the Yugoslav Army (*Vojska Jugosavije*, VJ) located in the republic lands as the only federal unit, the statesmen in Podgorica never claimed and announced its formal independence. Đukanović did not recognise Koštunica as federal president, but as the 'highest administrator' of Serbia. However, on the other hand, he did not abstain from performing his primary federal duty, namely, participation in the meetings of the Supreme Security Council, composed of the federal president and presidents of the republics, which had not gathered since 1998. The first meeting with the new administration, in which the Montenegrin president had confirmed to participate, did not take place, because Đukanović survived an accident in November 2000. The second meeting was held on December 25, 2000, and three key figures of the VJ, the commander of the armed forces in Montenegro, navy commander and Podgorica military airport commander were dismissed on the wish of Đukanović.¹⁸

This was both a contradiction to the announcements of Podgorica not to recognise the federal Belgrade, and a reserve for the possibility of remaining in Yugoslavia. Indeed, this was not the first example for the 'reserve' policy. After the federal elections, the Đukanović administration suggested an experts government to prevent the rival SNP to set up the new federal government.¹⁹

But this never meant that Podgorica in the new period got rid of its worries on the Serbian stance. First of all, the going of Milošević would not solely solve the problem, because, according to Podgorica, on the core of the question were the national policies and interests of Montenegro, rather than the unwanted (and wanted by The Hague) men in Belgrade.²⁰ Without redefining relations in accordance with the interests of Montenegro, no change of power in Belgrade would provide with any radical solution. In this context, Montenegrin politicians did not feel themselves sure on what changed in Belgrade. For instance, Premier Vujanović, known to be nearer to Belgrade and to the federation than Đuka-

involvement in organised crime, then "unfortunately, the matter at issue is a big-time liar with a high position in the government of a developed country"; Đukanović concluded (*Radio B 92*, January 15, 2001).

¹⁸ *Radio B-92*, December 26, 2000.

¹⁹ *Radio B-92*, October 7, 2000.

²⁰ Türkoğlu, Emir, "Sırbistan'ın Karadağ Sorunu", *Stratejik Analiz*, V.I/3, July 2000, p.32.

nović, complained that the Belgrade regime was not wilful to end its project of unitarisation of Yugoslavia, that is, creating the Greater Serbia. According to him, Montenegro had its representatives in none of the federal institutions, and those Montenegrins in the federal government (the SNP) were illegitimately selected.²¹ According to Žarko Rakčević, leader of the coalition partner social democrats, nothing changed in Belgrade; the efforts for Greater Serbia were going on, and the DOS, the 18 member coalition, replaced the old regime to continue working against Montenegro, of course, again together with the 'collaborator' SNP.²²

Pro-Montenegrin media fully shared the doubts on the happenings in Belgrade, asking what changed: Façade or system? When the DOS leaders met with representatives of the Montenegrin DPS and NS in July, 2000, in Montenegro, the Serbs stated their understanding of the fact that Montenegro wanted to keep the federation on the principles of equality and democracy, and they would respect free will and choice of Montenegrin people on their fate, and fate of their state. But the developments in Belgrade after the DOS came to power showed that, according to a Podgorica journalist, the Serbian democrats forget or gave up their promises in July 2000.²³ Once, when Koštunica broke with The Hague over delivering Milošević to the court, the West had to hear Montenegrin warnings that Belgrade had had a new government, but not a new policy. Especially when Koštunica met with Milošević to speak likely the court issue, and publicly the redefinition platform, which will be explained below, this doubt got its apex.²⁴

Redefinition of Relations between the Republics

On the first days with the DOS, Montenegro, loosing to some degree its hopes for independence and seeking to save its gaining in the past five years, had no other way than insisting on redefinition of relations, with the expectancy of getting privileges as much as possible. This was in fact factual position of the DPS, the middle way between the independists and Serbophils.

²¹ *Pobjeda*, December 20, 2000.

²² *Vijesti*, December 23, 2000.

²³ Vuković, Dragoljub, "Crna Gora između Dejtona i Beograda" *Monitor*, 527, November 25, 2000.

²⁴ *Washington Post*, January 15, 2001; *CNN*, January 14, 2001. However, Milošević was arrested by Serbian police and delivered to The Hague in May 2001, just a few months later. Thus, the DOS assured confidence of the west.

The Montenegrin three-party coalition offered Serbian parties a platform to discuss inter-republic problems, namely, redefinition of relations, in August 1999, when Milošević was in power. The platform did not succeed in reaching to an agreement, but was a positive step for dialogue between the sides, and used by Podgorica to show its 'good intention'. Podgorica ever kept the platform on the agenda, and started to use it in relations with the new Serbian government as a political manoeuvre. The Serbian side, keen for meeting, accepted to discuss the matters, but this time the new platform caused the Montenegrin coalition to break down.

The core of the disagreement was the DPS insistence on two states recognised internationally and represented in the UN, and a union with less common functions. This did not satisfy the NS, which left the alliance expressing that it would not support independence of the country.²⁵ Without the NS, the ruling coalition became a minority government but the expected aid was not delayed. The liberals declared that they would support the minority government as long as it carried out policies convenient to their principles, that is, full independence.²⁶

Thanks to this support, the government and the platform process continued. But the DPS was destined to willy-nilly obey wills of its tiny partner, the social democrats, and its main supporter, the liberals, both of whom were hard-line independists.

The proposal for the new platform had in essence two independent and internationally recognised states with common duties and responsibilities, that is, a union of independent states, like the CIS of the old USSR realm. Proposed federal functions were defence, foreign policy and common convertible currency with common market. There would be a one-winged parliament, the republics having equal number of deputies. The cabinet would compose of defence, finance, foreign affairs and foreign economic relations ministries.²⁷

This proposal by premier Filip Vujanović was criticised by the both coalition partners: The NS wanted more common duties, while the SDP asked whether it was possible to speak of independent state with so much common responsibilities.²⁸ Consequently, the NS left the coalition and claimed that the proposal was illegitimate. The DPS rejected it, saying

²⁵ *Radio B 92*, December 28, 2000.

²⁶ *Radio B 92*, December 29, 2000.

²⁷ *Vijesti*, December 30, 2000.

²⁸ *Vijesti*, December 23, 2000.

that the decision was taken by majority vote, contrarily to the NS claim, and was accepted by the Serbian side.²⁹

While the Montenegrin proposal was leading its coalition government to crack down, Belgrade government presented its own proposal for re-definition, which promoted the concept of 'functional federation' of the two republics. This proposal set out that the federation would have sole authority in foreign affairs, national defence, financial matters, customs and contract law. Federal government would be organised as in Germany, in which real power is held by chancellor, rather than president. This draft, which in no way recognised independence of Montenegro, was welcomed by the SNP and in advance rejected by the SDP.³⁰

Indeed, the new platform of Montenegro was a backward step compared to that of 1999. But, in contrary to the general view that democratisation process would help solve the problem, the change of government in Belgrade caused relations to be more complicated, according to experts of the Centre for Liberal-Democrat Studies in Belgrade.³¹

Some critiques focused on the fact that the problem with the new Montenegrin proposal was the lack of realism in expecting that the problem of state status should be solved with democratic contract. It would be the best, according to widespread public opinion, but it was very difficult to find a common cause for the both sides. In Serbia there was no a sufficiently developed democratic consciousness to understand that abandoning the current policy toward Montenegro would help Serbia the most. Between sides having so much difference in size and power, like Montenegro and Serbia, the only way of contract might be a *pactum subjectionis*: the smaller becoming subject to the bigger with some concessions. No kind of equality can change this rule of nature. The contracts between Serbs and Montenegrins on the common state in 1918 and 1992 were exactly like *Pacta Conventa* of Croats in 1102.³²

Any different way for agreement was not possible now, too. Milošević, even though only in words, offered Montenegrins that they might go if they wanted, but if they wanted to remain, then they would obey the laws. Now, nobody offered the leaving option; what was offered was the redefinition of relations, but not according to the wishes of

²⁹ *Radio B 92*, December 29, 2000.

³⁰ *Radio B 92*, January 10, 2001.

³¹ *Vijesti*, January 10, 2001.

³² With this convention Croatia and Hungary were united, but indeed Croatia disappeared from history to be part of the Hungarian realm.

Podgorica.³³ Montenegrin social democrats, who participated in the re-definition negotiations only as a formal-political duty, fully agreed with the comment that there could be no kind of equality in union with Serbia.³⁴

This realistic approach from some pro-Montenegrin circles was supported by Serbian leaders' same discourses. "*The difference of size between the sides is the problem in defining full equality*", said Zoran Đinđić, for example, stressing that the sides had to solve the problem under the current federal constitution. In fact, it seemed, Belgrade's worries stemmed mainly from possible or expectable aftermath of the redefinition process, rather than loosing its federal partner. When Yugoslavia ended, Kosovo Albanians, who never gave up their wish for independence, even in the moderate personality of Ibrahim Rugova, would have legal base to question validity of the resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council, stating that Kosovo was 'part of Yugoslavia', and not of Serbia.³⁵

Likely realising that they were continuously loosing with the 'wait and see' strategy, the DPS leaders did not reject calls by the opposition for early elections after the crack in the coalition. In spite of the objections by the ally social democrats, democrat socialists of Đukanović decided to hold elections within April 2001, just before the referendum on the status of Montenegro, which would to be held in May or June.³⁶

Although polls showed that majority in Montenegro wanted to change status of the republic, the DPS and pro-independence parties, being in doubt of regaining power after the elections, prepared the referendum draft in such a way that any new government would be obliged to hold referendum, while pro-Serbian forces, seeming to have more self-confidence to come to power, were defending the idea that the new parliament should decide on referendum. By delaying referendum, they estimated, at least, on giving Belgrade the necessary time to develop new strategies.³⁷ This was proved by the official Montenegrin news agency Montena-Faks, which quoted an unnamed Belgrade official as saying that a project team had been established to work on getting rid of Đukanović

³³ Radonjić, Radovan, "Stav: Ideja o pregovorima sa Srpskim vlastima", *Monitor*, n.529, December 9, 2000.

³⁴ <http://www.medioclub.cg.yu/23.12.2000>

³⁵ *Vijesti*, December 30, 2000.

³⁶ *Radio B 92*, January 5, 2001.

³⁷ Vuković, Dragoljub, "Montenegro Facing New Dilemma: Elections or Referendum", *AIM*, December 17, 2000.

in order to bring the rebel republic to heel. The plans included international discrediting of Montenegro.³⁸

In spite that Đukanović and his companions played more on the referendum and less on the early elections, as the words of Đukanović that the option of early elections was the most risky one showed, one might say that he was not sure at all of the referendum issue. What was the most certain was that he wanted agreement through the platforms of the both sides. In his Zagreb visit for clinical check-up, he frankly stated that if the sides would fail in agreement, then the Montenegrin people would express their idea on the future status of the republic in the referendum.³⁹

Montenegrin Pretexts and Desire for Independence

According to Branko Lukovac, foreign minister of Montenegro, independence of his country was the way for good relations and stability in the region. *"We believe that independence and internationally equal legal status of Montenegro is the condition for real long-run stability in the region"*, said Lukovac. *"New regional stability should depart from new realities that complex unions could not succeed in transformation on democratic bases and all dismembered. Newly independent states must set up their relations with each other by recognising each other, by easing movement of people, goods and capital, by cancelling barriers built in war time, by reinforcing co-operation processes and connections on regional bases, as method and model for integration into Euro-Atlantic structure."*

Montenegro was victim of aggressive nationalist-chauvinist policies of Belgrade, being firstly isolated from the world, then blocked by Serbia itself, said Lukovac. *"Industry works with 20 % capacity. Ships were held in foreign ports because they, as Yugoslavs, could not pay for their debts, and those remaining in the hands of the Podgorica government remain in ports, without working and getting older. While tourism was once bring-*

³⁸ *Montena-Faks*, January 15, 2001.

³⁹ *Vijesti*, January 16, 2001. It was understandable that Đukanović preferred Zagreb hospitals. What was interesting was that he explained his critical decisions in Croatia, after consultations with the Zagreb administration. That he explained his final decision on holding referendum during the EU summit in Zagreb was also very interesting in this mean. He relied too much on friendship of democratic Slavic leaders of Central Europe: Mesić of Croatia, Kučan of Slovenia, and Havel of Czechia. Slovenia and Croatia in advance accepted independence of Montenegro, while Bosnia and Croat circles of Bosnia was doing everything in favour of Đukanović. Adding Albania to this, there seemed signals of an anti-Serbian Illirian grouping.

ing USD 150 million annually, its outcome realised under USD 20 million in 2000. When independence is gained and the seal of Yugoslavia is got rid of, Montenegro can revive its economy thanks to its educated cadres and sufficient resources. There is no reason to worry about that independent Montenegro will economically depend on smuggling, black money, and black economy. Montenegro is determined to obey all international programs and organisations to fight all kind of organised crime, corruption and human trade. Necessary mechanisms will be created for that aim. We will cooperate with concerning institutions in Serbia and in the other neighbours, too. Montenegro will answer with its program against the campaign squealing it.”⁴⁰

Lukovac pointed to illegality of Yugoslavia also without Milošević, replying arguments that Montenegro must have recognised Yugoslavia, because all the world countries and organisations had recognised. First of all, in Montenegrin point of view, state institutions of the FRY should have been elected by taking also will of the Montenegrin people into consideration, if they were Yugoslav citizens. But this did not have happen. Actual federal president did not need to ask Montenegro for the state's membership in international organisations, which was necessary according to the federal constitution. 'Illegitimate' federal parliament talked about those memberships after their acceptances. So, the constitution was violated. Membership of Yugoslavia in those organisations meant in nothing for Montenegro, because Yugoslavia did not perform internal constitutional duties, which were important to keep the union. De facto, there was nothing changed in Belgrade to make Podgorica believe that things started to go on legal and normal way, and thus, there remained no way other than independence. –

Even Prime Minister Vujanović, known as more careful on the independence issue than Đukanović, started to say that Montenegro and Serbia were de facto independent states, pointing to the irony that the Serbs do not want their independent state.⁴¹

In the daily changing political circumstances of the region, after the leave of the NS, the DPS was judged to subjugate itself to the policies of the social democrats, its ally, and the liberals, supporters of the minority government. To some extent, this shift in the DPS seemed voluntarily, rather than obligatorily. When it became clear that the change of government in Belgrade would not bring new to solve the problems, in con-

⁴⁰ *Vijesti*, January 10, 2001.

⁴¹ *Blic*, December 23, 2000.

trary to all expectations, then the key political force in Podgorica, which had used to seek for a union with Serbia under Milošević, started to want an independent state with less and less ties to Serbia. Đukanović openly stated his wish for independence in his crucial Washington journey; the first one after G. W. Bush came to the White House.⁴² The fact that the international community started to lost its confidence for Koštunica due to the Hague issue, in the first months of the new government, which also shook the so-called internal cohesion the democratic coalition in Serbia, certainly encouraged Đukanović to shift toward independence. Disagreements in the rival SNP, which was going on between the two poles of Predrag Bulatović and Zoran Žižić, and manifested itself clearly with the leave of Momir Bulatović, also contributed to this brave. The constantly weakening opposition in Montenegro and the internationally discredited government in Serbia would help the Podgorica government realise its plans for independence from or less dependency on Belgrade.

Parallel to this political process, the percentage of Montenegrins who believed that the only solution was independence rather than any kind of union with Serbia increased continuously. According to polls of Damar, a Montenegrin public survey agency, those for independence were only 21 % in February 1998, while in December 2000, the number was rising to 43.4 %. For the first months of 2001, it exceeded the half. The widespread disappointment with the new Yugoslav and Serbian governments contributed to this rise and the shift in the policies of the DPS accelerated this change in public opinion. In the question form of Damar, independence was one of five options. When people were given two options, 'yes' or 'no', the rate for independence realised higher than the expectations: % 57.2 for independence.⁴³ The poll of the Institute of Social Sciences in Ljubljana a few weeks later than the poll of Damar showed that % 58.2 of the Montenegrin citizens supported independence.⁴⁴

With this change in internal and external climate, the Podgorica government has given rise to pawn the road for independence. The opening of two new offices in Brussels and Berlin was sign of self-confidence of Podgorica to go on. By those days, Montenegro had representation offices in the USA, the UK, France, Italy, Slovenia and Bosnia. These offices were to be future embassies and very capable cadres were employed. For example, Branko Lukovac, foreign minister in those days

⁴² *Vijesti*, February 3, 2001. See below.

⁴³ Vuković, Dragoljub, "Javno mnjenje i Crnogorsko državno pitanje", *Monitor*, n.531, December 23, 2000.

⁴⁴ *Vijesti*, February 19, 2001.

was once representative in Ljubljana, and Novak Kilibarda, ex-head of the NS, was working in Sarajevo.

Another step was to expel the Yugoslav currency from the country. Montenegro announced in 2000 that German mark had become official parallel currency with Yugoslav dinar. This was a temporary practice till the destined end of usage of dinar. Following this, the government passed a law on founding of the Montenegrin Central Bank. Denying the legal existence of the Montenegrin bank, and, of course, not consulting with it, the new Yugoslav authorities issued new dinars to replace the old ones, and opened exchange offices in Montenegro, too. Belgrade did not invite Montenegrin authorities to the meeting with ex-Yugoslav republics to divide golden and money legacy of the rump common state. Podgorica government claimed that the Yugoslav Central Bank lost its authority in Montenegro with the establishment of the republican central bank, and that any agreement between ex-Yugoslav republics without Montenegro would be illegal. Podgorica finally ended usage of dinar, which caused some reactions, especially by tourism circles expecting guests from Serbia, who normally use their own dinar. It was ironic enough. According to the law, all foreign currencies could be exchanged in Montenegro, except the Yugoslav dinar. This meant in, according to a Montenegrin tourism official, identification of Serbs with exterritorials, coming from the moon.⁴⁵

What If Montenegro Wanted Independence?

Once Serbia could not have used force against Montenegro thanks to international threats, and now could not do it due to international applause, which urged the country to present itself as a democratic and peaceful state. In the both cases Montenegro felt itself safe. Under the new circumstances, nobody in Serbia thought to prevent Montenegro forcefully or even by threatening.⁴⁶ Even General Nebojša Pavković, head of the General Staff of the VJ, whom Milošević had appointed and the new government did not change, announced that the VJ would not intervene in Montenegro on any decision of its citizens over legal status of the republic, adding that the army had no any problem with the current Montenegrin administration.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Đurić, Dragan, "Montenegro and the New Yugoslav Currency", *AIM*, December 23, 2000.

⁴⁶ Anastasijević, Dejan, "Srbija i Crna Gora: Platforma za razlaz", *Vreme*, n.522, January 4, 2001.

⁴⁷ *Radio B 92*, January 15, 2001.

Here was an analogy with Slovenia.⁴⁸ This ex-Yugoslav republic declared its independence for (officially) economic reasons; that is, to escape from the burdens loaded by the federal Belgrade. Before the short-during liberation war, Ljubljana prepared a police force capable of conducting professional war. And, it had more than enough international support. In the second (predicted) wave of dismemberment of Yugoslavia, Montenegro was almost exactly on the same position. It complained about economic policies of Belgrade, prepared an army-like police force and sought for international support. It was historically interesting that Slovenia was the country, which supported Montenegro the most.

Serbia seemed to invite Montenegro to act 'logically', which was a version of its policies to prevent the independence process. One warning was that Serbia without Montenegro would not lose more than what it had lost till then, but what would gain Montenegro without Serbia was uncertain. Only some Đukanović experts were optimists on economic issues, the backbone of the problem. Serbian side pointed to the Czechoslovakia case as an example. Czechia, bigger partner, was now on the road to the EU and Slovakia was one of the economically weakest states of Europe.⁴⁹

But this did not necessarily mean that Serbia prepared itself for separation of Montenegro. None of the current 'democrat' leaders were ready to accept such a possibility, which could be deduced from their fiercely opposition to hold referendum and rejection of the latest Montenegrin proposal on union of two independent states.

The Serbian side tried to reach an agreement via proposals of the both republics, but wanted to start within the framework of the current constitutional order, in contrast to Montenegro, which used to offer to begin from the zero point, that is, from independent states to a union. In any case, in the words of Serbian premier Đinđić, that union would be shaped how the greater nation wanted⁵⁰, which was not associated with something different from the existing Yugoslavia. Inavoidability of this fact made it difficult to think of continuation of Yugoslavia and led, as if, Koštunica to play the role of Mikhail Gorbachev. On the other hand, Koštunica, who had got the highest popularity among East European leaders of the transition period, constantly rejected rumours about ending

⁴⁸ For a nice and satisfactory analysis of this resemblance, see: Kočan, Esad, "Slovenia na jugu", *Monitor*, n.527, November 25, 2000.

⁴⁹ Anastasijević, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Radio B 92*, December 25, 2000.

like Gorbachev, as well as being a new Vaclav Havel.⁵¹ Belgrade believed that in the current circumstances, in which there was no Milošević and his influence, Đukanović could get all what he needed and wanted, except chair in the UN. So, according to the official and unofficial Belgrade, indeed he wanted to end Yugoslavia formally, which showed that he and the independists were behaving in the sprite of revenge of 1918, when Montenegro had abdicated its state status, or, from another aspect, lost it in a bloody conflict in the hands of unionists supported by Serbian armed forces. Belgrade authorities accused him also that this behaviour had had some roots related to other regional cases, i.e. Bosnia and Kosovo.⁵²

What was certain in the year 2001 was that Montenegro was day by day getting determined on independence. In his relatively unsuccessful Washington visit to meet the new US administration, President Đukanović, not regarding the lack of support to and interest in him in the American capital city, stated that Montenegro departed for independence and this process could not be stopped; and then, the international community should have understood and accepted this situation.⁵³

Views of the International Community

Within the still one-poled international structure, will of the international community means in will of the USA. Washington was always careful of supporting Montenegrin independence, even between 1998-2000, when Milošević exceeded Saddam on the rank of the unwanted. After the DOS victory in Belgrade, Montenegro was warned that if it went to referendum for independence, the USA would revise its policy which would likely lead to stopping financial aids.⁵⁴ But this did not necessarily mean that the USA was fundamentally opposing the independence option. It wanted to see Montenegro in Yugoslavia, but this wish was not an ultimatum, and not eventual. Montenegrin people should have decided on its own fate, but this decision should have been taken via negotiations with Serbia.

By the way, according to the USA, there should not have been connection between Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia, in sense of the so-

⁵¹ Interview by Nenad Lj. Stefanović, "Vojislav Koštunica, predsednik SR Jugoslavije: Neću završiti kao Gorbačov, *Vreme*, n.519, December 14, 2000.

⁵² Cerović, Stojan, "Stanje stvari: Kasno je za korak unazad", *Vreme*, n.522, January 4, 2001.

⁵³ *Vijesti*, February 3, 2001.

⁵⁴ *Reuters*, January 8, 2001.

called chain of independence. This was also will of Đukanović.⁵⁵ The chain theory predicted that if Montenegro became sovereign state, then Yugoslavia would formally end. In this case, the UN Security Council resolution of 1244, defining Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia, but not Serbia, would lose its validity. This would lead to comments that the UN did not recognise territorial integrity of Serbia, and thus, finally formal independence of Kosovo would have some or more legal base. If this happened, then the Republika Srpska, the Serbian dominated state-like entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, would have ground to declare its independence, which would be certainly followed by its self-annexation to Serbia to establish the so-called Greater Serbia. The Croatian factor in Bosnia, regardless of the moderate government in Zagreb discrediting the so-called Greater Croatia attempts, might depart toward the still alive national idea of unifying all lands, where Croats lived, under a unique state. With the NATO existence in the region, there was no room for a new war, but politically all these developments might convert the situation in the Balkans to how it was in 1991, that is, to the beginning.

This was what the USA led international community never wanted and, thus, the solution was widely associated with keeping the status quo. Namely, Yugoslavia with Kosovo and Montenegro, and Bosnia with the Republika Srpska had to be saved. But Washington did not give clear signals for fully supporting integrity of Yugoslavia, too. Still there were doubts between Belgrade and Washington; especially the rejection of Koštunica to deliver Milošević and other war criminals to The Hague brought the two capitals about odds.⁵⁶ Koštunica rejected to participate in the Dayton conference in December 2000 held for the fifth anniversary of the famous Dayton peace agreement. In the states-level conference, the situation in the region was debated by the most important personalities from the region and the international community. Being one of the most important statesmen, Richard Holbrooke, architect of the peace agreement and then permanent spokesman of the US official policy on the Balkans, said that only Russia and China interpret the 1244 in such a way

⁵⁵ Commenting on the claims of Belgrade that independence of Montenegro would, in domino effect, destabilise the region from Bosnia through Kosovo, Macedonia and Greece to the 'Middle East', Đukanović said that Kosovo was a question that should have been solved on the line Belgrade-Prishtina with international arbitrage and its solution could not be depended on Montenegro (*Vijesti*, February 7, 2001).

⁵⁶ The USA wanted Koštunica (and Yugoslavia) to clear his position on the war criminals till March 31, 2001. Relations between Washington and Belgrade would get clearer after this deadline.

that Kosovo would ever remain in Yugoslavia⁵⁷, which might be interpreted as such that the USA was far from thinking of an integrated (or existing) Yugoslavia for near or far future.

What was more important to prove this idea was that the consensus in the Dayton Conference gave Montenegrin people right to decide on its own fate.⁵⁸ Adding the expressions on the reinforcement and continuation of the 'Dayton' peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one might comment all in such a way: The USA planned to give a conditional independence to Kosovo⁵⁹, to leave Montenegro alone with its decision and to continue to implement the Dayton process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The new US state secretary Powell's rejection of meeting with Đukanović was commented by the influent American media that the new government did not support Montenegrin independence⁶⁰; but Đukanović 'deducted' from this case that the Balkan region was not priority for the Bush government, and there were other important issues to make the secretary busy.⁶¹

In the summit of the EU in Zagreb just before the Dayton conference, Đukanović too much tried to participate as a state chief. At the last mo-

⁵⁷ Nikolić, Božo, "Dejton i budućnost Balkana", *Monitor*, n.527, November 25, 2000.

⁵⁸ Then Đukanović commented this in the way that the claim of those saying that Montenegro will lose American aid and international support was unbased (Vuković, Dragoljub, "Crna Gora između...", *Monitor*, n.527).

⁵⁹ In contrary to Bosnia, where the three conflicting sides willy-nilly agreed on a common state and co-existence, and where an important percentage of Serbs accepts to be citizens of Bosnia, Kosovo has no any chance to provide with and keep a multinational structure, as seen in the Albanian attitude towards all non-Albanians, including Turks and Bosniacs, which also mean in total refusing of subduing to Serbia-Yugoslavia. The Serbian side is also far from providing with the minimum necessary confidence to make one believe that it may and will manage administrating the province in a way different from the upto now experiences. Kosovo, in these circumstances seems destined to be ruled by the international community.

⁶⁰ According to the *New York Times* (February 2, 2001), by not meeting with Đukanović, Colin Powell gave signals to Montenegro that it did not approve independence, to Kosovo that the Albanians should not have tried in vain for independence, and to the Republika Srpska that the Bosnian Serbs should have forgotten the dream of unifying with Serbia. But the explanation by the spokesman of the State Department that Powell did not want to influence the upcoming elections in Montenegro (*Reuters*, February 2, 2001) reinforced the idea that the USA wanted to see what really the Montenegrin people wanted. That is, if independists came over, it would accord its policies; if not, it would keep the status quo.

⁶¹ *Vijesti*, February 3, 2001.

ment he accepted to be included in the Yugoslav delegation, but sit in the ranks reserved for presidents. In the summit, organised by France, there was no any sign in front of Đukanović to state that he was from Yugoslavia. Official policy of the EU was based on the fear that independence of Montenegro would encourage other minorities, first of all Albanians of Kosovo, for independence and might deeply destabilise the region, within a chain reaction. Meanwhile, it was interesting that Gerhard Schröder of Germany, which is constantly accused of destabilising the region with anti-Serb policies, expressed that the EU has no reason to change its policy, while none of the statesmen or officials from France, known with its usual support for Serbs, was speaking on the issue. Kosovo Albanians were not directly represented in the Zagreb summit, in contrary to the Dayton conference. These were enough to show the difference in policies of the EU and the USA on the Balkans. But this attitude did not satisfy Koštunica, who criticised the EU over its Balkan policy, and disappointed the western statesmen and diplomats participating in the summit.⁶² Under the light of these realities, the EU strategy on Montenegro and the future of Yugoslavia can be summarised as a lack of common and determined strategy, as it was in 1991.

Being member of both the EU and the NATO, active participant of all military interventions and political processes in the Balkans and the west bank of the Adriatic, Italy is of crucial importance for the Montenegro case. As before stated, Italian government often accused Podgorica of supporting and joining in organised crimes, in which focus was Đukanović himself. Even a Bosnian Serb weekly, Reporter wrote relying on some diplomatic sources that the Italian justice ministry was soon to issue an international arrest warrant for Milo Đukanović. According to the report, the indictment would be based on accusations that the Montenegrin president was one of the leading players in Europe's black market for cigarettes.⁶³ The Montenegrin president, refusing all claims, related this policy to the close relations between some ministers and notables in Belgrade and Rome, and stated that Rome wanted to discourage Montenegro to go on independence by discrediting Đukanović.⁶⁴ On the same day

⁶² Nikolić, Božo, "Odjeci Zagrebačkog samita: Neizvjesna budućnost", *Monitor*, n.528, December 2, 2000.

⁶³ *Radio B 92*, January 29, 2001. One may seem in these kind of news of Serbian media the impression of the popular and often stated Serbian belief that Djukanović was the most dangerous guilty of Southern Europe, including Sicily. Indeed, none of the three countries seemed innocent and Montenegro was doomed to be a bridge between Italy and Serbia, both full of organised crime.

⁶⁴ *Vijesti*, January 16, 2001.

when Đukanović pointed to the collaboration, *La Repubblica*, the influent Italian daily, wrote that the Italian government, in the person of Lamberto Dini, the foreign affairs minister, set up 'business partnership' with Milošević by buying 29 % of Telecom Serbia in 1997. Once, about one milliard DM received from Rome had helped Milošević get rid of the financial crisis, win the general elections, and even materially reinforce Serbian police in Kosovo, which was preparing to intervene the rising Albanian armed resistance.⁶⁵

Normally, the UN had also its offers to solve the Montenegrin question. Kofi Annan proposed a confederate Yugoslavia composed of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. This was in fact proposal of Karl Bildt, Annan's adviser for the Balkans and the man who spent his last 10 years in and for the region. Neither Podgorica nor Belgrade accepted this plan. Podgorica said that nobody paid attention for this plan of Bildt, and Montenegro, believing in a solution on the basis of independence, could take it into consideration. Koštunica of Belgrade commented on the plan by saying that it was very far from realities, while Zoran Đinđić was regarding that "*it was none of Annan's businesses.*"⁶⁶

Summary

In the Milošević days, Montenegro became symbol of search for democracy, and Milo Đukanović was associated with Vaclav Havel, Milan Kučan and Stipe Mesić, the good men of transition period in Eastern Europe. In these conditions, Montenegro estimated and enjoyed a lot of support from the West. But the predictable consequences of independence of Montenegro worried the Western policy-makers in the sense that a lot of difficult questions would be added to those existing, for which solution the international community was almost helpless and hopeless. So, when the democratic forces in Serbia came to power, all the western countries tended to the idea that Yugoslavia should be kept and helped be transformed into real democracy. Besides the Montenegrin question, this would contribute to solution of all the regional problems, on the centre of which was Serbia itself. But the first months of the new Belgrade administrations did not satisfy both the West and Montenegro, which always claimed that nothing changed in Belgrade except actors.

The Podgorica government was at the beginning afraid of the DOS victory, but later things changed in what it wanted. This change led the

⁶⁵ *Vijesti*, January 17, 2001.

⁶⁶ *Vijesti*, December 21, 2000.

DPS and Đukanović, backbone of the government, to tend to independence more than they did under Milošević. This policy was supported by the public opinion and the support made the DPS more independist. The Montenegrin preference on the state status of the republic will be clarified with the upcoming general elections of April 2001, which provided the government a popular confidence.

Certainly there were a lot of technical difficulties with the independence of Montenegro. Apart from its relations with Belgrade, the vital issues stemmed from the internal causes. Albanians out of Albania did not yet proved that they would not create new problems, and solve the existing ones within democratic means. Keeping in mind the Preševo valley issue, which made both Serbia and the international community busy enough, one could hardly think that Albanians of Montenegro would peacefully and non-problematically live in the independent and democrat Montenegro (though they always proved to manage a peaceful coexistence with the ethnic Montenegrins). Bosniacs in their behalf were not sure of the consequences of independence. They might prefer Yugoslavia, if Podgorica did not provide with better conditions. Even it was probable that Serbs, concentrating mainly on the north of the country, would expel the Montenegrin authority from those regions, as the Russians of Moldavia did, and try to annex themselves to Bosnia, that is Republika Srpska, like south Ossetins, citizens of Georgia, wanting to enter the Russian Federation. At the best possibility, Montenegro would not be better than Georgia in terms of keeping its authority on the citizens, and than Macedonia in regard to keeping internal cohesion and stability. Then, if the independist government(s) failed to satisfy people, in the first elections Serbian sided opposition might gain power and things might reverse.

It was not rightful for the international community to force Montenegro to remain in Yugoslavia, unless Belgrade proved to be really wishful for democratisation and integration to Europe. But, on the other hand, Montenegrin independence did not seem very fruitful for the regional stability. The best way was likely a union of independent states, of which framework would be determined and warranted by the international community in the direction that the Montenegrin independence, as well as territorial integrity would be kept, and separation from the union would be prevented. Provided that a resolute international would stand behind this practice, this seemed the best solution both to keep internal cohesion and to prevent external (Serbian) threats.