

## Editorial

### *Balkan War Threat Persists*

The power struggle in Serbia between the one-time strongman Slobodan Milosevic, and the man who outpolled him in the Presidential elections on Sept. 24, Vojislav Kostunica, has been decided in favor of the latter. This, however, does not mean that stability in Yugoslavia and in the Balkans has been secured.

To describe the events of Oct. 5 in Belgrade as a “people’s revolution,” misses the point. It would be naive to think that Kostunica’s victory flowed from popular protests as such. Indeed, the various protest demonstrations and strikes by the opposition against Milosevic in the previous days, were rather sluggish and without mass participation. But then, on Oct. 5, the most militant elements of the opposition, well prepared and well organized, were moved to Belgrade from all over Serbia, and set into action. They stormed the national television station headquarters and the Parliament, without meeting with any serious resistance from security forces.

Although some press accounts point to widespread looting, arson, and drunkenness, it is nevertheless obvious that this well-planned and executed insurrection, had not simply flowed spontaneously from the “people.”

Rather, there had to have been negotiations between Kostunica and the secret service leadership, the various police organizations, and the Army, well before Oct. 5. The existence of Yugoslavia as a state, and its main institutions, including the security apparatus, the Army and the Orthodox Church, were not to be endangered. Their reasoning was certainly: If the integrity of the state is no longer possible with Milosevic, then go with Kostunica.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright greeted Kostunica’s success with delirious warbling. Some Washington officials were chanting the mantra about “a Europe whole and free.” But none of this hysteria signifies that Kostunica is simply a “man of the West.” Kostunica needs a lot of money, fast, from the West, but he has not forgotten NATO’s air war against Yugoslavia, and he will vigorously pursue

Belgrade’s claims on Montenegro, Kosovo, and the Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia. By Oct. 6, Moscow had decided to change its tune, and embrace Kostunica as President. In this regard, Moscow will support him, and will play out his good connections to the Serbian security apparatus and Army. In this context, the personal fate of Milosevic is insignificant, except that Kostunica will not extradite him to the West.

But it is very doubtful, whether Kostunica will get more from the United States and the European Union, than “start-up money” and the lifting of sanctions against Serbia. One should remember the highfalutin promises which were made by the West, after the end of the Kosovo war, at the donor conference in Sarajevo, in July 1999. What materialized from these promises was virtually nothing.

As long as Milosevic was in power in Serbia, he served as a plausible pretext, to block any economic reconstruction of the Balkans. It is to be feared, that with the disappearance of the enemy-image of Milosevic, and the escalating financial and economic crisis in the West, the interest in economic reconstruction and stability in the Balkans — especially on the part of Washington — will fade even more. Unless something serious is undertaken in this regard, it is probable that mass demonstrations of protest will soon take shape, this time against Kostunica, because the economic and social conditions of the country are disastrous.

Here, however, lies the chance for western Europe to recognize its self-interest, and to move rapidly toward the implementation of a Marshall Plan for the Balkans. This means, to do what was not done after the Kosovo war. The Schiller Institute presented a detailed plan for the reconstruction of the Balkans, in Summer 1999. The program stressed that it is not a matter of charitable contributions, but that Balkan reconstruction requires industrial exports out of western Europe. A Marshall Plan now is, at the same time, an anti-crisis program for western Europe itself.