

WIN IT

According to the polls, a majority of the American people support sending U.S. and NATO ground troops into Yugoslavia to defeat Serb forces and stop the slaughter and ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians. Or, to put it another way: to win this war against Slobodan Milosevic and his army of butchers by whatever means necessary. No doubt much of this popular sentiment comes from Americans watching the daily horrors of Kosovo unfold before their eyes, while the ineffectiveness of ever-so-slowly-escalating NATO airstrikes becomes ever more depressingly apparent.

But we think American opinion on Kosovo has also been significantly shaped by something else, something often talked about but rarely glimpsed: bold political leadership—the kind of leadership that shapes polls rather than follows them, the kind that stakes out a position in a crisis without waiting to see which way the pack is running, the kind of leadership for which Americans ordinarily look to their president. Only this time the bold leadership is not coming from the White House, or from the State Department, or from the Pentagon, whose inhabitants, whatever their good intentions, remain paralyzed by fear at the thought of committing ground forces to complete the job they so hesitantly and, as it now appears, ineptly began. No, this time it is coming from a handful of Republican politicians, led by Senator John McCain, who had the guts to get out in front of public opinion and make the case that the moral and strategic stakes in Kosovo are high, and that when America starts a war it needs to win it—even if that means using ground forces. The happy result of McCain's leadership, along with that of senators Richard Lugar and Chuck Hagel, is that a good portion of the American public has come remarkably quickly to the same conclusion: that winning is the only acceptable option in this crisis. Now other influential Republicans, like congressman Chris Cox, are stepping up to the plate despite their earlier misgivings about the military operation in Kosovo.

One could wish that President Clinton had the courage to build on the foundation of public support established and reinforced by leaders like McCain, Lugar, Hagel, and Cox. Unfortunately, Clinton and

his advisers seem to be worried that while support for ground troops may be high today, it will not remain so once troops are deployed and casualties taken. So Clinton and his advisers are preemptively deterred even from preparing for the use of ground troops because they fear that at some unknown moment down the road, the polls might dip. Talk about leadership. Why don't they just make Dick Morris the national security adviser and stop the charade?

Still, perhaps the president can be led to the right policy, and the right policy is to win this war. Here's what winning means:

¶ *Liberate Kosovo.* The bare minimum that the United States and NATO must achieve in the coming weeks is the removal of all Serb forces from Kosovo, followed by the return of ethnic Albanian refugees under the protection of a NATO force. President Clinton tried to sound like George Bush last week, declaring that Serb actions in Kosovo “must not stand.” But unlike Bush, Clinton has refused to take the necessary steps to make good on that promise. As McCain said last week, “the president wants to win a war without waging a war.” The Clinton administration continues to cling to the hope that victory can be achieved by air power alone. But whether or not that proposition ever made sense, the way the United States and NATO have conducted the air war—with Vietnam-style gradualism—has made success nearly impossible. Driving Serb forces out of Kosovo is now going to require U.S. and NATO ground troops. It is irresponsible for the president and his advisers to continue ruling out the ground option, and it is simply unforgivable that the administration has refused even to begin preparing for such a deployment. Mobilization for a ground war will take weeks. The longer Clinton waits, the better Milosevic's chances to win—either on the battlefield or at the negotiating table.

¶ *No more deals with Milosevic.* In the coming days the Butcher of Belgrade is going to mount a peace offensive to try to lock in his military gains in Kosovo and split the alliance. He may offer a plan for partition. He may offer to accept many of the terms laid out in the Rambouillet agreement, including “autonomy” for Kosovo—but with Serb control and

some Serb military and police forces remaining in Kosovo to intimidate whatever ethnic Albanians are left in the province. Accepting any of these proposals, or even entering into negotiations to discuss them, means a victory for Milosevic and a clear defeat for the United States and NATO—not to mention a continuing nightmare for the ethnic Albanians. The only thing to discuss with Milosevic is his unconditional surrender. Until that discussion begins, the Clinton administration should revoke Richard Holbrooke's passport and tell Yevgeny Primakov to turn his attention to fixing the Russian economy.

¶ *No return to the status quo ante.* It is essential that Milosevic pay a very high price for his brutality in Kosovo. At the end of the war, Milosevic must be seen, by his own people, by the world, and especially by the likes of Saddam Hussein and the leaders in Pyongyang, to have made a disastrous miscalculation of American and NATO resolve, which cost him and his followers dearly. For that reason, it is not enough if the United States and NATO merely reverse Milosevic's aggression in Kosovo. They must also damage his interests elsewhere. That means defending the increasingly independent republic of Montenegro against attempts at subversion and allowing the Montenegrins the chance to break away from Belgrade's control. And it means taking much tougher measures against pro-Milosevic forces in Bosnia. This would be a good time, for instance, for NATO to go in and snatch the war criminal Radovan Karadzic, who has been frolicking around Bosnia for years. NATO has been reluctant to go after him for fear of casualties. But now that we're in a full-scale war with Milosevic, that reticence seems especially ludicrous. Will hard-line Bosnian Serbs protest and perhaps even seek vengeance? Probably, but at some point in this conflict they may do so anyway. That's why in addition to preparing for ground war in Kosovo, NATO should beef up its forces in Bosnia and get ready for the possibility of combat there, too.

¶ *Drive Milosevic from power.* Whether this is a short-term or long-term goal, we need to make clear that it must be the ultimate goal of American policy to rid Europe of this menace once and for all. It is Milosevic's ruthless ambition, not historical ethnic hatreds, which has brought war and misery to the Balkan peoples throughout this decade. Any strategy that does not aim at Milosevic's ouster—as well as the removal of the thugs who surround him—will only make it likely that at some point in the future the horrors we have witnessed will return. This does not necessarily mean marching on Belgrade—although we would hope that as NATO moves forward in any ground war this option not be discarded. (After all, more strategic flexibility would have

served us well in the Gulf War, as it became apparent at the end of the conflict that the removal of Saddam Hussein was a goal well within the grasp of American military forces.) But it does mean indicting Milosevic as a war criminal. It does mean isolating him in the international community, maintaining strict economic sanctions, and supporting those Serbian democratic forces who, once the present conflict is over and Milosevic's military has been defeated, will surely return to their earlier struggle against the tyrant who has brought the Serb people so much misery. There is no guarantee that Milosevic would fall, or that if he did his successors would be angels. But that is no reason not to try. Dictators around the world, and other would-be Milosevics who have not yet made their appearance, need to know that when they carry out their brutal acts, they will not merely be resisted and turned back. They need to know that they will lose some of their power, preferably all of their power, perhaps their lives as well. They need to know that they will become marked men.

That is what is at stake in this crisis. The struggle in Kosovo today is about more than human suffering. It is about more even than European stability and NATO's credibility. At stake is the single overriding question of our time: Will the United States and its allies have the will to shape the world in conformance with our interests and our principles, challenging as that task may be? Or will we allow much of the world to slip into chaos and brutality, to be shaped by men like Milosevic and Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong-Il and the dictators in Beijing? It may seem odd that this challenge is coming in a place that few Americans ever heard of. But then history has taught us that you rarely get to choose where to make your stand. Today the crisis in Kosovo has become one of those unlikely pivots in history. We will someday have to look back and judge whether we had the courage and wisdom to stem the tide of brutality and dictatorship or whether the United States, instead, let the international order we uphold, and from which we benefit, begin to crumble.

This week Congress returns and will likely take up the Kosovo crisis. Presidents normally lead, and Congress normally follows, but the best thing Congress can do is to put as much pressure as possible on this president. Congress should oppose cutting any deals with Milosevic and insist on victory. Congress can and should authorize the use of ground forces as part of a strategy for victory. There will be a time later on for post-mortems on the Clinton administration's conduct of this war and for a broader debate on the principles and practice of American foreign policy. The task now is to win the war.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol, for the Editors