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"FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA" ¹

Slobodan MILOSEVIC
(Phonetic: meeLOHsheveech)

President, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (since 23 July 1997)


Addressed as: Mr. President 

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Slobodan Milosevic has consolidated his position as the ultimate decision maker in Serbian politics by successfully moving from the Serbian to the Yugoslav presidency in July 1997. He is currently attempting to reinforce his power base by augmenting the powers of his new office, which had been a largely ceremonial post. To this end, Milosevic has begun efforts to bring the media, intelligence services, and other functions under federal control.  He has encountered resistance from Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, who has publicly refused to support constitutional amendments that enhance the powers of the federal president at the expense of Montenegrin authorities. Even without constitutional changes, however, Milosevic will be able to increase substantially the powers of his office through his influence with members of the FRY and Serbian governments, most of whom owe their jobs to Milosevic, according to press and Embassy reports. 

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Engineering a Socialist Victory 

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Milosevic's other priority in the coming months will be to ensure the victory of his Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) in Serbian presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 21 September. To maintain the party's electoral advantage, Milosevic has tightened controls on the independent media and reached out to nationalist leaders to emphasize his party's nationalist credentials. 

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A Return to Nationalism 

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Milosevic--widely regarded as an ideologically and tactically flexible politician--has in recent months shelved the peacemaking image he cultivated in the wake of the Dayton agreement, turning instead to the kind of nationalist rhetoric he employed during the war, according to  press reports. According to the local media, Milosevic was the driving force behind a March 1997 agreement on increased bilateral ties between the FRY and Republika Srpska, the Serb entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The agreement was apparently intended to bolster Milosevic's image as protector of all Serbs, which had been damaged by the public perception that his support for the Dayton agreement represented a betrayal of the interests of Serbs outside Serbia. Milosevic has also beat the nationalist drum in the predominantly minority areas of Kosovo and Sandzak. 

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Rise to Power

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Milosevic was born in Pozarevac on 20 August 1941. His father, an Orthodox priest, committed suicide; his mother, a hardline Communist, also killed herself, according to press reports. Milosevic joined the Communist Party at 18. After graduating from the Law Faculty of the University of Belgrade in 1964, he held a series of economic-related party positions. Milosevic joined a Belgrade firm, Technogas, in 1968 and became its director in 1973. In 1978 he assumed the post of president of the Bank of Belgrade, one of Yugoslavia's largest financial institutions. He returned to full-time politics as Belgrade party chief in 1984 under the tutelage of his mentor, then Serbian Communist Party chief Ivan Stambolic. Milosevic took over as head of the Serbian party in 1986.

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[Redacted] In April 1987 he captured international attention with his dramatic appearance at a protest meeting of Kosovo Serbs, where he initiated an inflammatory campaign to right the wrongs they were suffering and issued demands for rapid progress toward full democracy and a market economy.

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Milosevic has visited the United States more than a dozen times. Since becoming President, however, he has made few international trips.

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Personal Data

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Milosevic speaks excellent, though accented, English. His wife, Mirjana Markovic, has been widely described as his closest confidante and adviser; she often uses her bimonthly magazine column to presage shifts in his official policy. The couple has a daughter, Marija, and a dissolute son, Marko.

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1 The US Government does not officially recognize the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [Redacted]

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