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Trends. After the Election: Milosevic Myths

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The big news from Yugoslavia is that the federal president, Slobodan Milosevic, appears to have been trounced in a re-election attempt. Paeans to the Yugoslav people and to the apparent winner--Vojislav Kostunica--resound throughout the international mass media. From repression, freedom. From intolerance, tolerance. From tyranny, democracy. Out of evil, goodness. Or so we are told.

The truth lies elsewhere. An abstract political analysis suggests that the two houses of the federal parliament are still controlled by a coalition favoring Milosevic. From this, a prime minister and federal government can be formed supporting Milosevic. Also, Milosevic still retains a Serbian power base within his Socialist Party.

A counter to this analysis would be that the symbolic and social psychological dynamic of the elections will induce massive defections from the Socialist Party and members of its coalition parties. As well, a people's power phenomenon will seep power from the federal parliament, prime minister, and government. However, even if this counter proves accurate, the winners may look surprisingly like the losers.

Many people within the anti-Milosevic groupings are against him because he was unsuccessful in wars with Croatia, Bosnia, and in Kosovo. Because he has brought on political isolation and economic sanctions from much of the rest of the world. Because he has called other Serbians enemies as opposed to maintaining and nurturing a Serbian in-group against a non-Serbian out-group. Because he did not attempt to spread the wealth among Serbians, but stole it for his family and cronies. Moreover, the electoral victor, Mr. Kostunica, proudly displays his own significant nationalist strivings, refuses to facilitate the turning over of Mr. Milosevic to the International Tribunal in The Hague for war crimes, yet brands the NATO bombing attacks on Serbian forces in Kosovo as meriting war crime status.

One can make a strong case that the voters of Yugoslavia have voted not for a future of democracy but for a more effective nationalist authoritarianism with the trappings of an ersatz democracy. The world's bated breath as Milosevic totters can more profitably be exhaled. This conclusion does not make as dramatic a story as the forces of Good against the forces of Evil. But it may well be more accurate. (See Erbes, C. R., & Harter, S. L. (1999). Domain-specific cognitive complexity in survivors of child abuse. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 12, 215-237; Erlanger, S. (September 28, 2000). A runoff is ordered, giving Milosevic a 2nd chance. *The New York Times*, p. A1, A14; Jones, E., & Watson, J.P. (1997). Delusion, the overvalued idea and religious beliefs: A comparative analysis of their characteristics. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170, 381-386; Perlez, J. (September 27, 2000). In election confusion, U.S. sees Serb's demise. *The New York Times*, p. A10; Pfeifer, S. (1999). Demonic attributions in nondelusional disorders. *Psychopathology*, 32, 252-259; Zachrisson, A. (1998). Transference: Polarities and paradoxes. *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*, 21, 183-198.) (Keywords: Milosevic, Yugoslavia.)