

# Opposition candidate declares victory over Milosevic

by R. Jeffrey Smith  
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**KOSOVSKA MITROVICA, Yugoslavia** - Moving to preempt President Slobodan Milosevic, the chief opposition candidate in Sunday's Yugoslav presidential vote declared victory Monday, and tens of thousands of his supporters held a huge party in Belgrade to celebrate.

With his bold declaration, made in the absence of official voting results, Vojislav Kostunica appeared to be trying to demonstrate enough self-confidence and public support to force Milosevic to concede defeat.

The opposition contends that despite widespread fraud and voter intimidation by the government, Kostunica carried the day on Sunday.

Kostunica said at a news conference Monday that if Milosevic challenges his claim, the opposition movement will "defend our victory by peaceful means, and we will protest for as long as it takes. ... We will fight in democratic ways. The truth is our strongest weapon. We don't want to provoke internal tensions."

The European Union, the United States and other Western nations - including France and Italy, which have traditionally been less hostile to Milosevic's government - threw their weight behind the opposition, declaring that any claims of victory by the government would not be credible and calling on Milosevic to step aside.

The Western powers view him as

having directed a decade of ethnic warfare in the Balkan region and say he must leave if they are to lift economic and political sanctions they have imposed on Yugoslavia. Milosevic has been indicted as a war criminal by an international tribunal in the Hague.

Kostunica made his victory announcement in a vacuum of reliable information about the actual results.

Government election authorities have so far released only early figures, showing Milosevic in the lead. In any case, the opposition has declared itself unwilling to believe any official vote count, saying the numbers will be manipulated by the government to deny what they contend was a clear win by Kostunica.

Two other opposition parties that fielded presidential candidates, the Serbian Radical Party and the Serbian Renewal Movement, both credited Kostunica with victory.

Milosevic, who has not appeared in public since he visited a polling station Sunday morning, gave no sign Monday that he is prepared to concede the election and resign. At the same time, police and other security forces under his control did little to obstruct the opposition rallies.

Monday night in Belgrade - capital of both Yugoslavia and its dominant republic, Serbia - Kostunica supporters rallied in force, shouting such slogans as "Save Serbia, kill yourself, Slobodan!" Similar rallies were reported in many cities around Yugoslavia.

At the Belgrade gathering, famed Yugoslav folk singer and dissident

Djordje Balasevic made his first appearance in two years, having withdrawn from public performances to protest Milosevic's policies. No rallies were organized by the government Monday, after only a few hundred Milosevic supporters attended a Belgrade rock concert Sunday and suffered the taunts of participants in a larger Kostunica rally.

The government appeared to be grappling through much of the day for a credible accounting of the election results, which analysts here believe Milosevic had expected to win handily.

"We are encountering a wall of silence," said Sinisa Nikolic, an opposition member of a federal election commission. "We are sitting here and asking what to do. We have no access to where computer results are being calculated."

Given Milosevic's tight control of the military and police, as well as his frequent use of repression to silence dissent, he retains the option of insisting that the vote was really in his favor and then cracking down on opponents.

He also could claim that a second round of balloting is needed because no candidate attained a majority of all votes cast Sunday. If he does, a runoff between the two top vote-getters - presumably Milosevic and Kostunica - would be held Oct. 8. But such a vote would hold new risks for Milosevic, because his opponents in Montenegro - Serbia's Western-oriented partner in the Yugoslav federation - who orchestrated a massive boycott of the Sunday's vote within the republic, have said they would

vote for Kostunica in a second round.

Legally speaking, Milosevic could concede defeat but remain in office until the middle of next year, to finish his current term.

At a Belgrade news conference

Milosevic's Socialists won 11 of 90 seats.

Zoran Djindjic, a leader of the 18-party coalition that backed Kostunica, said Monday that results from 60 percent of the nation's polling stations indicated Kostunica had won 55 per-

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this afternoon. Gorica Gajevic, a senior official of the ruling Socialist party, said that with more than a third of the vote counted, Milosevic had won at least 45 percent. She added that she expected his vote tally to surpass 50 percent, ensuring a first-round victory. Gajevic said further that she expects the Socialists to capture a majority of both houses of parliament.

But another official in the ruling coalition, Ljubisa Ristic, conceded the party had suffered a major defeat in municipal elections that coincided with the presidential vote. Opposition leaders agreed, saying, for example, that the opposition had won 105 of 110 local assembly seats in Belgrade and 68 of 70 seats in Cacak, while in Novi Sad

cent of the presidential vote, compared to Milosevic's 35 to 37 percent.

The opposition's claims of victory were based on tallies submitted by its election monitors, who stood by as government members of local election committees counted ballots throughout the country after the polls closed late Sunday.

"In essence, we won everywhere," said a joyous Dragisa Djokovic, who heads Kostunica's Democratic Party offices here in Mitrovica, in the Serbian province of Kosovo. He said he expects "changes, and good changes" in the wake of the vote, which he said Milosevic would be able to ignore for only a limited time before public protests force his resignation.

In 1996, Djokovic said, Milosevic

# Nike defends controversial ad pulled by NBC

by Deborah Lohse  
Knight-Ridder Tribune  
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Just get over it.

That's the message Nike Inc. is sending by saying that viewers offended by the slasher-movie ad NBC yanked off the air this week don't "get the joke."

But several marketing experts are cringing, saying Nike is unnecessarily tarnishing its brand name with such viewers by not denouncing the perceived anti-woman message. A better strategy, they say, would be to pull the ad from all stations and donate to anti-violence causes to bolster the stance.

Some say the ad, construed by some as an overly realistic portrayal of violence toward women, couldn't come at a worse time.

"The Olympics are about sports and worldwide peace," said Carol Cone, chief executive of Cone Inc., a strategic-marketing consulting firm. "And this year, women are doing exceedingly well" in the Olympics. "Their timing was really bad," she added.

The flap started last weekend, when thousands of viewers objected after NBC ran a Nike ad during the Olympic games featuring a woman outrunning a chainsaw-armed attacker. NBC yanked the ad off its Olympics lineup, saying it had only accepted the ad "subject to audience complaint."

"It's not funny to go after a woman like a piece of meat," fumed Joan Glang, a Burlingame mother of a 6-year-old boy who said she flipped the station in horror upon seeing the ad with her son. "He asked me, 'what happened, did he cut off her head?'" Glang said.

But Nike remained defiant, saying it was "disappointed" by NBC's actions and that it knew its loyal fans would understand that the ad was intended as a slasher-movie parody in which the so-called victim emerged victorious, aided by her Nikes. The ad featured U.S. Olympic track contestant Suzy Hamilton.

Nike defended the ad again Tuesday. Critics "are missing the point," said Scott Reames, a Nike spokesman, who said the company did apologize to those who were offended, but stood by its ad.

"People are reading way too much into these ads," Reames said. "We felt like the message in our ads was on where the woman was the victor," he added, noting that many viewers called backing the ad.

In tackling the flap, Nike joins a long roster of companies, many aiming to deliver cutting-edge ads to teens, that had spots pulled after consumer backlash. Coca-Cola pulled a supposedly humorous ad featuring a teen corpse after outcry in 1998. Roy Rogers pulled its lunch-lady ads after cafeteria workers found them demeaning.

The best strategy in such cases,

consultants say, is to "apologize profusely, and begin implementing safeguards to make sure it doesn't happen again," said Robert Grede, a marketing professor at Marquette University.

Nike's lighten-up stance is unduly risking its brand, these experts say.

"There's the old Hollywood adage that says any publicity is good publicity," Grede said. "I don't think that's the same for corporations -- if they continue in the same vein, they are going to wind up shooting themselves in the foot," he added.

"In a venue like the Olympics, which is mostly about feel-good imagery," where "Nike plays such a central role in the event, they didn't need to go to this level of edginess to meet their branding needs," said Allen Adamson, managing director of Landor Associates, a brand consultant.

"Their issue is not awareness. They don't need the spin," he said.

But Nike, like many companies trying to stay current with a teen following, said it can't afford to drab down its marketing. "Especially in the younger consumer market, you need to show you are continually pushing the envelope," Reames said. "If you go the plain-vanilla route, they will quickly discard you."

While the consultants were sympathetic to Nike's bind, they said the global giant isn't like Benetton Group Spa, whose controversial ads such as those featuring profiles of death-row

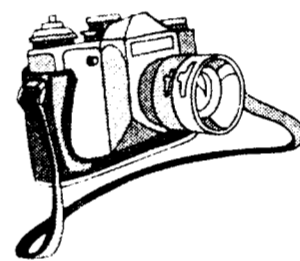
inmates are part of the makeup of the company. Nor are they in the position of smaller companies where shock ads are needed to create brand awareness.

Nike has long been known for its creative advertising, with widely praised ads like its "If you let me play sports" girl-empowerment ads, its catchy "Just Do It" campaign and its top athletes like Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods.

But Nike does walk a fine line with some of its ads. It pulled one last year after some felt the ad encouraged kids to race trains on roller blades, though Nike said the race featured in the ad was only imaginary. Nike angered many in earlier years by spotlighting in ads the racism that still afflicted Tiger Woods, then an emerging star, rather than focusing on his superior skills. And some people complained about its "beautiful" campaign, featuring athletes showing off their scars.

Recently another Nike ad that aired down under angered some aboriginal Australians. The ad featured an array of athletes apologizing for missing key events, like dinner, because of their Olympic training. The athletes repeated "sorry" over and over. Trouble was, the ad was perceived as a trivialization of Australia's "National Sorry Day" aimed at reconciling with native aboriginal Australians for past atrocities.

Nike didn't apologize for that ad, either.



•Quick Takes•  
World & Nation

## Strange Brew?



PHOTO BY REBECCA BARGER-TUVIM (TMS)

A man who goes by Be Gone Norm serves up stew at the annual East Coast Hobo Gathering in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania. The ninth annual gathering drew about 80 wanderers.

## Arabian Tales



PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHNEIDER © 2000, THE WASHINGTON POST

"I try to act as a social guide, teaching the new generation the central tales of Arab culture," says storyteller Rasheed Hallack, in a Damascus tea house. Storytellers operated in Syria when Hallack was a child, but disappeared in 1970 when Hafez Assad became president and began to exert tight control over public discourse and gatherings.

# Euro stabilizes at 87 cents

by William Drozdiak  
The Washington Post  
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**PRAGUE** - Finance ministers from the world's leading industrial powers were pleased as the ailing euro, Europe's new single currency, stabilized Monday at around 87 cents after Friday's massive rescue operation by central banks.

Traders on foreign exchange markets seemed reluctant to test the resolve of the Group of Seven nations,

whose finance ministers vowed during meetings here that their central banks were prepared to take further action to support the euro if it fell to levels that might jeopardize world economic stability.

But some analysts said the euro, which had fallen to a record low of 84 cents before the G-7 intervened in currency markets by selling billions of dollars to prop it up, could face fresh downward pressure if Danish voters decide Thursday to reject a referendum calling on them

to join 11 other nations that have already embraced the currency.

Neil MacKinnon, senior currency strategist at Merrill Lynch, said traders had a "residual degree of skepticism" about whether the central banks can reverse the euro's steep decline against the dollar by repeated interventions. "But the price action today indicates that the market is wary about taking on the G-7," he said.

Friday's action in support of the euro marked the first time in five years that the United States, Japan and

Europe staged a joint intervention on foreign exchange markets. Despite lingering U.S. reluctance to take any steps that weaken the dollar - which might run the risk of fueling inflation - analysts said the central banks have engaged in a battle that they cannot afford to lose.

"It's clear that the G-7 will come in with further intervention if they need to," said C. Fred Bergsten, head of the International Institute for Economics, a Washington research organization. "They have made a commitment now, and they must follow through."