

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN BRIEF [REDACTED] FOR 17 NOVEMBER 1989.

YUGOSLAVIA: SERBIAN STRONGMAN MILOSEVIC UNDER ATTACK [REDACTED]

SERBIAN PRESIDENT MILOSEVIC, WHO ENGINEERED A REFERENDUM LAST WEEK TO SHOW HIS POPULARITY AND TO PACK THE SERBIAN GOVERNMENT WITH SUPPORTERS, IS DRAWING UNUSUAL CRITICISM FROM SEVERAL SERBIAN GROUPS AND GROWING OPPOSITION FROM OTHER REPUBLICS. SERBIAN YOUTH GROUPS AND INTELLECTUALS HAVE CHARGED MILOSEVIC MADE A MOCKERY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS BY PRESELECTING CANDIDATES FROM HIS FOLLOWERS.

[REDACTED] A SMALL GROUP OF SERB HARDLINERS HAVE BEGUN TO CHALLENGE MILOSEVIC'S LEADERSHIP, AND NATIONALIST SERBS IN KOSOVO, ONCE STAUNCH MILOSEVIC ALLIES, ARE ACCUSING HIM OF LAXITY IN INCREASING SERBIAN CONTROL OVER KOSOVO. OUTSIDE SERBIA, THE MILOSEVIC-INSPIRED TRIAL OF FORMER KOSOVO LEADERS HAS PROVOKED STRONG PROTESTS IN SLOVENIA AND CROATIA. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE MILOSEVIC'S RELATIONS WITH BOSNIAN AND MACEDONIAN LEADERS ARE INCREASINGLY STRAINED.

[REDACTED] MILOSEVIC RETAINS ENOUGH SUPPORT IN SERBIA AND ELSEWHERE FOR A FAIRLY STRONG SHOWING AT THE NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS IN JANUARY. BUT CRITICISM FROM SERBIAN AND OTHER GROUPS MAY PROMPT HIM TO COMPROMISE MORE ON ISSUES SUCH AS SLOVENE PROPOSALS FOR GREATER POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION. OVER THE LONGER TERM, MILOSEVIC'S POPULAR SUPPORT AND HIS ABILITY TO DISRUPT PROGRESS ON NATIONAL REFORM MAY DIMINISH AS SERBIAN ENTHUSIASM FOR HIS NATIONALISTIC POPULISM GIVES WAY TO DISCONTENT OVER DETERIORATING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.