

NATIONS

IN • THE • NEWS

Yugoslavia:

The fall of the Mlesovic regime clears the way for closer ties

A \$10 million assistance package from Canada will help the people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) weather the coming winter and continue their transition to democracy.

Announced October 20, the package is the latest in a series of steps toward normalizing relations between Canada and the FRY—measures adopted since the defeat of former president Slobodan Milosevic in a free election last September.

In the wake of the election, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien called on Milosevic to cede power peacefully. He added that Canada would end sanctions and expand its assistance package to the FRY as soon as a “government committed to reform and reconciliation is in place.”

On October 9, after the swearing-in of President Vojislav Kostunica, Canada lifted sanctions, including bans on air flights and export development credits. Still in effect are UN-imposed sanctions, including an arms embargo and a freeze on assets of the Mlesovic regime.

Canada’s assistance will help the FRY cope with the impact of decades of socialist rule, regional conflict in the 1990s and (more recently) international sanctions and the NATO campaign.

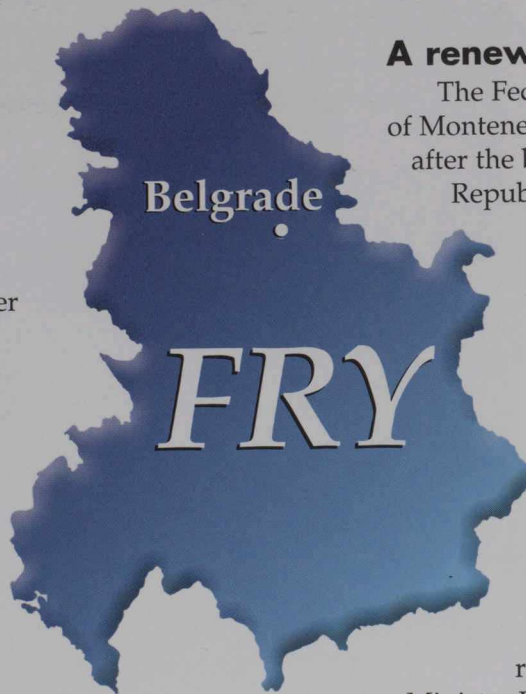
Immediate challenges include possible heating and electricity shortages in the coming winter, and the need to help hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people return to their homes. In the longer term, the FRY will need help in converting to a market-based economy and developing strong democratic institutions.



A man wheels a cart loaded high with firewood through downtown Novi Sad, the capital of Vojvodina province, some 80 km northwest of Belgrade, January 11, 2000.



A young girl pushes a toy baby carriage past the burnt-out remains of a police vehicle in front of the Parliament in Belgrade, October 7, 2000.



A renewed relationship

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of Montenegro and Serbia, was proclaimed in 1992 after the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Covering an area of 102 350 square kilometres, the FRY has a population of 10.6 million.

In 1993, Canada joined other Western nations in condemning the country’s aggression in Bosnia and Croatia, and it supported UN sanctions against the FRY. In 1999, Canadian armed forces took part in the NATO air campaign that forced the FRY to end its human rights violations in Kosovo.

The fall of the Milosevic regime clears the way for a renewed relationship. As then Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy put it when he announced the lifting of sanctions, “Canada’s disagreement was with the Milosevic regime, never with the people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. With Vojislav Kostunica inaugurated as President, Canada is pleased to revive its traditional ties of friendship with Yugoslavia.” ●

photos: CANAPRESS

To be administered by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the assistance package includes:

- \$8.5 million for heating supplies, shelter and clothing. Of that sum, \$1.7 million will go to winterize camps for displaced people and refugees, plus maternity wards, childcare centres and schools. CIDA will provide the support through the UNHCR and UNICEF.
- \$1.5 million to help build democratic institutions in the FRY, including support for independent news media and the strengthening of civil society (non-governmental) practices.

Vojislav Kostunica, the new president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and his wife attend a ceremony marking the 55th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade during World War II, October 19, 1999.