

The man who would rule Serbia

HIS campaign headquarters was within a jail and he was forbidden from contacting supporters and party activists. But incarceration at the United Nations detention centre in The Hague and lengthy charge sheets for war crimes did not stop the groundswell of support for the ultra-nationalist leader, Vojislav Seselj, in Sunday's Serbian parliamentary elections.

The politician's imprisonment is his most efficient campaign tool. The International War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is very unpopular in Serbia. It seems that the more pressure is applied by the prosecutor's office to arrest fugitives such as the former Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, and military chief General Ratko Mladic, widely believed to have masterminded the Srebrenica massacre of 7,000 Muslims, the more powerful the backlash. Much of the Serbian population believes that the country's leaders are unfairly singled out for condemnation. Public opinion polls show about 65 per cent opposed to co-operating with the tribunal.

The slow and cumbersome court procedures, the series of high-level witnesses and the daily live broadcasts of the Milosevic trial, for example, help boost his support in Serbia, allowing him to present himself as a martyr and defender of Serbia, says analyst Braca Grubacic. Similarly, and despite prison rules, the Seselj network still stretches from The Hague to Belgrade and his influence remains substantial.

Although he was banned from campaigning, the liberal prison regime unwittingly gave him opportunities to keep in touch with his supporters.



He once boasted on Belgrade television that his paramilitaries would gouge out Croatian eyeballs with 'rusty teaspoons'. The International War Crimes Tribunal has unwittingly given Vojislav Seselj of the ultra-nationalist Radical Party — the strongest force in the new parliament after Sunday's poll in Serbia — a platform, says ADAM LEBOR

vive and even prosper after his downfall. The parlous state of the economy and rising unemployment, the failure to make a clean break with the bloody past and the reluctance of many Serbs to confront Belgrade's role in fomenting the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo all feed the continuing support for Seselj. While Serbia's neighbours steadily integrate into mainstream Europe, much of the Balkan nation is locked in a cycle of denial and self-pity, potentially destabilising the process of European integration.

During the Croatian and Bosnian wars, Seselj ran his own brutal militia. He once boasted on Belgrade television that his paramilitaries would gouge out Croatian eyeballs with "rusty teaspoons". The political thuggishness of the early 1990s still thrives, encouraged by Tomislav Nikolic, his successor as head of the Radical Party. This week, Nikolic reiterated on television that he was not sorry about the murder of the opposition journalist, Slavko Curuvija, in 1999.

Of course, Milosevic and especially his wife Mira Markovic loathed Seselj and the feeling was mutual. Seselj once claimed on television that Milosevic was henpecked, and suggested that Mira was not really a woman. She accused him of "inciting others to take part in a war in which he did not have the guts to take part" and claimed "that perhaps he is just not a man".

Not a man, war criminal, or international statesman: the difference, it seems, is in the eye of the beholder.

— *The Times, London.*

1980s for anti-Communist activities. He emerged with a loathing of Croats and Muslims so visceral that many questioned his sanity. Warren Zimmerman, the former US Ambassador to Yugoslavia, described him as a psychopathic bully.

The continuing popularity of Seselj highlights a profound malaise in Serbian politics. The Milosevic regime's topping in the October 2000 revolution was organised with the consent of the army and the secret service, allowing many of the dark networks of the Milosevic era that helped to destroy Yugoslavia to sur-

While earlier this month, Milosevic broke prison rules by taping a speech for a Belgrade radio station as a result of which tribunal officials imposed new restrictions, Seselj even telephoned the Radical Party headquarters on Christmas Day while the party held a news conference.

"I waited for this day when the prison is pretty empty," he said, according to a transcript on the party website. "An old inmate always knows how to take his guards by surprise."

Seselj was imprisoned in the early

Milosevic, loyals win Serb polls

Reuters & AFP

Belgrade, December 29

A SERBIAN ultra-nationalist party led by an indicted war crimes suspect offered to form a coalition government with moderates on Monday after it won the parliamentary elections. The winners of Sunday's elections included former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, on trial before the UN war crimes tribunal at The Hague, who will not sit in the assembly, officials said.

The hardline Serbian Radical Party (SRS) under Vojislav Seselj, who is awaiting trial on war crimes charges at the UN tribunal, offered to join forces with the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) under former Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica.

"There are obviously many common points in our two programmes which could make us form a government together," SRS deputy leader Tomislav Nikolic told reporters after Nationalists won the largest share of votes. "We are suggesting to the DSS to listen to the will of its voters. It is obvious that only the SRS and the DSS can form the government," Nikolic said.

The Radicals will be the biggest party in the new Parliament after winning 27.5 per cent of the vote on Sunday, according to unofficial results. Their success sparked concern across Europe of a return to nationalism in the former Yugoslav Republic. Together with the Socialist Party of Milosevic, they could command more than a third of the vote.

Both Seselj and Milosevic are facing war crimes charges for their roles in the Balkan wars that tore apart former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Neither Milosevic nor Seselj can take their seats in Parliament because they are in UN custody, but diplomats here said their election had a powerful symbolic impact.

"This will be seen as negative because of the symbolic value that these two people represent," a European diplomat posted in Serbia and Montenegro said.

Kostunica, who helped overthrow Milosevic in 2000 but then opposed his extradition to the UN tribunal, has repeatedly ruled out joining forces with the Radicals despite his reputation as a "soft nationalist".

He has been consistent in his opposition to the hardline nationalism embodied by Seselj, who wants to role back reforms designed to bring Serbia into the European Union and Nato.

Outgoing Deputy PM Nebojsa Covic said the result showed Serbs wanted to punish the government for failing to raise living standards faster in a country that had been battered by years of international isolation under Milosevic. Together with Milosevic's Socialists, the Radicals would have more than 100 deputies in the 250-seat legislature.

30 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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SERB POLLS / COALITION GOVERNMENT LIKELY

Majority eludes ultra-nationalists

By Batuk Gathani

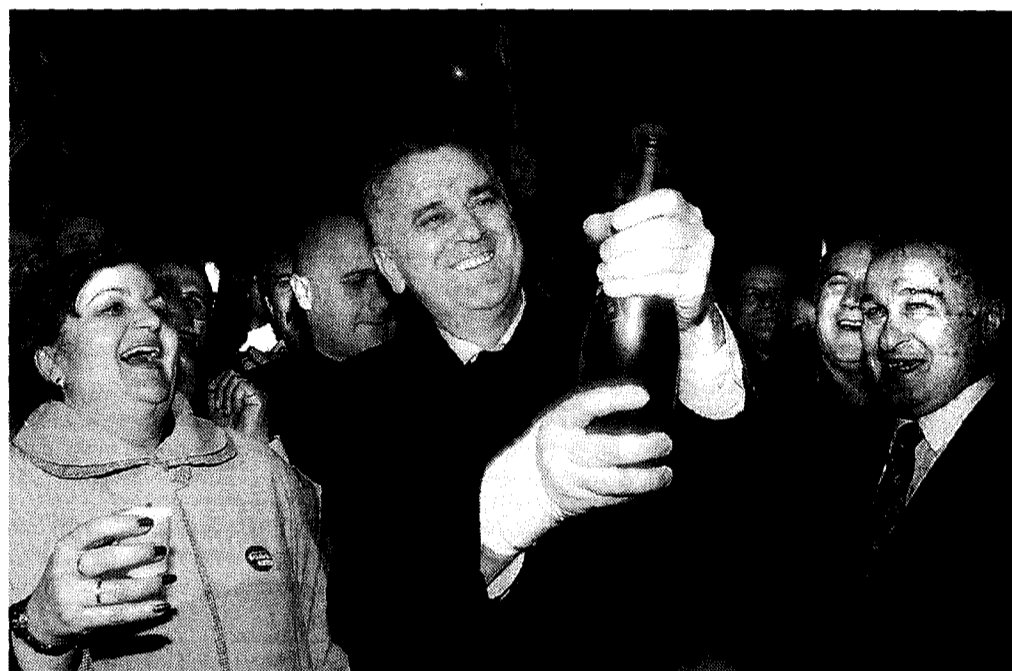
BRUSSELS, DEC. 29. The ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) — who are opposed to the Liberal Democrat-initiated reforms — allied to the former Serbian strongman leader, Slobodan Milosevic, has emerged leading in the crucial parliamentary elections late last night. However, they have failed to gain a majority needed to govern on their own.

The result is a setback for reformers as they suffered their biggest setback since forcing Mr. Milosevic out of power in 2000.

It is ironic to note that both Mr. Milosevic and his ultra-nationalist ally, Vojislav Seselj, have scored an impressive electoral victory while they are detained and being held for trial at The Hague, allegedly for war crimes.

Two other indicted war crime suspects from other parties were also running for parliamentary seats. The War Crimes Tribunal has emerged as an unpopular institution in Serbia since it has also demanded extradition of four more suspects, for alleged war crimes against the Muslim population in the Balkan region under Serbian influence.

The centre-right nationalist parties are likely to provide a robust Opposition, as they are overtly and passionately disdainful of the U.S. and the E.U. Hence, there is much uncertainty about the final election result, but the unofficial poll results show reformers had won 59 per cent of parliamentary



Tomislav Nikolic, deputy head of the hardline nationalist Serbian Radical Party and other officials celebrate 'victory' in the general elections in Belgrade on Monday. — Reuters

seats and technically enough to form a broad ruling coalition with a reformist agenda.

The winners are poised to occupy more than 100 of the 250 seats and hence will need to seek the help of other parties to form government.

The ruling political class is mired in crises of legitimacy with corruption rampant and big question marks about efficient and transparent governance.

Kosovo is de facto an international protectorate but legally remains part of Serbia. The union arrangement is to remain in place for a minimum of three

years after which the two republics will decide whether to keep or scrap it.

The Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, was proclaimed in 1945. Under Tito, the lid was kept on ethnic tensions. The federation lasted for over 10 years after his death in 1980 but under Mr. Milosevic it fell apart in bloodshed through the 1990s. In 1998, violence flared in the autonomous province of Kosovo in Serbia.

The Kosovo Liberation Army, supported by the majority ethnic Albanians, came out in

open rebellion against Serbian rule.

Amid escalating violence, international pressure grew on Mr. Milosevic and NATO launched air strikes against Yugoslavia in March 1999.

The country was thrown into turmoil just weeks after coming into existence when the Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, who spearheaded reforms, was assassinated.

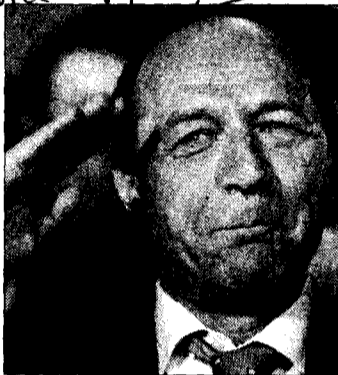
Djindjic was the prime mover in the handing over of Mr. Milosevic to The Hague Tribunal. The authorities blamed organised criminal groups with links to Mr. Milosevic for his killing.

Romania votes Basescu

14/12
Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Dec. 13. — Prime Minister Mr Adrian Nastase conceded defeat in Romania's presidential runoffs today, calling opponent Mr Traian Basescu the country's future President. "It is the decision of the Romanian people and I respect it," Mr Nastase said. "I congratulate Basescu," he said and added: "I have congratulated him personally on the phone today... Basescu is the future President of Romania."

A small political party that initially had supported Mr Nastase's Social Democratic Party, quickly issued a statement expressing its independence. Mr Basescu, Bucharest's mayor, held a decisive lead in Romania's presidential runoff with less than 2 per cent of the ballots remaining to be counted, according to official partial re-



After victory: Mr Traian Basescu. — AFP
sults released today. His victory dealt a major blow to the successors of Romania's Communists, who have governed for most of the period since the 1989 revolution. President Ion Iliescu, who had supported Mr Nastase, called Mr Basescu today to congratulate him.

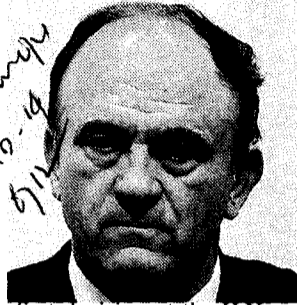
With 98.76 per cent of the ballots counted, Mr Basescu had 51.23 per cent of the vote, while Mr Nastase had 48.77.

14 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Jail for Bosnian Serb general

THE HAGUE (NETHERLANDS): A Bosnian Serb general was convicted on Friday of commanding a deliberate two-year campaign of terror against the civilians of Sarajevo, raining sniper fire and shells on the Muslim sector of the city that killed hundreds of people and wounded thousands. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. By a two-to-one decision, the U.N. War Crimes Tribunal said Gen. Stanislav Galic (*in the picture*), ordered his troops to fire on civilians while they were shopping, tending gardens, fetching water from the river or going about their daily lives. It was the first decision at the U.N. court for the former Yugoslavia dealing exclusively with the siege of Sarajevo during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war that brought the world images of "Sniper Alley" and corpses of children killed by shells while playing in the snow. — AP



'Newater' a success

SINGAPORE: A factory that turns sewage into drinking water is being promoted as Singapore's latest tourist attraction, local media reported on Friday. The Government launched an aggressive campaign last year to prepare Singaporeans for waste water that is processed so that it is again clean enough to drink, a product dubbed 'Newater'. This February, the country started replenishing about 1 per cent of its daily water consumption with the reclaimed waste water. Keen to share its Newater success with the rest of the world, Singapore's Public Utilities Board has printed glossy brochures about the Newater plant, which will be

distributed at hotels, tour agencies and other tourist attractions, the *Straits Times* daily said. The utility board was not immediately available for comment. This resource-scarce city-state now buys more than half of its water from neighbouring Malaysia under decades-old treaties, which start expiring in 2011. The water trade has sparked occasional spats between the two nations over pricing and other issues. The Government hopes that Newater will help Singapore eventually become self-sufficient when it comes to water. Visitors to the plant view video presentations on how Newater is treated, and take a free hour-long guided tour where they learn about Singapore's quest for alternative water supplies, according to the centre's Web site. — AP

Bosnia Serbs admit killing over 7,000 Muslims

Agence France Presse

BANJA LUKA, Oct. 14. — Bosnian Serb authorities admitted for the first time today that more than 7,000 Muslims had been slaughtered by Serb forces in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's worst atrocity since World War II.

"I am confirming that the number (of victims) is higher than 7,000. I cannot reveal the exact figures. It is up to the government to do it," an official from a special investigative commission said.

In June, the Bosnian Serb government admitted for the first time that Serb forces had committed the massacre and tried to cover up the crime, but it avoided giving a definite figure.

The commission included the figures of more than 7,000 victims, in a report that it presented to the Bosnian Serb government yesterday. "I think that the commission made the most objective and the most correct list of those killed in Srebrenica," commission member Mr Djordje Stojakovic said.

The government issued a report in 2002 which minimised the number of victims, triggering outrage among survivors and the international community.

Gasparovic is elected Slovak president

9-19
19/4

Europe

Bratislava: Slovakia's former parliamentary speaker Ivan Gasparovic has been elected president with nearly 60 percent of the vote, the central electoral commission said on Sunday.

With results from all 50 electoral districts, Gasparovic won a decisive 59.9 percent of the vote in Wednesday's runoff election, against 40.1 percent for former prime minister Vladimir Meciar.

Meciar, a 61-year-old controversial former prime minister who negotiated the split of Czechoslovakia in 1991, had been tipped for a political comeback after a decisive victory in a first round of voting two weeks ago.

Gasparovic, 63, had been Meciar's right-hand man for years before splitting with him in the late 1990s.

The success of the two men in the first ballot on April 3 caused a major upset for the then-favourite foreign minister Eduard Kukan who was knocked out of the running.

Over the past two weeks, Gasparovic sought to rally support from various opponents of Meciar, arguing he was more acceptable to foreign partners.

During Meciar's eight years as prime min-



Ivan Gasparovic flashes the victory sign at his party headquarters in Bratislava on Sunday after winning the presidential elections

ister in the 1990s, the United States and European nations had warned that under his dictatorial rule Slovakia would have no place in the European Union and Nato. AFP

Japan, S Korea stand firm on Iraq

ANN & Agencies

TOKYO, April 9. — Japan and South Korea today vowed to stand firm in Iraq despite armed insurgents abducting a number of their citizens in an apparent bid to force a troop pull out amid rapidly deteriorating stability.

Seven South Koreans and, reportedly, three Japanese were seized in separate incidents in Iraq, renewing fears that rebels would target citizens of US allied nations to weaken an already faltering resolve among the coalition.

Within hours of the latest incident, Japan's government reaffirmed its commitment, saying it would not be swayed by threats despite alerts that have largely confined Japanese troops in

to their bases.

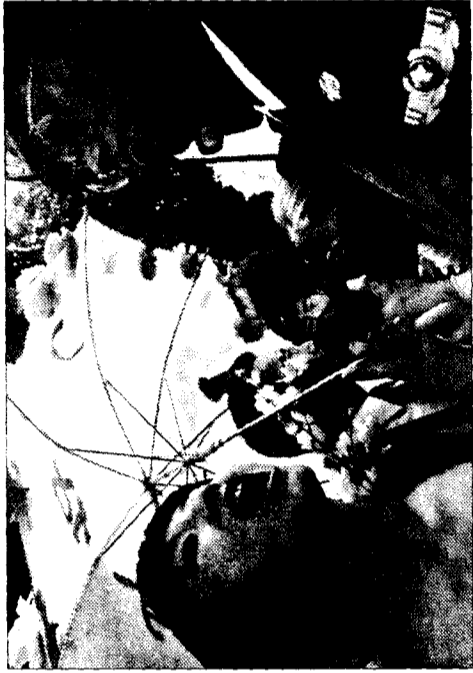
Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi denounced terrorists' threats to burn alive three hostages as "cowardly" and vowed today that Japanese troops would stay in Iraq despite tearful pleas from the captives' families to bow to the gunmen's demands. "We cannot give in to the cowardly threats of terrorists... Right now what we need to do is gather accurate information and bring them home safely."

In a related development, the Japanese government has decided to organise an airlift to evacuate Japanese civilians in Iraq to neighbouring Kuwait following the kidnapping of three Japanese nationals, a news report said today.

Chief Cabinet secretary



DEFIANCE ALL AROUND: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. (Right) A policeman looks at a Japanese woman shouting slogans demanding the release of three kidnapped Japanese in Iraq in Tokyo on Friday. — AFP



Mr Yasuo Fukuda told reporters: "Since our Self-Defence Forces are providing reconstruction support for Iraqi people, we have no reason for withdrawal."

In Seoul, South Korean foreign minister Mr Ban Ki-moon said his country's dispatch of personnel to the country, where the US-led coalition is facing an increasingly bloody resistance, would continue unabated. The minister added: There is no change at all in our principle of dispatching troops to Iraq.

Foes pitch in differently

JERUSALEM, April 9. — The Palestinian Authority and Israel pitched in separately using their influence to get the two Israeli Arabs kidnapped by Iraqi insurgents released, as the episode has brought to light the complex reality surrounding the occupants of East Jerusalem.

Mr Yasser Arafat personally intervened today to seek the release of the two Palestinians kidnapped in Iraq, his office said. An Israeli foreign ministry official today said the USA is handling the case of the two Arab residents of East Jerusalem, who were kidnapped yesterday by a previously unknown Iraqi group. — PTI

THE KOSOVO CRISIS

Whole Of The Balkans May Be Affected

By VLADIMIR VOLKOV

SF 6 27/3
Nato started bombing Yugoslavia on 24 March, 1999, allegedly in reply to ethnic cleansing campaigns and the ousting of Albanians from Kosovo. Today, five years later, one can say that the result of NATO actions was diametrically opposite to the goals proclaimed at the beginning of the military operation. The Western powers, which spoke about their desire to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo, actually provoked it. Large-scale ethnic persecution campaigns against Serbs, Gypsies, Jews, Turks and all other non-Albanian groups began in Kosovo with the deployment of "blue helmets". Since then, about 400,000 have fled the province.

Nato connivance

The campaign of creating an "ethnically pure Kosovo", launched with Nato connivance by Albanian extremists who seized power in the region, has had its ups and downs, with another aggravation, apparently planned in advance, in Kosovo Mitrovica in the past few days. As a result, more than 20 Serbs were killed and hundreds forced to leave the province, Serb villages and churches torched, anti-Serb hysteria is gaining momentum and new demands for the independence of Kosovo have been made by Albanian extremists. These demands run counter to UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which seals the territorial integrity of the former Yugoslavia (and now Serbia and Montenegro), Kosovo as its inalienable part.

In fact, Kosovo has long escaped the jurisdiction of Belgrade and turned into a mandate territory of Nato, whose peacekeepers do not control the situation in the province. Albanian extremists are its true masters. Their terrorist organisation — the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), against which fought ex-

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President Slobodan Milosevic, who is now facing the Hague tribunal on charges of ethnic persecution — has not been dissolved after the deployment of Nato forces in the province, though the bloc had pledged to disarm the bandits.

But the KLA only changed its

extremists, saying that in this situation, there is no alternative to the independence of Kosovo, as US ex-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used to say. This is an extremely dangerous stand, as it implies not only the creation of an independent state of Kosovo but also the im-



name to the Kosovo Protection Corps, whose "men and officers" not only bring death and destruction to the province but also make raids to the southern districts of Serbia, where they attack people and even police stations. The KLA bandits also infiltrate Macedonia, joining the local Albanian extremists, fanning their separatism and encouraging them to begin an armed struggle for the "independence" of Albanians.

Extremist ideas

As a result of the legalisation of the KLA through the creation of the Kosovo Protection Corps, dozens of bandits received posts in the province's bodies of authority and are now applying their extremist ideas quite legally.

Regrettably, many politicians in the West are encouraging the separatist plans of Albanian

implementation of a more ambitious plan of creating Greater Albania, which would incorporate Albania, Kosovo, and a part of Montenegro, Macedonia and Greece. The appearance in Europe of such a state as a result of border re-carving, with a quickly growing population of six to seven million, would seriously change the situation in the Balkans and the rest of Europe. It would thus become extremely difficult to get rid of the Balkan splinter.

Kosovo has calmed down a bit now after several days of Serb pogroms, and President Ibrahim Rugova has even announced a day of mourning for the dead. But this calm, ensured by the emergency deployment of additional KFOR units and harsh military-police measures, is deceptive and, worst still, temporary. There will be a new outbreak of violence, which can

grow to dangerous proportions because the Kosovo problem has not been solved and the West does not seem willing to bring order to the unruly extremists who made terror the main instrument of implementing their separatist plans.

Moscow believes that the situation in Kosovo can be stabilised if the sides strictly abide by Resolution 1244 and Belgrade jurisdiction over Kosovo is restored in practice. "Regrettably, the Albanian leaders seldom fulfil the demands of the Security Council", Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the other day in an interview with Russian television channel.

Ethnic groups

"Besides, some Western spokesmen closed their eyes to this and did not call Albanians to their senses in time. The recent tragedy in Mitrovica confirmed our fears that such connivance with the Albanians' intention to cleanse the province of other ethnic groups is harmful and dangerous". The minister added that Russia demands compliance with the basic provisions of the settlement sealed by the UN Security Council.

Ethnic groups cannot live at peace with each other in Kosovo, and so we should probably accept the idea of Serbian prime minister Vojislav Kostunica on dividing Kosovo into ethnic cantons. This scheme is actually used in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Serbs and Muslims have been living separately after the hostilities of the early 1990s.

To restore order in Kosovo, the world should really disarm the KLA or whatever it is called now and call to account the Albanian "hawks" such as Hasim Taci, ex-leader of the KLA who has become a "respected politician" and the leader of the so-called Democratic Party of Kosovo. He committed many crimes in the past and is playing politics in Kosovo now, politics that is fraught with violence and might eventually blow up the Balkans.

There is no scarcity of resources in our country, but these are not used properly. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee.

I think West Bengal is suffering from an image problem... The government has to build a climate conducive for business. The bandh culture has to be banished as it scares potential investors. — Mr Kenji Shimizu, Japanese consul-general in Kolkata.

It (Mr Rahul Gandhi's entry into politics) would not make any ripple in the country and would have no impact on the prospects of Uttar Pradesh. — Mr LK Advani.

Yassin's ideology was killing and murdering Jews, wherever they were, and the destruction of

the state of Israel... The war against terror has not ended and will continue day after day, everywhere. It is the natural right of the Jewish people, like that of all nations in the world that love life, to hunt down those who rise to destroy it. — Mr Ariel Sharon, Israeli Prime Minister, on the assassination of the Hamas spiritual leader.

I'm a liberal man and have observed the BJP changing itself in the greater interests of the people. I've found the party most progressive among all parties. — Mr Bhupen Hazarika.

Several times we urged the NDA government to declare Tamil as a classical language and as one of the official languages.

But they (BJP) ridiculed us. So we had to resort to protest demonstrations, which was criticised by senior leaders of the NDA. That is why we had to leave the alliance. — Mr Karunanidhi, DMK leader, at a rally.

Frankly, I find it outrageous that the President is running for re-election on the grounds that he's done such great things about terrorism. He ignored terrorism for months when maybe we could have done something. — Mr Richard Clarke, who served as the US President's counter-terrorism coordinator and previously worked for the Clinton administration.

Nehru was not attuned to the soul of India while Patel was.

Later Acharya Kripalani and Jayaprakash Narayan too accepted that choosing Nehru was a mistake. — Mr KS Sudarshan, RSS chief.

I voted for Putin because he is going to win anyway and what is the point in voting for someone else. — Yelena Chebakova, a Moscow resident.

I don't like to see a different number next to my name. — Serena Williams, who lost her world no 1 ranking after knee surgery last year, which forced her to take a break.

What do you think, watching on TV? I think we all know the answer, don't we? — Sourav Ganguly, asked to comment on the alleged chucking action of bowler Shoaib Akhtar.

on RECORD

Poland performs a balancing act

19-17 19/7

By C. Raja Mohan

WARSAW, MARCH 18. As Poland prepares to join the European Union in about six weeks, it is widely accused in the continent as being "a Trojan Horse" for the United States. Poland's strong support for American military presence in Europe and its helpful role in the stabilisation of Iraq, makes it stand out amidst the deepening political rift between America and Europe.

"It is a wrong metaphor", the President of the Polish Senate, Prof. Longin Pastusiak, tells a visiting group of Indian writers. "We do not have to bring Americans into Europe", Prof. Pastusiak says. "They have been here a long time".

Poland, however, is determined to help keep the Americans inside Europe for the foreseeable future. As the U.S. rethinks the disposition of its military forces in Europe for the first time after the Second World War, Poland is keen to host American troops on its soil.

The U.S., which is reordering its military presence in Europe for the first time since the Second World War, has agreed to establish three military facil-

ities in Poland which joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1999. The scale and quality of American military presence in Poland would have been much higher but for Russian objections to the east-ward expansion of the NATO.

Poland was indeed eyeing a larger American military presence and the commercial benefits that would have followed. But for now it is satisfied with the symbolic importance of American facilities on its soil. American military presence might have less to do with actual military security, but it provides psychological assurances as well as underwrite Poland's emerging special relationship with the United States.

The clue to the unusual role of Poland in a rapidly transforming Europe lies in its history. There is not one Polish interlocutor who does not tell you the deep historical anxiety of being kicked around by its neighbouring great powers. Until the First World War, Poland's very existence was vulnerable to the repeated partitions of the nation by the three great powers surrounding it—Austro-Hungarian empire, Russia and

Germany (Prussia). Later sandwiched between Germany and Russia, Poland found its national frontiers being shifted again and again.

Warsaw clearly prefers that stability and regional balance of power is maintained by a distant superpower, the United States, rather than the neighbouring powers. Washington, in turn, clearly values the special geopolitical position of Poland in Europe.

WARSAW JOURNAL

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union and its control over Eastern and Central Europe in the late 1980s, Poland had just three neighbours—the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. The Unification of Germany and the splintering of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia have given Poland seven ethnic Poles are scattered among these neighbouring countries.

The history of Warsaw's relations with all these neighbours is a complex one loaded with memories of past domina-

tion of outsiders and Poland's own expansive role in the region. Officials insist that Poland's relations with all its neighbours are today in an "excellent shape".

Analysts outside the Government do agree that the integration into the structures of NATO and European Union give Poland a rare stability. But they insist that Poland will continue to keep a wary eye on Russia for any signs of geopolitical assertiveness and balance Germany within Europe. Poland will also seek to exploit its special ties to neighbouring countries like Lithuania and Ukraine.

Located at the heart of the continent, Poland is a natural bridge between different historical fault lines in Europe. It is an active member of different sub-regional groupings like the Visegrad Group that includes (Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary).

It sits on the Council of Baltic Sea States that includes Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Russia and Sweden. Poland has also set in motion what is called the Central Europe Initiative to overcome the historical polit-

ical differences in the region.

As the E.U. takes in ten new members on May 1, Poland is clearly the largest and most influential. With a population of 40 million, it is as large as all the other nine new members put together.

Poland, like some other smaller states of Europe and the United Kingdom, would prefer a Europe that is loosely federated. It does not relish the prospect of a tighter federation sought by France and Germany which might swamp the national identities of smaller nations.

In getting wrapped into the European fold, Poland realises one of its long-sought national objectives. Even as it seeks a say in the E.U., Poland does not want to squander the special relationship with the United States. But these two objectives do clash amidst the mounting political tensions between Europe and America over the war on terrorism. "We are often asked, who do you love more—your mother or the father?" the Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland, Boguslaw Zaleski, says. He hopes Poland will never have to choose between Europe and America.

22 killed, 500 injured in Kosovo riots

Associated Press
Pristina, March 18

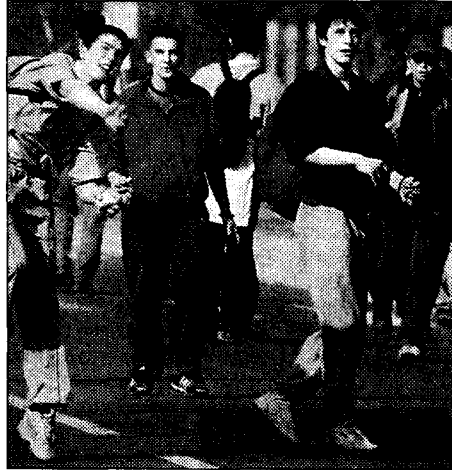
GUNBATTLES, RIOTS and street fights between Serbs and ethnic Albanians have killed 22 people and injured about 500, UN officials said on Thursday, as Nato peacekeepers tried to regroup following the worst violence since Kosovo's 1999 war.

No new trouble was reported early Thursday, but evidence of the previous day's violence was still visible. Smoke billowed from Serb houses set ablaze in Kosovo Polje, a mixed town some 3 miles west of Pristina, and burned out cars littered the streets of the capital. The clashes started on Wednesday in the ethnically divided city of Kosovska Mitrovica amid reports that Serbs set a dog on a group of Albanian boys, sending three, the oldest 12, fleeing into an icy river.

After authorities recovered two bodies — and searched for a third — ethnic Albanians and Serbs gathered near a key bridge over the Ibar River that divides Kosovska Mitrovica, long the flashpoint of tensions in this UN-run province. The two sides traded insults, threw rocks and charged at each other before gunfire rang out.

Melees broke out elsewhere in the UN-run province, including several enclaves where Serbs have eked out a sheltered existence since the end of the war. Nato-led peacekeepers and Romanian police units moved in, firing tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades to stop ethnic Albanians from surging across the bridge toward the Serb side of the city, where another crowd had gathered.

The breakdown in order illustrated the failure of UN and Nato efforts to snuff out ethnic hatred and set the province on the path of reconciliation.



AP
Youths throw stones at the riot police near the Albanian embassy in Belgrade on Thursday.