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8/16

Montenegro breaks away

B. Kumar

With Montenegro proclaiming independence and separating from Serbia in the process, the disintegration of the former federation of Yugoslavia is almost complete. The last act of this sordid 15-year-old drama might be played out by the end of this year if people living in the province of Kosovo break free from Belgrade's control. The Serb parties that bitterly oppose the break-up of the 'land of the southern Slavs' appear to have accepted the verdict of the May 21 referendum — in which 55.5 per cent of voters in Montenegro opted for independence. The parliament in Belgrade unanimously supported the government's decision to assume the powers and responsibilities of the now dissolved federal administration. However, it is doubtful that Serb nationalists have learnt any lesson from the recent experience. Their clandestine support for the warlord Ratko Mladic, who faces charges of genocide in the International Criminal Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia, seems to have had some impact on voting in the referendum. This demonstration of Serbia's refusal to acknowledge the atrocities committed by its military forces in Bosnia and Kosovo appears to have persuaded Muslims in Montenegro to vote for separation. Until the votes were counted, it was far from certain that pro-independence groups would have their way. The European Union, which holds the fate of the Balkan states in its hands, had set the condition that it would not endorse separation unless at least 55 per cent of voters favoured independence. Podgorica and Brussels are likely to initiate talks soon on Montenegro's accession to the EU.

The Mladic controversy has adversely affected Serbia's prospects for entry into the EU. Brussels suspended talks on the subject after Belgrade failed to meet the April 30 deadline for the arrest and handing over of the warlord. As it tries desperately to cling on to Kosovo, Serbia cannot afford to get on the wrong side of the western powers. Authorities in the Muslim-dominated province, which has been a United Nations protectorate since 1999, must implement certain measures before they can stake a claim to independence. The Kosovars have to create mechanisms for the protection of Serbs, Croats, and other minorities and devolve power to local bodies controlled by these ethnic groups. But it is widely believed that the EU favours Kosovo's independence. Serbia's failure to apprehend Mr. Mladic and those of his ilk provided western powers with a humanitarian cover for a step they would take in their own interest. After the break-up of Yugoslavia, five successor republics have become dependencies of the EU and NATO. With the International Monetary Fund virtually dictating the economic policies of these states, western business interests have taken over much of their assets. Serbia alone appears to retain the kernel of southern Slav nationalism. Belgrade will need to cut its losses if it wants to continue as an exception in the Balkans.

Left alone, Serbia to declare own independence

Bh. 1/15
Belgrade: Serbia's parliament convened on Monday to pave the way for the country's formal independence after Montenegro, its last ally, abandoned its 88-year association with Belgrade.

Meeting in extraordinary session, the lawmakers were to proclaim Serbia's own independence and transfer solely onto Belgrade the international status of the federation of Serbia-Montenegro, including its seat on bodies such as the United Nations.

It follows Montenegro's own formal independence declaration Saturday, after the tiny Balkan state voted on May 21 to secede from the union that had bound together the last remnants of the former Yugoslavia.

After Monday's session, the flag of the disappearing federation was to be lowered from the parliament building, the Serbian one raised in its place and the national anthem,



Montenegrons celebrate their independence in Podgorica

"God give us justice," played.

Neither Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, who has been reluctant to accept Montenegro's decision, nor President Boris Tadic was present as the deputies gathered in gloomy mood. "Montenegro's separation is a sad reality for me," said Milos Allgrudic of Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia.

Serbia's neighbour, sandwiched between the mountains and the Adriatic Sea and with a population of just 650,000, declared independence after its May 21 referendum led to 55.5% voting in favour of going it alone. The move also brings to an end the 15-year painful dissolution of communist Yugoslavia.

According to the constitution of Serbia-Montenegro, Serbia inherits its membership in the UN and all other international and financial organisations. AFP

Croatia recognises Montenegro

Zagreb (Croatia): Croatia on Monday became one of the first countries to recognise Montenegro as an independent state, 15 years after they fought a bloody war.

Montenegro, which parted from Serbia after an independence referendum in May, was also recognised Monday by the European Union. Iceland, Switzerland and Russia also recognise the tiny Balkan state.

"The government of Croatia recognises Montenegro as a sovereign and independent state," the cabinet said on Monday, expressing readiness to "develop good neighbourly relations and cooperation" with Montenegro, to contribute to "peace, stability and progress" in the region.

The two countries are to establish diplomatic relations



A group of youngsters celebrates Montenegro's independence

formally in the coming days.

In 1991, war broke out in Croatia when minority Serbs opposed Croatia's independence from the dissolving Yu-

goslavia. At the time, Montenegro and Serbia were allied in support of the Serb rebels in Croatia, and Montenegrin troops participated in attacks

on Croatia's ancient city of Dubrovnik.

The war ended in 1995, and relations between Croatia and Montenegro have greatly improved, particularly after the Milo Djukanovic, president at that time, apologised in 2000 for the crimes that Montenegro troops committed during the war.

The government said it was convinced that Montenegro is aware of its role in Croatia's war, and that it was sure the countries would "develop new relations of ... mutual respect, turned to the future," the government statement said.

Croatia is negotiating its membership in the European Union and the regional cooperation in the Balkans is one of the conditions for joining the bloc. AGENCIES

Montenegro vote gets approval

IAN Traynor
Zagreb, May 23

MONTENEGRO'S HISTORIC decision to dissolve almost a century of union with Serbia and embark on a new era as a tiny independent nation received its international stamp of approval on Monday. The Parliament in Podgorica is to assemble within a fortnight for what will be a celebratory session proclaiming independence, the first new state in Europe since 1993.

Following Sunday's referendum, which delivered an 11 per cent majority for independence but an extremely close margin of victory beyond the 55 per cent required by EU rules, international monitors applauded the conduct of the vote, while Brussels announced it would recognise Montenegrin independence.

Official results on Monday reported a very high 87 per cent turnout, with 55.4 per cent voting to sever the loose union with Serbia. Under EU terms, 55 per cent had to vote for independence for it to be accepted. The margin was little more than 1,600 votes in an electorate of 485,000, although in straight majority terms the Yes camp inflicted a decisive defeat on the pro-Serbia side.



AFP
Montenegrins celebrate the confirmation of the referendum results with a portrait of Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic in Cetinje on Tuesday.

As daylong celebrations took hold in independence strongholds such as the old capital of Cetinje and other countries from former Yugoslavia congratulated the Montenegrins, the Serbian government in Belgrade reacted sourly and sought to cast doubt on the vote count. The Serbian President accepted the results, but an adviser to the Serbian Prime Minister called the margin worrying. But the Or-

ganisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, monitoring the ballot, dismissed any talk of irregularities. International organisations were ubiquitous in Montenegro for the ballot, with 3,500 monitors deployed, about one for every 140 voters.

"The people of Montenegro conducted a transparent referendum and should be congratulated for making this historic decision," said Nevezat Yelcintas,

head of the OSCE operation. A European Parliament mission said it was "very impressed" by the conduct of the ballot.

The unionist camp was furious that the victors jumped the gun on Sunday night, with the Prime Minister, Milo Djukanovic, declaring a triumph before official results were known, particularly when the margin of victory was so slim. But by Monday night, the independence momentum appeared unstoppable.

Javier Solana, the EU foreign policy chief and an unpopular figure among the independence supporters, said the Montenegrin and Serbian authorities would now have to negotiate a *modus vivendi*.

While the yes camp has always insisted that independence would put Montenegro on the fast track to EU membership, Solana sought to diminish such expectations. "I cannot tell you exactly when we will start talking to them," he said in Brussels. "It is more important that they now talk between themselves."

The outcome of the referendum makes Montenegro the last republic of five in the former Yugoslavia to split with Serbia.

The Guardian

20 MAY 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 Oct 2006

INTL

Barbed wire and bridges

The Balkans will continue to fragment unless the EU makes cooperation a condition of membership.

Handwritten: JVA

Gyula Hegyi

DOLCE VITA is a small cafe in Kosovska Mitrovica, on the Serbian side of the city. It is on the river bank, in front of the bridge leading to the Albanian part. Sometimes the bridge is opened to traffic, other times it is barricaded with barbed wire and tanks of the French gendarmerie. Berlin is now united, but those with nostalgia for its wall have only to travel to Kosovska Mitrovica. It is a city divided into two hostile parts.

The former Yugoslavia is split into ever smaller units. Where once there was one country, now there are five states, plus smaller entities clamouring for independence or at least complete autonomy. This chain of mini-states and enclaves lacks eco-

nomic viability, but is rich in well-paid "ministers" and "parliamentarians." Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo were oppressed by Milosevic, so the U.S. and its European allies bombed the so-called smaller Yugoslavia.

Now Milosevic is dead, the name of Yugoslavia exists only in history books, and the Serbs have been expelled from the larger part of Kosovo. Under international law Kosovo still belongs to Serbia. The aim of the 1999 war was, at least officially, to establish the rule of law and democracy. Serbia is a democratic country now, and it would be wrong to break international law by taking away its province against its will. If we accept that state frontiers can be changed by wars, and new states created by bombing, then we risk opening a Pandora's box. On the

other hand, the ethnic Albanians have good reasons for not wanting to live under Serbian rule. And Kosovo's ethnic Serbian community does not want to live under Albanian rule, also with reason. So is the answer to create one Kosovo for the Albanians and a smaller one for Serbs?

There is only one viable long-term solution. All states, regions and entities of the former Yugoslavia want to join the EU. And the EU can build upon that ambition. It should make cooperation between the small western Balkan countries the most important criterion of any enlargement in the Balkans. It would be silly to start talks with one or two small states that are not ready to have good relationships with their neighbours.

Croatia and Macedonia are on track for EU membership. Two other countries wish to join as well: Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its three ethnic communities — Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats — who don't want to live together in one state; and Serbia and Montenegro plus Kosovo, where some of the Montenegrins and most of the Albanians want an independent state. If all the separatist dreams were to be met, that would mean six new states instead of two.

Europe's response should be: "Look, we

want you, but all together. If you can create two loose federations in which every entity has its own rights, if you can cooperate in a smaller union, then you are more than welcome in our bigger union as well. But do not think that one entity can join earlier than the others, just because of its war record."

We want real peace in the Balkans, not new frustrations by selecting the good guys against the bad ones. As far as the economy and infrastructure go, there are no real differences between these two federations.

A loose federation should include Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and an autonomous Vojvodina inside Serbia. Respect for the rights of all nations and religions, autonomy in internal affairs, and a common strategy for EU accession and foreign affairs would be necessary. The Vienna talks on the future of Kosovo, which began earlier this year, should lay the basis for a new, creative structure for the future. An independent Kosovo or Montenegro with hostile minorities would regenerate the old conflict, while a new EU-backed form of coexistence could stabilise the region. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

(The writer is a Hungarian Socialist MEP.)

Final farewell for butcher of Balkans

ASSOCIATED PRESS
 Pozarevac, March 18

SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC, an avowed atheist, was buried in his hometown on Saturday after a sentimental farewell in Belgrade that drew more than 50,000 admirers in a strong show of nationalism in the Balkan republic.

The wooden casket carrying Milosevic's remains was lowered into the ground in the backyard of his family's estate. Dignitaries including senior members of his Socialist Party (SPS) and the ultra-nationalist Radical Party attended the solemn dusk ceremony. The grave, placed under the linden tree where Milosevic first kissed his wife Mira — on a crimson carpet framed by brass stands holding red velvet ropes — was a double one with room for his widow, who reportedly wants to join him when she dies. Her name also was inscribed in Cyrillic letters on the stone.

None of his immediate family members was present; his son Marko lashed out at Serbian authorities for preventing them from attending the burial.

But a senior Socialist Party official read out a letter from his widow, moments before his coffin was lowered. "You have returned home forever," said the letter. "We were constantly together... You returned home from The Hague prison and I am not there with you. Criminals who killed you maybe want my life and the life of our children... Every struggle against injustice will in the future be inspired by you."

A letter from Milosevic's son, Marko, was also read out. "Dad, I fulfilled what you asked of me and I sent you home, here with us, where you wanted, where your place is," it read.

Milosevic was buried beneath a linden tree where he first kissed his wife, in a double grave with space for his widow. Milosevic's daughter, Marija, however has said that she would demand the exhumation of her father's body for "a proper burial" in Montenegro, where she lives. Security was tight in Pozarevac with police on heightened alert and extra ambulances parked around town. Many of his supporters wept uncontrolably and chanted "Slobo! Slobo!" at the sight of the flag-draped coffin. Some clutched photographs of Milosevic "Heroes never die," read a banner. "Tribunal kills," said another.



AP
 Serbian children in military uniform stand beside the coffin of Slobodan Milosevic as honorary escorts in Belgrade on Saturday.

Death of a dictator

WHEN the end came, Slobodan Milosevic was an almost forgotten figure, listening to his favourite, Frank Sinatra and Celine Dion CDs in the cell where he had been a prisoner of the International War Crimes Tribunal since 2001, and “mister president” only to a clutch of fellow Serbs who themselves were facing trial for war crimes under the tribunal at The Hague.

The apotheosis of Slobodan Milosevic came on a burning hot day in June 1989, St Vitus Day, when, at the celebrations commemorating the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo, he addressed a million of his countrymen on the field of Gazimestan. The site where the invading Turks had vanquished the Serbian Prince Lazar was hallowed ground for Serbs. Standing on the dais, surrounded by black-robed hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church and highly uncomfortable-looking officials from the other Yugoslav republics, he said that Serbia had until now succeeded in bettering its position within Yugoslavia by peaceful means, without war. But armed conflict, he warned, could not be ruled out in the future.

Within two years, he had fulfilled his own prediction. After his strident Serbian nationalism drove three Yugoslav republics — Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia — to secede in 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina followed in 1992. Yugoslavia was at war. Most Serbs ardently believed that Milosevic was fighting for the rights of the Serb minorities in the newly independent republics. The outside world saw only a struggle for a greater Serbia.

Milosevic was a child of World War II, born in 1941 in the little town of Pozarevac, in central Serbia. His father, Svetozar, was a deacon in the Orthodox Church. His mother, Stanislava, a schoolmistress, became an ardent supporter of Tito's Communists, then fighting Yugoslavia's German invaders. His parents separated soon after he and his brother were born. Both subsequently committed suicide, his father in 1962 and his mother in 1974.

Milosevic found solace from an unhappy childhood in his childhood playmate, Mirjana (“Mira”) Markovic, whom he would marry in 1965. She also came from an unusual home. Her mother, Vera Miletic, had been a Partisan, shot in 1942. Brought up by her aunt, who was one of Tito's confidantes and supposedly his mistress, Mira belonged to the privileged Communist elite that Tito's one-time ally turned opponent, Milovan Djilas, dubbed “the new class.”

After studying law at Belgrade University, Milosevic began his slow, steady ascent through the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Apart from his wife's excellent party connections, his close friendship with Ivan Stambolic, another child of the Communist elite and a rising star within the party's Serbian branch, proved to be profitable. Each time Stambolic moved from one position to another, Milosevic followed in his wake, running the state gas company Tehnogas before moving to the Serbian state bank, Beobanka.

After Stambolic moved to the top of the party, Milosevic followed again, becoming President of the Serbian League of Communists when Stambolic became President of Serbia in 1986. Stambolic had already established himself as a determined, but moderate, champion of Serbian national grievances on the subject of Kosovo. Tito's Partisans had fought hard to reclaim this desperately poor region for Yugoslavia in 1945, after four years of union with Albania under Italian protection.

In Kosovo, Milosevic spied his chance to

MARCUS TANNER profiles the life and times of Slobodan Milosevic whose death last week brought into focus the ruthless and brutal politics of Serbia after the bloody disintegration

of Yugoslavia

betray and overtake his patron. Hurrying down on 27 April 1987 to the suburb of Kosovo Polje, not far from the famous Gazimestan, he told a group of Serbian demonstrators complaining of harassment at the hands of the local Albanian police that “no one has the right to beat you.” The remark might have gone unnoticed, had Milosevic's allies in Serbian television not filmed him and broadcast the clip on the main news programme that evening. The speech at Kosovo Polje turned Milosevic into a national hero, while Stambolic was embarrassed. Too late, he discovered that Milosevic had quietly inserted his own men into key positions in the Serbian party and in the



This file picture taken on 5 October 2005 in central Belgrade shows a ripped poster of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. — AFP

media, who immediately organised a campaign for Stambolic's removal. The rallies then held all over Serbia in Milosevic's support fused Serb nationalist and Communist sentiments in a style that was totally without precedent in Yugoslavia. Never since the Communists took power in 1945 had a party leader of any of the six federal republics played the once forbidden nationalist card so openly. Nor had the media ever been harnessed to the nationalist cause so flagrantly.

At the Serbian party plenum of September 1987, Milosevic swept all before him. Stambolic resigned three months later, to be replaced by one of Milosevic's ciphers. The conquest of the Serbian party was only the start. Once in power, Milosevic continued to orchestrate huge rallies over the Kosovo issue throughout Serbia, attempting to export his revolution to the rest of Yugoslavia. A huge demonstration in the northern city of Novi Sad forced out the leadership of the province of Vojvodina in December 1988. Soon after that, protests forced out the leaders of the republic of Montenegro.

Azem Vlasi, the ethnic Albanian leader of the party in Kosovo, resisted the enormous pressure generated by the rallies to resign. But Milosevic was undaunted, and browbeat the other republics into agreeing to send federal troops and police into the province. Cowed, Vlasi finally quit, to be arrested on charges of “counter-revolutionary nationalism and separatism.” In March 1989, Milosevic presided over a victorious session of the Serbian Parliament, which proclaimed the re-absorption of both Kosovo and Vojvodina into Serbia. Three months later, he headed down to receive the thanks of a grateful nation at Gazimestan.

By 1990, Milosevic controlled four of the

eight units of the Yugoslav federation and seemed within an inch of extending his control over Serbia to the rest of Yugoslavia. By basing his appeal on narrow Serbian chauvinism, rather than a broader Yugoslav nationalism, Milosevic united the Serbs at the price of alienating everyone else. Indeed, he managed the rare feat of rallying anti-Communist Croats and Slovenes on the side of their own Communist leaderships.

Thwarted, Milosevic put pressure on the eight-man federal presidency to declare emergency rule throughout Yugoslavia, which would have placed all the republics under the control of the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army. But fear of both Serbia — and of the army, united Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia against him.

In 1991 Slovenia and Croatia seceded. Milosevic practically ignored the departure of the Slovenes, whose small republic had no significant Serbian minority. Not so Croatia, where the 12 per cent Serb minority gave Milosevic and his allies in the army the opportunity to embroil themselves in a war to defend what they saw as Serbia's national interest.

In spite of isolated calls in the West for military action, especially following the encirclement and bombardment of the city of Dubrovnik, Serbia successfully retained its third of Croatia's territory, which was placed under the control of a nominally independent authority, the Serb Republic of Krajina.

Milosevic applied the same ruthless tactics when Bosnia seceded in spring 1992. But this time, the scale of fighting was larger and the carnage correspondingly more horrific. At least 10,000 died in Croatia before the January 1992 cease-fire. In Bosnia, the figure was at least 1,00,000. The forced displacement

of hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslims resulted in “ethnic cleansing” of the kind carried out by Hitler. Milosevic was scarcely visible in the conflict and invariably professed lack of connection with the carnage in his talks with international peace negotiators. But no one doubted that he was the author and mastermind of the entire conflict and the manner in which it was conducted.

In both Croatia and Bosnia, his local Serbian clients became insubordinate and, much to Milosevic's fury, wrecked the chances of favourable settlements by holding out for more territory than they could possibly get. In consequence, Milosevic's truncated Yugoslavia was placed under international sanctions that sapped what was left of its economic strength and chipped away at Milosevic's own popularity. He drew comfort from the subsequent Bosnian peace settlement hammered out at Dayton, Ohio, where he posed — and was treated by the world — as the great arbiter of the Balkans who could “deliver” a Serbian agreement.

The wars ruined Serbia. For all his past experience as a banker, Milosevic proved a disastrous economist. Kosovo also came back to haunt him. In the spring of 1998, a new group that spurned Rugova's tactics, the Kosovo Liberation Army, organised an insurrection that spread rapidly across the province. Milosevic responded with the ruthless brutality that had become his trademark. Both Serbs and Albanians were summoned in February 1999 to Rambouillet, near Paris, to be presented with a deal envisaging an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia, to be policed by an external force run by Nato. Faced with an uncompromising Nato, Milosevic did not even bother to attend the talks. Instead, the policy of burning villages and expelling Kosovo Albanians was stepped up after Nato began air strikes on Yugoslavia on 24 March. By the end of the month, as more than 400,000 refugees streamed out of the province, bringing reports of murder, arson and robbery, Europe faced its biggest refugee crisis since WWII. The President used his grip on the media to present the enforced withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo in June 1999 as another triumph. Kosovo had been lost but Serbia proper saved from foreign occupation. But the public was not deceived, and the flight northwards of most of Kosovo's Serbs, fleeing ahead of the returning Albanians, led to a growing fusion between Milosevic's nationalist and liberal opponents. The elections he called on 24 September 2000 were a massive strategic error as the Democratic Opposition of Serbia won a landslide victory. Like many dictators, Milosevic had tasted huge popularity only to end up a reviled and despised figure. The second round of voting on 8 October never happened. After a wave of strikes swept the country, on 5 October, huge crowds in Belgrade stormed the federal parliament building, setting it alight, and as police and the army stood idly by, it was clear that Milosevic's years in power were over.

On 21 March 2001, the police finally arrested Milosevic and on 28 June — St Vitus Day and the anniversary of his famous speech at Gazimestan — they bundled him off unceremoniously to The Hague, as the first head of state to face trial for genocide.

Initially putting himself forward as a technocrat, Milosevic then presented himself as a man of iron who would save Yugoslavia. When Yugoslavia declined salvation on the terms he offered, he reinvented himself as the godfather of a new, greater Serbia. He failed miserably in all three guises.

— The Independent

Milosevic took wrong drugs, says expert

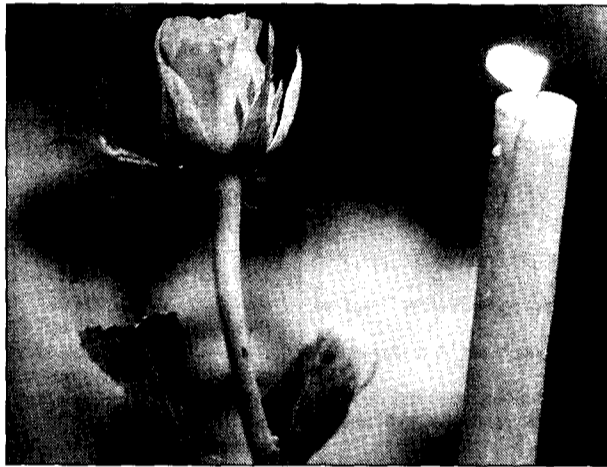
The Hague, March 13 (Reuters): Slobodan Milosevic took drugs that worsened his health before dying in prison, a Dutch expert said today, as the former Yugoslav President's family tried to decide whether to bury him in Serbia or Russia.

Adding to controversy over Milosevic's death just months before an expected verdict in his war crimes trial, Russia expressed its "distrust" of proceedings and pressed The Hague tribunal to allow its doctors to examine post mortem results.

Groningen University toxicologist Donald Uges said he thought Milosevic had knowingly taken harmful medicines to improve his case for going for medical treatment to Russia, where his wife, son and brother live.

Dutch prosecutors said today they had formally released his body, which Milosevic's son Marko wants to collect later for burial. The Dutch foreign ministry said it had granted visas for Marko and Russian medical experts.

Marko said the family wanted the funeral in Belgrade, but might ask for a tem-



A Milosevic supporter holds a candle and a rose in Belgrade on Monday. (Reuters)

porary burial in Moscow if the Serbian authorities failed to guarantee the safety of his mother Mira Markovic, who fled Serbia from corruption charges in 2003.

Milosevic, 64, who suffered from a heart condition and high blood pressure and was found dead in bed in his cell on Saturday, had faced a possible life sentence if convicted.

"I don't think he took his medicines for suicide — only for his trip to Moscow ... that is

where his friends and family are. I think that was his last possibility to escape The Hague," toxicologist Uges said. "I am so sure there is no murder."

Uges said tests he conducted two weeks ago on Milosevic's blood showed traces of rifampicin — a drug used against leprosy and tuberculosis that would have neutralised other medicines.

A preliminary autopsy report yesterday showed Milose-

vic had died of a heart attack, but toxicology tests were still under way.

The autopsy was conducted by Dutch scientists and attended by Serbian pathologists. Serbia said the autopsy had been very professional and the whole procedure filmed.

But Russian news agencies quoted foreign minister Sergei Lavrov as saying Moscow did not trust the autopsy results and wanted its doctors to examine the results of the post mortem. Last month, the tribunal rejected a request by Milosevic to be allowed to travel to Moscow for specialist medical care.

His lawyer said Milosevic feared he was being poisoned with the wrong drugs in a bid to silence him, and wrote to Russia the day before he died asking for help.

Saying she was furious Milosevic's victims had been denied justice, UN chief prosecutor Carla del Ponte suggested he might have killed himself to evade a verdict, noting that former Croatian Serb leader Milan Babic committed suicide at the jail last week.

Milosevic found dead in prison cell

Autopsy ordered; Serbian leader was facing 66 counts of war crime charges

AMSTERDAM (NETHERLANDS): Slobodan Milosevic, the former Serbian leader indicted for war crimes for orchestrating the Balkan wars of the 1990s, was found dead in his prison cell near The Hague, the U.N. Tribunal said on Saturday.

Mr. Milosevic (64), was found dead on Saturday in his bed at a U.N. prison near The Hague, the tribunal said in a statement. He appeared to have died of natural causes, a tribunal press officer said. A full autopsy and toxicological examination have been ordered, the tribunal said.

"The guard immediately alerted the detention unit officer in command and the medical officer. The latter confirmed that Slobodan Milosevic was dead," the statement said.

Mr. Milosevic had been on trial since February 2002, defending himself against 66 counts of crimes, including genocide, in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo — proceedings repeatedly interrupted by his poor health and chronic heart condition.

He recently asked the tribunal to be released temporarily to go to Moscow for treatment at a heart clinic. The tribunal rejected the request, fearing he would not return to complete his trial.

Frequent complaints

Mr. Milosevic was examined by doctors following his frequent complaints of fatigue or ill health, but the tribunal could not immediately say when he last underwent a medical check-up. All detenus at the U.N. centre in Scheveningen are checked by a guard every half hour.

Steven Kay, a British attorney who had been assigned to represent Mr. Milosevic, said on Saturday that the former Serb leader would not have fled, and

was not suicidal. "He said to me: 'I haven't taken on all this work just to walk away from it and not come back. I want to see this case through,'" Mr. Kay told the BBC.

Blow to tribunal

Mr. Milosevic's trial was recessed last week to await his next defence witness. He also was waiting for a court decision on his request to subpoena former U.S. President Bill Clinton as a witness.

His death comes less than a week after the star witness in his trial, former Croatian Serb leader Milan Babic, was found dead in the same prison.

His testimony in 2002 described a political and military command structure headed by Mr. Milosevic in Belgrade that operated behind the scenes.

Babic, who was serving a 13-year prison sentence, committed suicide.

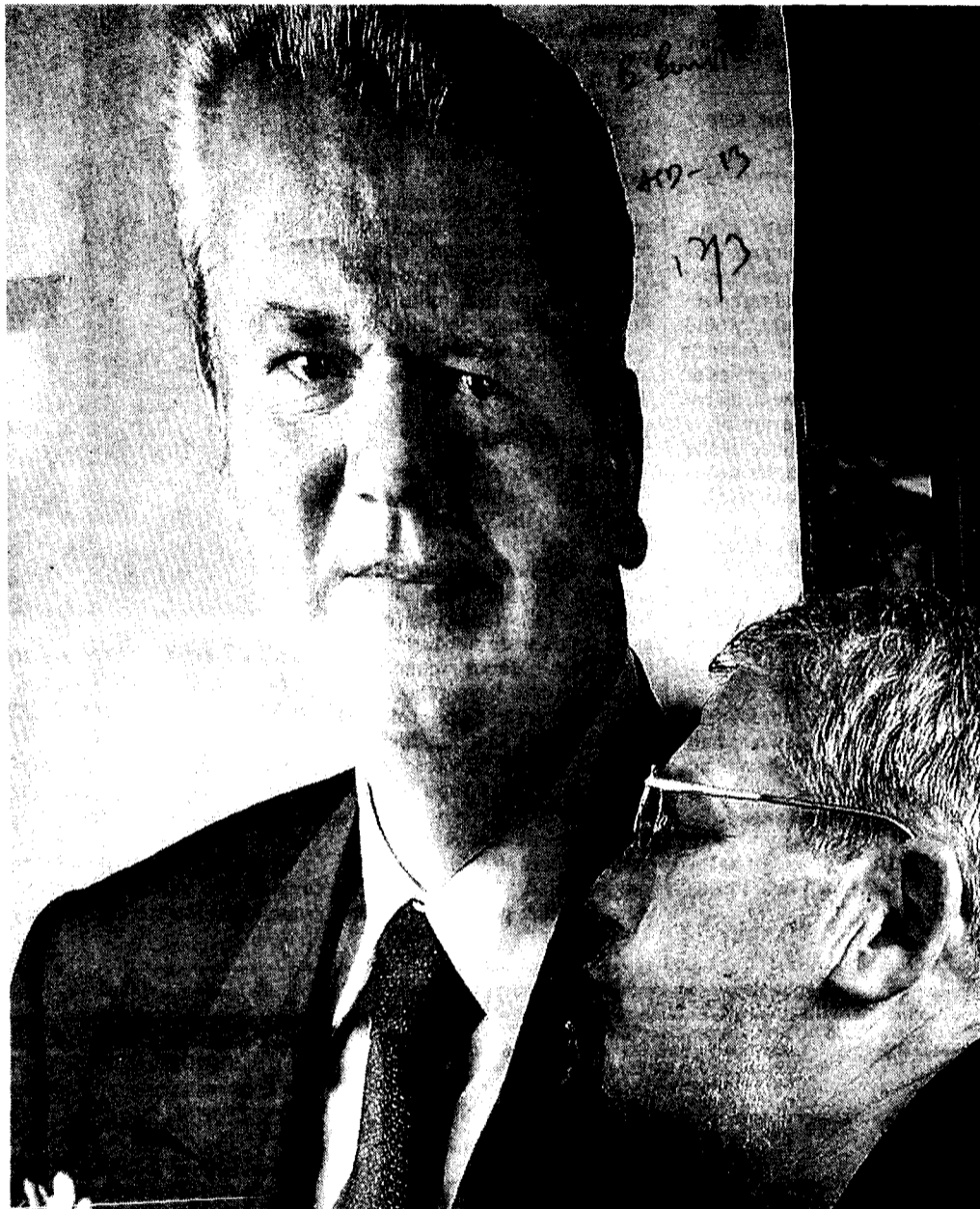
Mr. Milosevic's death will be a crushing blow to the tribunal and to those who were looking to establish an authoritative historical record of the Balkan wars.

Though the witness testimony is on public record, history will be denied the judgment of a panel of legal experts weighing the evidence of his personal guilt and the story of his regime.

"It is a pity he didn't live to the end of the trial to get the sentence he deserved," Croatian President Stipe Mesic said.

"Unfortunately, he did not face justice for crimes he has committed in Kosovo as well," Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister Lufi Haziri said in Pristina.

The E.U. said Mr. Milosevic's death does not absolve Serbia of responsibility to hand over other war crimes suspects. — AP



A supporter kisses a photo of Slobodan Milosevic, at his Socialist Party headquarters in Nis, southern Serbia, on Saturday. — PHOTO: AP

THE HINDU

Butcher of Balkans found dead in cell



Slobodan Milosevic: Strongman retires

The Hague, March 11 (Reuters): Slobodan Milosevic — branded the “Butcher of the Balkans” for the wars that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s — was found dead in his cell today, just months before his trial was expected to conclude.

“Milosevic was found lifeless on his bed in his cell,” the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague said.

The court said a medical officer confirmed that the 64-year-old former Yugoslav President — who suffered from a heart condition and high blood pressure — was dead, adding the Dutch police and a coroner had launched an inquiry.

A tribunal spokeswoman said there was no indication Milosevic had committed suicide. She said the trial — which has already lasted four years — would end now he was dead.

Milosevic rose to the top of Yugoslav politics in the power vacuum left by the 1980 death of post-World War II Yugoslav dictator Marshal Tito. Elected Serbian President in 1990, he ruled with an iron grip until his overthrow in 2000.

“With the death of Milosevic, one of the main actors, if not the main actor, in the Balkan wars of the late 20th century has left the scene,” French foreign minister

Philippe Douste-Blazy said. Milosevic was charged with 66 counts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo as he sought to carve out a “Greater Serbia” as Yugoslavia broke up in the 1990s. He dismissed the trial and refused to plead.

The charges against him included involvement in the siege of Sarajevo during the 1992-95 Bosnia war and the 1995 massacre of 8,000 Muslims in the UN “safe area” of Srebrenica, Europe’s worst single atrocity since World War II.

Milosevic’s ill health had repeatedly interrupted his trial that started in February 2002 and had been expected to end this year. Last month, the court rejected Milosevic’s bid to go to Russia for medical treatment, noting the trial was almost over.

Looking pale and with his shock of white hair swept back, Milosevic — sent to the tribunal in 2001 — said last month his health was worsening and he was hearing noises in his head.

Milosevic’s wife Mirjana, his high-school sweetheart often described as the driving force behind his career, blamed the court. “The tribunal has killed my husband,” she told CNN.



Supporters of Slobodan Milosevic light candles in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. (AFP)

Poison fears

Belgrade, March 11 (Reuters): Former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic feared he was being poisoned in his detention cell in The Hague, his lawyer Zdenko Tomanovic said today hours after the tribunal announced Milosevic’s death.

“Today, I have filed an official request to the tribunal to have the autopsy carried out in Moscow, having in mind the war crimes trial his claims yesterday that he was being poisoned in the jail,” Tomanovic said in The Hague. “I demanded protection for Slobodan Milosevic over his claims that he was being poisoned. I still haven’t received any reply and that’s all I have to say at this time,” the lawyer said. Milosevic conducted his own defence at the war crimes trial.

BARE FACTS



A ripped poster of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade

- Born in Pozarevac, Serbia, on August 20, 1941
- Son of a theology teacher
- Married high-school sweetheart and neo-communist Mirjana who bore him a son, Marko, and a daughter, Marija
- Milosevic muscled his way to the top of Yugoslav politics in the power vacuum left by the 1980 death of dictator Marshal Tito
- Lawyer by education, he became head of the Serbian communist party in 1986
- For the next 13 years, Milosevic was the undisputed strongman of Serbian politics
- Toppled on October 5, 2000, when huge protests erupted in Belgrade
- Arrested six months later and transferred on June 28, 2001, to the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague

Butcher of Balkans defiant to the end

REUTERS

Belgrade, March 11

INTELLIGENT, RUTHLESS and compulsively defiant, Slobodan Milosevic carried his gambles to the brink of disaster and beyond during a decade of useless wars, vainly resisting the breakup of Yugoslavia.

When they landed him in The Hague, accused of masterminding ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the 1990s, Milosevic snarled like a beast. "That's your problem," he rasped at the judges vainly trying to persuade him to enter a plea.

The former Serbian and Yugoslav president dismissed the UN war crimes tribunal as a venue for "victor's justice". Stubbornly conducting his own case he grew more and more ill.

After frequent bouts of cardiovascular illness, doctors tried to have him moved to Moscow for treatment but the tribunal last month turned down the request.

As his trial got under way in February 2002, Milosevic gazed disdainfully at spectators behind a bullet-proof glass wall. Square-jawed and white-haired, he verbosely protested his innocence. Milosevic never once referred to the court or the bench, but sniffed always of "the other side".

"All right, Mr May, I know, I know. You can rule this is Tuesday if that's what you like," the gravel-voiced, 62-year-old grandfather once told Chief Justice Richard May. May endured interminable monologues by Milosevic, who was convinced of his legal finesse yet often

missed an obvious challenge.

When Croat President Stipe Mesic warned Milosevic in 1991 he could be lynched by his own people. "He just puffed at his cigar and said, 'We'll see who will be hanged'." Ten years later, in detention and listening to Frank Sinatra, he regularly called his wife and helped fellow inmates with English. But his combative edge was never far below the surface. His trial was halted regularly in 2004 by bouts of hypertension blamed on the heavy workload of conducting his own defence. Milosevic had lined up a list of some 1,600 witnesses.

Former Balkans envoy David Owen told the tribunal Milosevic was not "fundamentally racist", and no supremacist.

US Balkans envoy Richard Holbrooke grudgingly admired

how he wrong-footed opponents, unlike former Nato supreme commander General Wesley Clark, who ignored clever moves and bombed Serbia for 11 weeks to end Milosevic's crack-down on Kosovo Albanians.

In foreign eyes, Milosevic had been a Jekyll and Hyde character. But when he crossed the West over Kosovo he was consigned to the ranks of the "rogue-state" monsters.

Poisoned?

Milosevic's legal adviser told reporters on Saturday that he had feared he was being poisoned in prison. "After consultation with the family, I have officially insisted that the autopsy be carried out in Moscow," Zdenko Tomanovic said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Milosevic seeks subpoena for Clinton

Ex-US Prez 'Had A Role In Events Relevant To Indictment'

The Hague: Lawyers representing Slobodan Milosevic have asked the United Nations war crimes tribunal to issue a subpoena to force former US President Bill Clinton to testify at his trial, documents showed on Tuesday.

"In his position as former president of the United States, Clinton had a continuous role and unique knowledge of events relevant to the indictment," the lawyers said in a written request filed last week but only made public on Tuesday.

Lawyers Steven Kay and Gillian Higgins said his evidence was needed to make

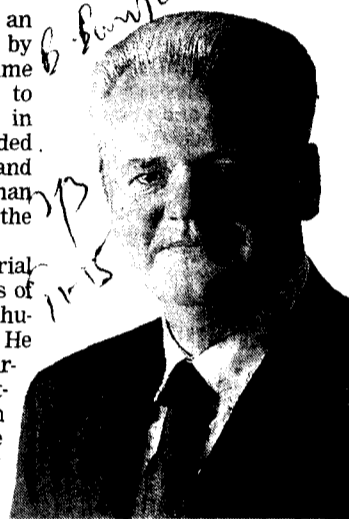
sure the trial was "informed and fair". They said Milosevic had written a personal letter to Clinton asking him to testify but had not received a response. They added the US embassy in The Hague had written to them last year explaining the opposition of the US government to the plea.

Milosevic, who has argued that he was a peacemaker in the 1999 Kosovo conflict and that the West committed war crimes, has also asked the court to subpoena retired United States general Wesley Clark to appear as witness in his defence.

Clark directed NATO's

bombing of Kosovo in an 11-week campaign led by Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to halt Serbian repression in the region. Judges decided last year not to call Blair and Gerhard Schroeder, German Chancellor at the time of the bombing, as witnesses.

Milosevic has been on trial for four years on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. He has used up more than four-fifths of the 150 days allotted for his defence, which suggests the case could be wrapped up in a few months. Reuters



25 MAY 2006

Tricky transition

Montenegro had more independence as part of Yugoslavia than it will have as a EU-NATO protectorate.

Neil Clark

MONTENEGRO VOTES for independence," the headlines declared at the result of the referendum in the Balkan republic. But is independence really what lies in store? My dictionary has independence as: "Completely self-governing not subject to or showing the influence of others." By this definition, independence is not what they will be getting.

The most important political and economic decisions, affecting the everyday lives of citizens in the republic, will not be made in its capital, Podgorica, but in Brussels, Geneva, and Washington, and the boardrooms of the multinational companies that now dominate the country's economy.

It is ironic that EU and WTO membership has been most enthusiastically supported by Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, and the pro-independence faction — for it is hard to

think of an easier way for a small country to lose national independence than by surrendering control of trade and economic policy to un-elected bureaucrats miles away.

NATO membership, which Montenegro is also expected to pursue keenly, has similar consequences: commanders of its new army and navy will have to get used to taking orders from those who planned the 78-day bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

Then there is the role of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These two un-elected bodies have, with the EU, sought to impose Thatcherite neo-liberal solutions on Serbia-Montenegro, ever since the fall of Yugoslavia's socialist-led government in 2000.

For all the novelties of statehood, the brutal truth is that today's "independent" Balkan republics had, if anything, more independence when they were autonomous republics inside the Yugoslav Federation. In

place of one militarily strong, internationally respected, non-aligned nation, there now exist several weak, economically unviable EU/IMF/NATO protectorates.

The dismantling of Yugoslavia, with its alternative economic and social model, has suited Western capitalism fine. But for the people of the region, the benefits have been harder to discern.

More than 65 years ago, on the eve of the attack on Yugoslavia by the Axis powers, Serbian jurist Slobodan Jovanovic argued that a single, south Slav state was the best way the people of the Balkans could guarantee their independence and protection. It still is — and that logic seems likely to make itself felt in the years to come. When the victory parades are over, the only real difference the narrow vote of May 21 will make is that Montenegro will be able to enter European Union. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006