

BALKAN WATCH

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A Review of Current Events

MACEDONIAN PRESIDENT DIES IN PLANE CRASH. The plane carrying President Boris Trajkovski and eight others crashed in Bosnia on February 26 en route to an investment conference in Mostar. Trajkovski's death came on the same day that Macedonian Prime Minister Crvenkovski was to deliver their nation's European Union application to Irish Prime Minister Ahern in Dublin. Trajkovski was a popular politician, known for his efforts to bring Macedonia closer to Europe and work toward peace and ending ethnic conflict in the country.

KOSTUNICA FORMS GOVERNMENT, VOWS TO LIMIT COOPERATION WITH TRIBUNAL. Several ministerial appointments made by new Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica in the Cabinet approved by Parliament on March 3 have caused an outcry among many Serbs. Justice Minister Zoran Stojkovic was accused of conducting a show trial against six dissidents in 1984 during the Tito era. Interior Minister Dragan Jovic was convicted in 1981 of robbing a kiosk. Both ministers are members of Kostunica's political party, the DSS. Zoran Balinovac, secretary of the government's legislative committee, reportedly belonged to the political party headed by Mira Markovic, wife of former president Slobodan Milosevic. And Kostunica appointed a suspect in the assassination of the late Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic as his new secret service chief. However, Kostunica sacked police chief Sreten Lukic, who had been indicted by the Hague tribunal. Kostunica also asserted that Serbian courts should have more say over war crimes trials, while reiterating that he wanted reforms to lead to eventual integration into the EU.

Kostunica also vowed to limit cooperation with the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, angering many in on the reformist side of the government. Outgoing Prime Minister Zarko Korac said that Kostunica's stance would be damaging for the country and worried about the possibility of Milosevic's supporters returning to full power. On February 23, the EU Council of Foreign Ministers issued a statement noting that ministers "expressed concern at political developments in Serbia following the parliamentary elections of 28 December 2003." Ministers "emphasized the interest of the European Union in a Serbia committed to political and economic reform... full cooperation with ICTY, the fight against organized crime and continued reconciliation and cooperation with neighboring countries." EU External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten added that, "It's per-

fectly clear what the political criteria are. Plainly there are consequences if people say they're not going to take any notice of those political criteria.

An election turnout law in Serbia was also dropped, ending the requirement that at least fifty percent of eligible voters show up and vote in the polls. And Boris Tadic was selected to succeed assassinated Zoran Djindjic as leader of the Democratic Party.

MLADIC, KARADZIC FREELY CROSSING BORDERS. Michael Humphreys, European Commission chief in Bosnia, stated that he believes indicted war criminals Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic are able to freely cross the border between the Bosnian Serb Republic and Serbia-Montenegro. "My understanding is they can move back and forward across the border and I am afraid there is not doubt that they do," noted Humphreys. The U.S. war crimes ambassador, Pierre Prosper, warned the Bosnian Serb parliament March 4 that they faced sustained economic or political sanctions unless they did more to arrest the two. A day earlier, SFOR arrested Karadzic's former defense minister and current military affairs adviser to the Bosnian Serb presidency, Bogdan Subotic. Bosnia's High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, dismissed three Bosnian Serb policemen in February for aiding Karadzic's support network.

PROSECUTION RESTS IN MILOSEVIC TRIAL. The prosecution, led by UN chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte has completed its presentation against former Yugoslav Prime Minister Slobodan Milosevic on 66 counts of genocide, complicity in genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. "We've nailed him," said one prosecution official. "I have no problem getting a conviction," said Del Ponte. "It's not an easy case, but we have shown that Milosevic was the mastermind of everything," said Florence Hartmann, Ms. Del Ponte's spokeswoman. The defense now has two months to prepare its side and summon witnesses to testify.

CROATIAN EU BID IN JEOPARDY OVER WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL COOPERATION. European Commission President Romano Prodi told Croatian President Stipe Mesic that Croatia's bid to join the European Union may be jeopardized if the country is unable to fulfill a list of points laid out by Prodi. This list includes increased cooperation with the war-crimes tribunal at The Hague. Indicted war criminal General Ante Go-

tovina is believed by tribunal officials to be in hiding in Croatia. Mesic claimed that Croatia had increased efforts to capture the general. Prodi also cited significant political and economic reforms in the country since it submitted its EU application one year ago.

SERBIAN GROUPS PROTEST VOJVODINA AUTONOMY CLAIM. The Subotica Initiative, a plan to grant Vojvodina greater autonomy within Serbia, was decried by Serbian politicians as a complaint over the result of the recent elections held in Serbia. Delegates to the First Vojvodina Convention in Subotica drafted the plan, hoping to recreate a condition of greater autonomy, such as was allowed within the framework of the 1974 Serbian constitution. Nenad Canak, leader of the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats, felt that too much has changed since the old constitution. Serb leaders in Belgrade objected to the creation of the plan.

NO CHANGE IN SERBIA-MONTENEGRO MINISTRIES. Branko Lukovac, Minister for Foreign Economic Relations of Serbia-Montenegro, stated that there will not be any changes in the Council of Ministers. Serbia will continue to control the foreign and defense ministries, despite recent problems within the Serbian government. The Constitutional Charter does not guarantee that specific ministries will be controlled by either the Serbian or Montenegrin governments; however, leaders in Belgrade and Podgorica informally agreed that it would make best sense for Serbia to control these two important ministries for now.

ALBANIAN SOCIALIST PARTY CALLS FOR INCREASED EFFORTS TO JOIN EU. Led by Prime Minister Fatos Nano, the Albanian Socialist Party has asked the opposition to shelve calls for early elections and work together to join the EU and NATO. The opposition has been angry with Nano's leadership, calling on him to resign because of failure to significantly increase the small country's standard of living. Nano also announced that planned increases in utilities would have to occur soon; however, he planned to implement the increases gradually, instead of immediately. Sali Berisha, leader of the opposition Democratic Party, said that Nano's plans are "without hope." More opposition protests are scheduled for March 20.

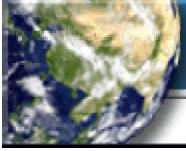
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Quotable Quotes

"For us it would be fundamental that the government not only continues with the process of reforms but also keeps the agreements it has with the international community vis-a-vis the international tribunal."—EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, expressing concern about Serbia's new government (*Reuters*, 2/23/04).

"With such people still in important positions, Serbia could return to Milosevic's era."—Otpor member Nenad Konstantinovic, commenting on ministers appointed by new Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica (*AP*, 3/5/04).

"Full cooperation with the ICTY is crucial if the doors to Europe and the Partnership for Peace program are to open for Bosnia."—Joschka Fischer, German Foreign Minister, on a visit to Bosnia (*AFP*, 2/25/04).



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