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The Other War Crime in the Balkans

By *Manuel E. Yepe*
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Havana.

The Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in The Hague, has exonerated the late President of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, for war crimes committed during the Bosnian war of 1992-1995, including the Srebrenica slaughter.

Far from conspiring with convicted Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, Milosevic condemned the ethnic cleansing advocated by Karadzic and tried to prevent the war that dismembered Yugoslavia.

This finding, in fact, belies the propaganda aimed at justifying the illegal 1999 NATO war against Serbia.

Milosevic died a prisoner in a cell of the advanced technology high security prison of Scheveningen in The Hague. He died of a heart attack in 2006, when he was subjected to a pantomime “international trial” after being denied the heart surgery that could have saved his life. His death prevented him from delivering incriminating evidence against his US and European captors.

Sara Flounders, renowned US writer and anti-war activist, who participated as a defense witness in the trial against Milosevic, in an article entitled “Milosevic’s Death: A Political Assassination

Blamed on the Victim” wrote: “No one who has met with President Milosevic over the past four years would believe he would risk killing himself rather than complete his trial. And no one who visited Scheveningen prison in The Hague would believe the outlandish claims that somehow he was able to smuggle in unprescribed medications on a regular basis. They would instead suspect that the authorities were desperately trying to cover up their own crimes.”

Milosevic was housed in a special unit within a high security prison with advanced technology. These units are specially patrolled by United Nations guards. Cameras are everywhere. Every movement of the prisoners is monitored and controlled.

The prison authorities claim that Milosevic was taking rifampicin, a rare, difficult-to-acquire antibiotic used to treat leprosy or tuberculosis that has the unique ability to counteract the medicine he was taking to control his high blood pressure.

When rifampicin was allegedly found on Jan. 12 in Milosevic’s blood, the ICTY kept the report of the blood tests secret, even from Milosevic and his doctors, who were complaining that something terribly wrong was damaging the defendant’s health. While the prisoner and his defense committee and assisting lawyers were demanding health information, the ICTY officials sat on this report.

Equally outlandish were the claims that Milosevic staged his illness to delay the trial. In fact it was the prosecution that delayed the trial first by adding charges against Milosevic when they realized they had no case on the original war-crime charges, then by bringing hundreds of witnesses to generate 500,000 pages of prosecution testimony from February 2002 to February 2004.

Milosevic was determined to use the trial as a platform to defend not only himself but the people of Yugoslavia, and to indict the U.S., Germany and the NATO powers for their role in the criminal destruction of his country. He welcomed the trial as the only platform where he could make the historical record. In his remarks to the court, he constantly described why, despite his bad health, he was determined to continue.

In a letter addressed to the Russian Embassy two days before he died, Milosevic wrote that he had taken no antibiotics in more than four years. He warned that he was sure he was being poisoned and that his life was in danger.

He said the ICTY is not a real international court, with the ability to try any accused war criminal. It is a political court set up by the UN Security Council at the insistence of the United States in 1993, in violation of the UN Charter. It aims to punish the victims for the crimes committed against them and to absolve the imperialist powers who invaded, bombed, dismembered and forced the privatization of the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia.

Now the world is asked to believe that Milosevic was responsible for his own death. It is a scenario so incredibly complex, an elaborate suicide story that is as improbable as the charges against him. The bought-and-paid-for corporate media are accepting and propagating the story of

his death in the same servile fashion they accepted the very existence of this illegal court and the justification for the destruction of Yugoslavia.