

Editor's Note

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By Chris Stephen in The Hague (TU 309, 14-18 April 2003)

A conviction will guarantee the reputation of the entire war crimes process. Failure, or a muddled trial, will leave a sense of unfinished business hanging over The Hague.

Our focus for this week is on how the trial is going - 15 months on, and not yet half way through.

We report from Court Number One where the secretary of paramilitary commander Arkan has given an inside view of the Serbian security apparatus.

And we also carry the harrowing account of one of the war's many victims, a reminder of the suffering that lies behind the formal language of the court.

This is put into perspective by comment from Emir Suljagic, who has followed the trial from its beginning in February 2002.

And, in an attempt to shed some light on Milosevic's personality, we look at the way he lived in Belgrade's palatial Beli Dvor.

And as for the trial itself? A mountain of evidence has been built up - even a small fraction of it is enough to see Milosevic to go jail for life. On the other hand, we are still in the prosecution phase - the defence case, which Milosevic will mount himself, has yet to start.

And here is where the anxiety begins for prosecutors. Partly because he insists on mounting his own defence, Milosevic is frequently unwell. He suffers from colds and high blood pressure, possibly made worse by the stress of the legal work of his defence.

This has already seen more than two months lost from the trial. The prosecution has already cut back its case. It says that more cuts would mean that the indictments are not fully explored. The result is that the prosecution case may not finish until September.

Milosevic will get equal time for his defence - and the trial will go on still longer should he fall ill again. The nagging fear at the back of many people's minds is that in the end he will grow too sick to continue.

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