



## TRANSITIONS ONLINE: **Milosevic's Twilight Marked a New Day for Justice**

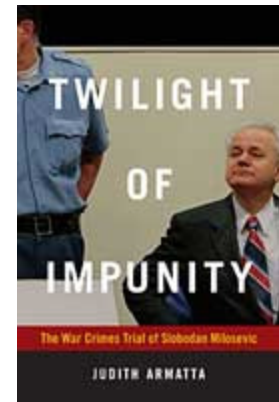
by **Ky Krauthamer**

5 October 2010

*TOL Talk: Looking beyond the chaotic Milosevic trial, Judith Armatta argues that the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal, while far from perfect, has done far more good than harm.*

This week marks 10 years since the end of Slobodan Milosevic's authoritarian rule in Serbia. After his resignation from the Yugoslav presidency, Milosevic was arrested and sent to stand trial for war crimes at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague.

The Milosevic trial and its implications for the future of international justice form the subject of a book published this year, *Twilight of Impunity*, written by Judith Armatta, an American lawyer and human rights advocate who monitored the trial. Armatta's legal background and experiences in the former Yugoslavia inform her book. In the late 1990s, still during Milosevic's rule, she worked for an initiative of the American Bar Association, helping legal professionals and NGOs to advance the rule of law in Serbia and later in Montenegro, and during the Kosovo conflict she headed a war crimes documentation project among Kosovar Albanian refugees in Macedonia.



Armatta argues that the Hague tribunal helped bring the perpetrators of many horrific crimes to justice, criminals from all sides who fought in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. However, the unruly trial – frequently interrupted by the defendant's rants against all those who conspired against him and the Serbian nation – ended when Milosevic died before a verdict was reached, leaving many questions surrounding his role in mass killings and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo unresolved. And other wartime leaders like **Franjo Tudjman** of Croatia and **Alija Izetbegovic** of Bosnia were never charged with any crime, much less put on trial.



Judith Armatta

While Armatta leaves no doubt that Milosevic would almost certainly have been found guilty of grave crimes, she believes the tribunal's appeals panel might well have overturned or downgraded a conviction on the charge of genocide, based on several rulings made in connection with other trials. The learning curve for the Milosevic trial was steep, and the lessons learned by prosecutors and judges may help smooth the course of the ongoing trial of former Bosnian Serb leader **Radovan Karadzic** and the upcoming retrial of former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj.

Judith Armatta spoke to TOL from her home near Washington, D.C., where she works as a consultant on international humanitarian and legal issues.

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Published by Transitions o.s., Baranova 33, 130 00 Prague 3, Czech Republic.