

Marko Attila Hoare

**BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**
GENOCIDE, JUSTICE AND DENIAL

Marko Attila Hoare
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Genocide, Justice and Denial
Essay selection by Admir Mulaosmanović

Center for Advanced Studies, Sarajevo, 2017. Second Expanded Edition
www.cns.ba

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CIP - Katalogizacija u publikaciji
Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka
Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo

327(4:497.1)
341.485(497.6):341.645
94(497.6)

HOARE, Marko Attila
Bosnia and Herzegovina : genocide, justice
and denial / Marko Attila Hoare ; [essay selection
by Admir Mulaosmanović]. - Sarajevo : Centar
za napredne studije = Center for Advanced Studies,
2017. - 332 str. ; 21 cm

ISBN 978-9958-022-57-9
COBISS.BH-ID 24711430

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Sarajevo, 2017.

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Foreword

The articles in this volume were published on my blog, Greater Surbiton, since its launch in November 2007. Although Greater Surbiton was devoted to a number of different themes – including the southern and eastern Balkans, Turkey and Cyprus, Russia and the Caucasus, the meaning of progressive politics and the fight against Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of chauvinism – the former Yugoslavia was at all times central to it. Twelve years after Dayton, when the blog was launched, the war over the former Yugoslavia was being waged as fiercely as ever – not on the battlefield, but in the realm of politics and ideas, both in the region and in the West. Genocide deniers and propagandists who sought to downplay or excuse the crimes of the Milosevic and Karadzic regimes of the 1990s – people like Diana Johnstone, Michael Parenti, David N. Gibbs, Nebojsa Malic, John Schindler and Carl Savich – continued their ugly work. Yet the ongoing struggle to counter their falsehoods was just one front in the war.

The period since 2007 has witnessed the rise of Milorad Dodik's separatist challenge to the precarious Bosnian-Herzegovinian unity established at Dayton, and the consequent degeneration of the post-Dayton political order in the country; the declaration of Kosovo's independence and Belgrade's efforts to derail it; the struggle in Serbia between reformist and nationalist currents; the increasingly aggressive challenge of Russia's Vladimir Putin to the West, manifested most starkly in the attacks on Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, but also in support for Belgrade over Kosovo and for Dodik in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the increasingly apparent failure of the International Criminal Tribunal for

the former Yugoslavia to punish adequately the war-criminals of the 1990s, despite the spectacular arrests of Radovan Karadzic in 2008 and Ratko Mladic in 2011; and the increasingly stark failure of Western leaders to confront murderous tyrants like Putin, Sudan's Omar Hassan al-Bashir and Syria's Bashar al-Assad – reminiscent of their failure in the 1990s over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Today, the truth about the war in the former Yugoslavia is more widely known and understood than ever. The battle for the recognition of the Srebrenica genocide worldwide has largely been won; the remains of most victims of the massacre have been identified and reburied. The deniers and their narrative have been largely discredited. Yet the Bosnian question is further from a happy resolution than ever, while the West – the US, EU and their allies – look less likely to lead positive change in the region than they did a decade ago. Kosovo's full international recognition is still being blocked by Serbia and Russia; Macedonia, kept out of the EU and NATO by Greek nationalist intransigence, is in crisis; not a single official of Serbia has yet been found guilty by the ICTY for war-crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or is likely to be in the future; and leading former-Yugoslav war-criminals such as Biljana Plavsic and Momcilo Krajisnik have been released after serving short prison-terms in comfortable conditions.

The outcomes of the struggles tracked by my blog have therefore been far from unambiguously happy. Yet the politics and recent history of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rest of the former Yugoslavia are much better understood than they were a decade ago; new generations of scholars, analysts and activists are discovering and explaining more all the time. I hope that the articles contained in this volume have made a contribution to this process of discovery.

Marko Attila Hoare, June 2015

NOTE: The following new articles were added to this edition: 1) Srebrenica genocide denier David N. Gibbs praises Donald Trump on foreign policy, 2) Xavier Bougarel's errors concerning the Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War, 3) The judgement on Radovan Karadzic will confirm the criminal character of Republika Srpska's wartime leadership, 4) Kinship and Elopement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 5) The Srebrenica massacre after twenty years, and 6) Is it really true that 'East Timor was worse than Bosnia or Kosovo'?

1

Yugoslavia and its Ghosts

THE WEST AND THE BREAK-UP OF YUGOSLAVIA:
A GROUNDBREAKING NEW STUDY

Review of Josip Glaurdic, *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2011

The break-up of Yugoslavia has generated an enormous literature – much of it poor, some of it acceptable and some of it excellent. There are several decent introductory accounts of the break-up that competently summarise familiar information. There are some very good studies of Slobodan Milosevic and his regime that do justice to the break-up as well. There are some excellent studies of sub-topics or related topics. But there have been few truly groundbreaking studies of the process as a whole. Too many of the older generation of pre-1991 Yugoslav experts had too many of their assumptions shattered by the break-up; too many journalists and casual scholars flooded the market in the 1990s with too many under-researched, third-rate works; too many younger scholars were handicapped by political prejudices that prevented them from addressing the truth squarely. Furthermore, the body of relevant primary sources has been vast and growing exponentially while the body of good supporting secondary literature has only slowly grown to a respectable size. In these circumstances, to write a groundbreaking general study

of the break-up of Yugoslavia has been a difficult task that has required both a lot of talent and a lot of patient hard work.

Josip Glaurdic's *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia* is such a study. As far as general accounts of the break-up go, there are only two or three that rival this work; none that is better. A great strength of this work lies in Glaurdic's careful balance between the domestic and international dimensions of Yugoslavia's break-up; he gives equal space to each and shows carefully the interaction between them. As far as the domestic dimension is concerned, he has skilfully summarised and distilled the existing knowledge about the subject as well as anybody before him. But where this book is truly original and groundbreaking is in its analysis of the international dimension. For this is the best serious, comprehensive, scholarly analysis of the role of the West – specifically, of the US, European Community and UN – in the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The mainstream literature has tended to present the West's involvement in the break-up in terms of a reaction after the fact: Yugoslavia collapsed and war broke out due to internal causes, and the West responded with a weak, ineffective and primarily diplomatic intervention. Some excellent studies of the responses of individual Western countries have appeared, most notably by Michael Libal for Germany, Brendan Simms for Britain and Takis Michas for Greece. Apologists for the former regime of Slobodan Milosevic or for the Great Serb nationalist cause have, for their part, churned out innumerable versions of the conspiracy theory whereby the break-up of Yugoslavia was actually caused or even engineered by the West; more precisely by Germany, the Vatican and/or the IMF. But up till now, nobody has attempted to do what Glaurdic has done, let alone done it well.

Glaurdic's innovation is to begin his study of the West's involvement not in 1991, when full-scale war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, but in 1987, when Milosevic was assuming absolute power in Serbia. This enables him to interpret the West's reaction to the eventual outbreak of war, not as a reflex to a sudden crisis, but as the result of a long-term policy. He places this long-term policy in the broader context of the evolution of the

West's global considerations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The most important of these considerations concerned a state incomparably more important than Yugoslavia: the Soviet Union.

Yugoslavia's principal significance for the Western alliance during the Cold War was as a buffer state vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and as a model of an independent, non-Soviet Communist state. These factors became less important in the second half of the 1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev ruled the Soviet Union and the Cold War was winding down. Milosevic was initially identified by some influential Western observers as a possible 'Balkan Gorbachev'; a Communist reformer who might bring positive change to Yugoslavia. The most important such observer was the veteran US policymaker Lawrence Eagleburger, who became deputy Secretary of State in January 1989. In his confirmation hearings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 15-16 March 1989, Eagleburger stated that 'there is no question in my mind that Milosevic is in terms of economics a Western market-oriented fellow... [who] is playing on and using Serbian nationalism, which has been contained for so many years, in part I think as an effort to force the central government to come to grips with some very tough economic problems.' (Glaurdic, p. 40).

This initial US appreciation for Milosevic dovetailed with a more important consideration: the fear that a collapse of Yugoslavia would create a precedent for the Soviet Union, weakening the position of Gorbachev himself. Of decisive importance was not merely that Western and in particular US leaders viewed Gorbachev as a valued friend, but the extreme conservatism of their ideology as regards foreign policy. Simply put, the US administration of George H.W. Bush valued stability above all else, including democratic reform, and actually preferred Communist strongmen, not only in the USSR but also in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, to the democratic opposition to them. Bush and his team feared the collapse of the Soviet Union and the destabilisation that this threatened – given, among other things, the latter's nuclear arsenal. This led them to acquiesce readily in Soviet repression in Lithuania, Latvia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Their acquiescence in Milosevic's repressive policies was a natural corollary.

As Glaurdic shows, this conservative-realist worldview led the Bush Administration, right up till the end of 1991, to champion Yugoslavia's unity rather than its democratic reform. Though the US gradually lost faith in Milosevic, its animosity in this period was above all directed at the 'separatist' regimes in Croatia and Slovenia. The irony was not only that Croatian and Slovenian separatism was a direct response to the aggressive policies of the Milosevic regime, but also that the latter was promoting the break-up of Yugoslavia as a deliberate policy. Through its unwillingness to oppose Milosevic and its hostility to the Croats and Slovenes, Washington in practice encouraged the force that was promoting the very break-up of Yugoslavia that it wished to avoid.

The problem was not that the Bush Administration lacked accurate intelligence as to what Milosevic's regime was doing, but that it chose to disregard this intelligence, instead clinging blindly to its shibboleth of Yugoslav unity, indeed of Yugoslav centralisation. Thus, as Glaurdic shows, a 'conservative realist' ideology resulted in a highly unrealistic, dogmatic policy. In October 1990, the CIA warned the US leadership that, while the latter could do little to preserve Yugoslav unity, its statements would be interpreted and exploited by the different sides in the conflict: statements in support of Yugoslav unity would encourage Serbia while those in support of human rights and self-determination would encourage the Slovenes, Croats and Kosovars (Glaurdic, p. 110). The Bush Administration nevertheless continued to stress its support for Yugoslav unity.

This meant not only that the West failed to respond to Milosevic's repressive and aggressive policy, but that Milosevic and his circle actually drew encouragement from the signals they received from the West. Milosevic scarcely kept his policy a secret; at a meeting with Western ambassadors in Belgrade on 16 January 1991, he informed them that he intended to allow Slovenia to secede, and to form instead an enlarged Serbian stage on the ruins of the old Yugoslavia, that would include Serb-inhabited areas

of Croatia and Bosnia and that would be established through the use of force if necessary. This brazen announcement provoked US and British complaints, but no change in policy (Glaurdic, pp. 135-136).

The problem was not merely ideological rigidity and mistaken analysis on the part of Western and particular US leaders, but also sheer lack of interest. Glaurdic describes the paradoxical Western policy toward the Yugoslav Federal Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, who – unlike Milosevic – really did want to preserve Yugoslavia, and whose programme of economic reform, in principle, offered a way to achieve this. In comparison with the generous financial assistance extended to Poland in 1989-1990, no remotely similar support was offered to Markovic's government, because in US ambassador Warren Zimmermann's words, 'Yugoslavia looked like a loser'. (Glaurdic, p. 68).

The US's dogmatic support for Yugoslav unity was shared by the West European powers. Glaurdic demolishes the myth – already exploded by authors like Libal and Richard Caplan – that Germany supported or encouraged Croatia's and Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia. When the president of the Yugoslav presidency, Janez Drnovsek, visited Bonn on 5 December 1989, German chancellor Helmut Kohl expressed to him his 'appreciation for Yugoslavia's irreplaceable role in the stability of the region and the whole of Europe'. On the same occasion, German president Richard von Weizsaecker informed the Yugoslav delegation that he supported a 'centralised' Yugoslavia (Glaurdic, p. 59). A year later, on 6 December 1990, German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher told his Yugoslav counterpart, Budimir Loncar, that Germany 'has a fundamental interest in the integrity of Yugoslavia', and consequently would make 'the Yugoslav republics realise that separatist tendencies are damaging to the whole and very costly' (Glaurdic, pp. 124-125).

This German opposition to Croatian and Slovenian independence continued right up till the latter was actually declared in June 1991, and beyond. According to Gerhard Almer, a German diplomat and Yugoslav specialist at the time, 'Everything that was happening in Yugoslavia was viewed through Soviet glasses.

[Genscher's] idea was, "Well, Yugoslavia disintegrating is a bad example for Soviet disintegration, and this was bad for us since we needed a Soviet Union capable of action because we needed to get a deal with them on our unity". This was widely accepted in the ministry.' (Glaurdic, p. 160). Contrary to the myth of anti-Yugoslav imperialistic tendencies on the part of Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic government, the latter's support for the Yugoslav *status quo* in the face of Belgrade's abuses was so rigid that it provoked strong resistance from the Social Democratic opposition.

Genscher, subsequently demonised as a supposed architect of Yugoslavia's break-up, actually resisted this pressure from the Bundestag for a shift in German policy away from unbending support for Yugoslav unity and toward greater emphasis on human rights and self-determination. The turning point for him, as Glaurdic shows, came with his visit to Belgrade on 1 July 1991, after the war in Slovenia had broken out. The combination of the overconfident Milosevic's aggressive stance in his talk with Genscher, and the Yugoslav government's inability to halt the Yugoslav People's Army [JNA] operations against Slovenia, destroyed the German foreign minister's faith in the Belgrade authorities, leading to his gradual shift in favour of Croatia and Slovenia. Eventually, after a lot more Serbian intransigence and military aggression, Germany would reverse its traditional policy by 180 degrees, and come out in favour of the recognition of Slovenia's and Croatia's independence, while the EC would split into pro- and anti-recognition currents of opinion.

Nevertheless, as Glaurdic shows, Germany's change of heart was a double-edged sword, since it aroused the anti-German suspicions and rivalries of other EC states, particularly France and Britain, which consequently hardened their own stances against recognition. On 6 November 1991, while the JNA's military assaults on the Croatian cities of Vukovar and Dubrovnik were at their peak, Douglas Hogg, the UK's Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, explained to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons that his government was opposed to the recognition of Croatia since it would create an

‘obstacle’ to territorial adjustments in Serbia’s favour and at Croatia’s expense. Several days later, the French president, Francois Mitterand, made a similar public statement, indicating that he saw Croatia’s existing borders as a ‘problem’ that prevented its recognition (Glaurdic, pp. 253-254).

The Bush Administration, meanwhile, acted as a brake on the EC’s shift against Belgrade and in favour of recognition, teaming up with the British and French to counter Germany’s change of policy. US Secretary of State James Baker and his deputy Lawrence Eagleburger, as well as the UN special envoy Cyrus Vance (himself a former US Secretary of State) waged a diplomatic battle in this period against any shift away from the West’s non-recognition policy, and against any singling out of Serbia for blame for the war – even as the JNA was massively escalating its assault on Vukovar in preparation for the town’s final conquest. Eagleburger had signalled to the Yugoslav ambassador in October that, although the US was aware that Milosevic was attempting to establish a Greater Serbia, it would do nothing to stop him except economic sanctions, and even these only after Greater Serbia had been actually established (Glaurdic, pp. 243-246). As late as December 1991, Vance continued to oppose recognition and to support the idea of a federal Yugoslavia, and continued moreover to put his trust in Milosevic, the JNA and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, while viewing the Croatians dismissively as ‘these Croatian insurgents’ (Glaurdic, pp. 264-265).

Glaurdic has marshalled an enormous wealth of documentary evidence to show that the British, French and Americans, far from reacting in a weak and decisive manner to a sudden outbreak of war, actually pursued a remarkably steady and consistent policy from before the war began, right up until the eve of full-scale war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: of vocally supporting Yugoslav unity and opposing Croatian and Slovenian secession; of resisting any singling out of Serbia for blame or punishment; of opposing recognition of Slovenia and Croatia; of seeking to appease Milosevic and the JNA by extracting concessions from Croatia as the weaker side; and finally of appeasing the Serb nationalists’ desire to carve up Bosnia. EC sanctions imposed in

November 1991 applied to all parts of the former Yugoslavia equally, while there was no freezing of the international assets or financial transactions through which the JNA funded its war. The UN arms embargo, whose imposition had actually been requested by the Yugoslav government itself, favoured the heavily-armed Serbian side and hurt the poorly armed Croats. Although, largely on account of Germany's change of heart, the EC at the start of December 1991 belatedly limited its economic sanctions to Serbia and Montenegro alone, the US immediately responded by imposing economic sanctions on the whole of Yugoslavia.

According to myth, the Western powers applied the principle of national self-determination in a manner that penalised the Serb nation and privileged the non-Serbs. As Glaurdic shows, the reverse was actually the case. In October 1991, Milosevic rejected the peace plan put forward by the EC's Lord Carrington, which would have preserved Yugoslavia as a union of sovereign republics with autonomy for national minorities, in part because he feared it implied autonomy for the Albanians of Kosovo and the Muslims in Serbia's Sanjak region. Carrington consequently modified his plan: Croatia would be denied any military presence whatsoever in the disputed 'Krajina' region, despite it being an integral part of Croatia inhabited by many Croats, while Serbia would be given a completely free hand to suppress the Kosovo Albanians and Sanjak Muslims. Carrington's offer came just after leaders of the latter had organised referendums for increased autonomy, and after the Milosevic regime had responded with concerted police repression (Glaurdic, p. 242).

Milosevic nevertheless continued to reject the Carrington Plan in the understandable belief that the West would eventually offer him a better deal. He consequently asked Carrington to request from the EC's Arbitration Commission, headed by Robert Badinter, an answer to the questions of whether the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia possessed the right to self-determination, and of whether Serbia's borders with Croatia and Bosnia should be considered borders under international law. Carrington submitted these to the Commission, along with a third question, of whether

the situation in Yugoslavia was a case of secession by Slovenia and Croatia or a case of dissolution of the common state. That the Arbitration Commission ruled against Serbia on all three counts was, in Glaurdic's words, a 'terrible surprise for Milosevic and for many in the international community' (p. 260), given that Badinter was a close associate of President Mitterand, whose sympathies were with Serbia's case. The Badinter Commission's ruling dismayed both Carrington and French foreign minister Roland Dumas, and paved the way to international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. But it did not fundamentally change the West's policy.

Glaurdic's account ends with the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, which as he argues, should be seen as the logical culmination of this policy. The failure of the EC foreign ministers to recognise Bosnia's independence in January 1992 along with Croatia's and Slovenia's was, in Glaurdic's words, 'the decision with the most detrimental long-term consequences, all of which were clearly foreseeable... The EC had missed a great chance to preempt a war that would soon make the war in Croatia pale in comparison. Of all the mistakes the European Community had made regarding the recognition of the Yugoslav republics, this one was probably the most tragic.' (pp. 281-282). Recognition of Bosnia at this time would have upset Milosevic's and Karadzic's plans for destroying that republic; instead, they were given every indication that the West would acquiesce in them.

Thus, on 21-22 February 1992, Bosnia's politicians were presented with the first draft of the plan of the EC's Jose Cutileiro for the three-way partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina into loosely linked Serb, Croat and Muslim entities. Since the plan, based on the ethnic majorities in Bosnian municipalities, offered the Bosnian Serb nationalists 'only' 43.8% of Bosnian territory instead of the 66% they sought, the latter's assembly unanimously rejected it on 11 March. Once again, the EC abandoned universal standards in order to accommodate Serb intransigence, and Cutileiro modified his plan so that the three constituent Bosnian entities 'would be based on national principles and would be taking into account economic, geographic and other criteria' (Glaurdic, p.

294), thereby opening the way for a Serb entity with a larger share of Bosnian territory than was justified on demographic grounds.

Ultimately, Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic rejected the plan. But as Glaurdic writes,

“The damage that the Cutileiro plan did to Bosnia cannot be overstated. By accepting the ethnic principle for the re-organisation of the republic, Cutileiro in essence recognised the platforms of the SDS [Serb Democratic Party led by Karadzic] and the Boban wing of the HDZ [Croat Democratic Union] and opened a Pandora’s box of ethnic division that still mars Bosnia to this very day. Cutileiro’s intent was obviously to appease the Bosnian Serbs and their Belgrade sponsor into not implementing their massive war machinery. However, instead of lowering tensions and giving the three parties an impetus to keep negotiating, the plan actually gave them a “charter for ethnic cleansing”.” (p. 290)

In these circumstances, the West’s belated recognition of Bosnia’s independence in April 1992 was naturally not taken seriously by the Serb leaders; Milosevic rather wittily compared it to the Roman emperor Caligula declaring his horse to be a senator (Glaurdic, p. 298).

My principal regret is that Glaurdic did not fully apply the logic of his iconoclastic analysis to his consideration of the Croatian dimension of the Yugoslav tragedy. He carefully and correctly highlights the retrograde nationalist ideology of Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, including his equivocal statements about the Nazi-puppet Croatian regime of World War II and his promotion of the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet he does not properly stress the extent to which Tudjman’s repeated retreats in the face of Serbian aggression merely encouraged the latter, just as did the similar retreats of the Western leaders. Thus, Tudjman capitulated to the JNA’s bullying in January 1991 and agreed to demobilise Croatia’s reservists and arrest Croatian officials involved in arms procurement, including the Croatian defence minister Martin Spigelj himself. Glaurdic argues that this ‘defused the [JNA] generals’ plan for a takeover’ and

brought Yugoslavia 'back from the brink' (p. 134), but it would be more accurate to say that such Croatian appeasement merely encouraged further Serbian assaults, and that the killing in Croatia began only weeks later.

Glaurdic has carefully described the Milosevic regime's secessionism vis-a-vis the Yugoslav federation, but one significant detail omitted from his book is the promulgation on 28 September 1990 of Serbia's new constitution, which stated that 'The Republic of Serbia determines and guarantees: 1 the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and its international position and relations with other states and international organisations;...'. In other words, Serbia declared itself a sovereign and independent state before either Croatia or Bosnia did. This is relevant when evaluating not only the Milosevic regime's hypocrisy regarding 'separatism', but the extent of the West's policy failure. Milosevic posed as Yugoslavia's defender while he deliberately destroyed it. Western leaders were hoodwinked: they sought both to uphold Yugoslavia's unity and to appease Milosevic's Serbia. As Glaurdic has brilliantly demonstrated, their dogged pursuit of the second of these policies ensured the failure of the first.

THE MYTH THAT 'GERMANY ENCOURAGED CROATIA TO SECEDE FROM YUGOSLAVIA'

Those who are sufficiently ideologically driven will readily and tenaciously believe a myth that upholds their own ideology, no matter how completely the myth has been exposed and discredited. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion have been used by anti-Semites from the Nazis to today's Islamists, despite the fact that they were exposed as a forgery a century ago. German anti-Semites sought to explain away Germany's defeat in World War I in 1918 by a supposed 'stab in the back' by the Jews, shifting the ignominy for the murderous Imperial German regime's military collapse onto an innocent third party. In much the same way, apologists for the former regime of Slobodan Milosevic have for twenty years tried to blame the ignominious break-up

of Yugoslavia – which the Milosevic regime deliberately engineered – on democratic Germany’s supposed ‘encouragement of Croatian secessionism’. They have done this despite a complete failure to uncover any evidence to support their thesis.

David N. Gibbs in *First do no Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2009) is the latest author to attempt to breathe life into the corpse of this myth, arguing that ‘Croatian leaders were assured, well in advance, that Germany, the dominant power in Europe, would support their efforts to establish an independent state and to secede from Yugoslavia’ (p. 78) and ‘the key EC state of Germany was clearly in favour of breaking up Yugoslavia, and was actively encouraging secession’ (p. 91). Rarely have I seen such cynical misuse of sources.

- 1) For example, Gibbs quotes the memoirs of the former German foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher as follows:

‘Genscher himself was openly sympathetic toward the secessionists. In his memoirs, he stated: “It was important for us to establish that the Yugoslav peoples alone had the right to freely determine the future of their nation” – with the implication that the Yugoslav central government could not veto this right. Genscher also affirmed “an individual nation’s right to secede’ from the larger [Yugoslav] polity.’ (Gibbs, p. 79)

Yet here are some statements from Genscher’s memoirs that Gibbs omitted to quote:

‘When it came to recognising Croatia and Slovenia, the Vatican displayed extreme reluctance. During my visit in [sic] the Vatican on November 29, 1991, this attempt to remain aloof was particularly apparent. I understood that attitude; the accusation that on this issue the Vatican and West Germany formed a “conspiracy” is therefore very wide of the mark. No one outside of Yugoslavia was interested in the least in the dissolution of Yugoslavia; it was only the pan-Serbian strife [sic] for hegemony that set the country’s dissolution in motion’ (Hans Dietrich Genscher, *Rebuilding a House Divided*, Broadway Books, New York, p. 91)

'On Wednesday, March 20, [1991,] I received Slovenia's president Milan Kucan and Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel; they also spoke of their concerns and of Slovenia's increasing move to independence. I urged them to proceed slowly and above all to take no unilateral steps but to be alert to opportunities to hold the confederation together in some other constitutional form. Especially in view of our delicate, historically burdened relationship with the region, two aspects were of particular importance to German foreign policy: one, not to encourage centrifugal tendencies, and two, to make no unilateral changes in our policy toward Yugoslavia.' (Genscher, p. 491)

'To return to the situation in mid-1991: From June 19 to 20 the first conference of the CSCE Council of Foreign Ministers was held in Berlin. As the host nation, Germany chaired the meeting. Before the conference, I received a few foreign ministers for bilateral talks. Among them was Yugoslavia's foreign minister, Budimir [sic] Loncar, because I wanted to discuss with him first of all the question of how to deal with the issue of Yugoslavia – as might be expected, one of the core topics of the conference. Once again we were impelled to emphasise our interest in maintaining a unified but democratic and federated nation; the conference must remain true to the principles established by the Paris Charter a few months earlier.' (Genscher, pp. 492-493)

So a source quoted selectively and tendentiously by Gibbs to try and squeeze out something approaching 'evidence' for his thesis that Germany encouraged Croatia's secession actually provides rather more evidence that Germany supported a unified Yugoslavia at the time Croatia declared independence in June 1991 [NB since Gibbs falsely accuses me of being unable to read German, I should make clear that I am quoting the English translation of Genscher's memoirs because Gibbs himself relies on the translation, and does not use the German original].

- 2) Likewise, Gibbs quotes the study of Germany's policy toward Croatia in 1991 written by former German diplomat Michael

Libal (*Limits of Persuasion: Germany and the Yugoslav Crisis, 1991, 1992*, Praeger, Westport and London, 1997): ‘on 18 July the decision was made in Belgrade to completely withdraw the JNA from Slovenia;... in Germany a sense of euphoria prevailed.’ (Gibbs, p. 94).

Yet Libal’s book in fact demolishes the view that Germany encouraged Croatia to secede; in Libal’s words, ‘No German official advocated the encouragement of separatist tendencies within the Yugoslav republics.’ Libal describes the ‘good, if not excellent relations between Bonn and Belgrade, which Genscher had been building up since the early 1970s... It was almost a special relationship: Germany acted as Yugoslavia’s advocate in the European Community (EC) and was instrumental in bringing about closer cooperation between the two.’ Consequently, ‘Given this excellent state of relations and the strong position Germany enjoyed throughout the whole of Yugoslavia, any idea of destabilising that country and encouraging its breakup would have been lunacy. Yugoslavia as a unitary state was a perfect partner for Germany, as no smaller, more troubled and more difficult partner, or possibly even client state, could ever be expected to be.’ (Libal, p. 5) Gibbs simply ignores the copious testimony and documentation provided by Libal that runs counter to Gibbs’s thesis, treating it as though it does not exist.

- 3) And again, although he includes in his bibliography the book by Richard Caplan, *Europe and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), Gibbs does not bother to inform his readers of what Caplan wrote, which is that

‘Until fighting erupted at the end of June, Germany had, along with the rest of the EC, supported the continued unity of Yugoslavia. As late as 19 June 1991, Germany voted in favour of a statement by the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) expressing support for the “unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia”; in fact, it was Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German foreign minister, who supplied the text of the statement. Even after Slovenia’s and

Croatia's declarations of independence, Germany supported the West European Union (WEU) declaration of 27 June that expressed regret at "the recent unilateral decisions" of the two republics, and urged all political authorities in Yugoslavia to "resume the dialogue with a view to securing the unity of the state".' (Caplan, p. 18).

Gibbs does not attempt to tackle this evidence.

- 4) Or another example of misrepresentation: Gibbs cites an anonymous source in the *New Yorker*, allegedly a US diplomat who was claiming that Genscher 'was encouraging the Croats to leave the federation and declare independence.' Gibbs admits: 'It is difficult to fully assess this allegation, given the anonymity of the source. However, the *New Yorker* allegation is supported by the memoirs of US ambassador Warren Zimmermann, which note "Genscher's tenacious decision to rush the independence of Slovenia and Croatia" [Gibbs's emphasis].' Gibbs then claims in the endnote to this sentence: 'Note that Zimmermann does not say that Genscher rushed the international *recognition* of Slovenia's and Croatia's independence; he makes the much more provocative statement that Genscher rushed independence.' (p. 249)

Yet this is simply untrue, as Zimmermann in his memoirs nowhere accuses the Germans of encouraging Croatia's secession, but does criticise them for supporting Croatia's recognition; the idea that when Zimmermann referred to Genscher having 'rushed independence' he really meant 'rushed secession' is sheer wishful thinking on Gibbs's part.

- 5) Yet perhaps the most egregious example of Gibbs's distortion of sources is his claim that 'German support for secession and for breaking up Yugoslavia is also noted by former Canadian ambassador to Yugoslavia, James Bissett and by Croatian nationalist Stjepan Mesic' (p. 79). Bissett is frequently cited by Gibbs, who fails to inform his readers that he is a Srebrenica genocide denier and defender of Milosevic, therefore not an entirely reliable source, and that Bissett's supposed 'noting' of German support for Croatian secession is merely an unsubstantiated allegation.

As for Mesic, it turns out in Gibbs's endnote that he does not in fact 'note' German support for Croatia's secession at all. Gibbs's supposed evidence for his claim is an extract from Milosevic's trial, in which Milosevic is questioning prosecution witness Milan Kucan about what Mesic said on a TV programme in which they (Mesic and Kucan) appeared together. Milosevic states 'Mesic declared that the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of German Hans-Dietrich Genscher and the Pope John Paul II, by the direct agreement and support designed to break up the former Yugoslavia had practically contributed most to that actually happening', and Kucan replied 'Those were the stance of Mr Mesic'.

The supposed 'noting' by Mesic of Genscher's support for Croatia's secession thus turns out to be actually testimony not from Mesic but from Kucan, who appears to be confirming what Milosevic said. Gibbs considers the extract from the trial to be sufficiently significant that he reproduces the sentence by Milosevic, and puts Kucan's reply in emphasis: '*Those were the stance of Mr Mesic*' (Gibbs, p. 250).

What Gibbs does not tell his readers, is that in the following lines of the transcript, not only does Kucan state clearly that he cannot remember what Mesic said, but Milosevic makes clear that the reference is to Genscher's support for Croatian independence *after* it was declared, not before.

This is what Milosevic said:

'Let us just specify something else, please. Do you remember that at the time Mesic said that he came to Belgrade, to the highest position in the federation in order to, through the mediation of the Yugoslav diplomacy at the time, to get in touch with the most influential factors and to persuade them that the survival of Yugoslavia was nonsense? And I have a quotation: "I wanted to convey that the idea of the break-up of Yugoslavia to those who had the greatest influence on its fate, to Genscher and the Pope. In fact, I had three meetings with Genscher. He enabled a contact with the Holy See. The Pope and Genscher agreed with the total break-up of SFRY." Was that what he said?'

The ‘highest position in the federation’, i.e. the presidency, was a position Mesic assumed only at the end of June 1991, after Croatia had already seceded.

This is what Kucan replied:

‘Your Honours, this programme which I participated together with Mr. Mesic, I can confirm that. But to be able to confirm each and every word, I’d need either a transcript or a video in order to be able to confirm it. These are very weighty words, and to testify like this wouldn’t — just wouldn’t do.’

So Mesic was not ‘noting’ that Genscher had supported Croatia’s secession. And Milosevic was not alleging that Mesic had ‘noted’ this. And Kucan was not confirming that what Milosevic said was true. Gibbs has simply falsified the source yet again.

- 6) In his endnotes, Gibbs writes, ‘In memoirs, the Slovene defense minister Janez Jansa downplays the role of foreign support, but he concedes that by July 1, “Genscher strongly supported our cause”’. (Gibbs, p. 249). Of course, this citation merely suggests that Germany supported Slovenia’s cause after independence had already been declared, not that Germany actually encouraged secession.

What Gibbs does not tell his readers is that, according to Jansa, Germany actually *discouraged* Slovenia from declaring independence. Jansa writes ‘Even the German parliament in its debate in February 1991 did not support our dissociation from Yugoslavia’ (Janez Jansa, ‘The Making of the Slovenian State 1988-1992: The Collapse of Yugoslavia’, Zalozba Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1994, p. 91)

- 7) Gibbs cites the opinion of journalist David Halberstam: ‘According to David Halberstam: “The Slovenians were already aware [by February 1990] that the Germans... favoured their independence.”’ The opinion of a journalist with no expertise on the former Yugoslavia does not count for much; particularly so in this case, as in February 1990, the pro-independence nationalists had not even taken power in Slovenia,

which was still ruled by Communists formally committed to Yugoslav unity!

- 8) Gibbs's last remaining 'source' that Germany encouraged Croatia to secede is a statement by the State Department official John Bolton, but this turns out to be another case of misrepresentation. Gibbs writes 'State Department official John Bolton later stated that Germany "induced the Slovenes and the Croats to jump ship," that is, to leave the federation.' (Gibbs, p. 79)

Yet when the quote is given in full, there is no suggestion that Bolton was accusing Germany of having induced Croatia and Slovenia to secede before they did so; merely that he accused Germany of having induced the EU states to recognise their independence after they had done so:

'Initially, Germany, based largely on its historical interests in the region, insisted that EU members recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. While this precipitous change alone was not enough to cause the ensuing carnage and ethnic cleansing in the region, Bosnia-Herzegovina unquestionably saw a declaration of independence as the only way to extricate itself from Serbia's grasp, hoping thereby to find security in a united European front against Serbian force. Having thus induced the Slovenes and Croats to jump ship, and having pushed the Bosnians, Germany then concluded that it was constitutionally barred from undertaking any military activities that might actually stop the Serbian (or Croat) war machine.'

Thus, none of Gibbs's sources turns out to support his contention that Germany encouraged Croatia or Slovenia to secede from Yugoslavia, and some actually refute it.

- 9) Gibbs also claims that 'French Air Force general Pierre M. Gallois asserts that Germany began supplying arms to Croatia, including antitank and antiaircraft rockets, in early 1991 – before the war began.' (Gibbs, p. 78) He neglects to tell his readers that Gallois was – like his favourite source James Bissett – another Milosevic supporter, who actually wrote a

preface to a book comprising a dialogue between Milosevic and one of his other supporters, and to which Milosevic also contributed the foreword, entitled 'The trial of Milosevic or the indictment of the Serb people'. In this book, Gallois praises Milosevic for his 'intelligence' and his 'honour'. The value of his assertion that Germany had been arming Croatia from early 1991 should be assessed with this allegiance in mind.

- 10) There remains Gibbs's claim that Germany was involved in building up Croatia's intelligence services prior to Croatia's declaration of independence:

'Germany's covert intervention began in 1990, while Yugoslavia was still an integral state. In that year, German officials from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BFV), a subdivision of the Interior Ministry, assisted in building up Croatia's intelligence service, the National Security Office (UNS). In the course of this activity, German officials would openly collaborate with extreme nationalists in Franjo Tudjman's HDZ party. This early German intervention, though little known, is nevertheless well documented.' (Gibbs, p. 77)

Since, as Gibbs has pointedly informed us in his reply to my first post about him, he is a 'tenured full professor', it is surprising to learn what he considers the definition of 'well documented' to be: in this case, two short articles, neither of which provides any evidence or even references to back up its assertions, which do not even support Gibbs's assertions, which contradict each other, and one of which is the work of a Srebrenica-genocide-denying outfit of extreme-right-wing Islamophobic crackpots.

The first of these articles, 'Croatia's intelligence services' by Marko Milivojevic, published in *Jane's Intelligence Review* on 1 September 1994, has this to say: 'Dating back to as early as 1990, when Croatia was still a constituent republic of an internationally recognised state, German involvement with Croatia's intelligence services began with the UNS whose name was a direct copy of Germany's BfV (Federal Office for

the Protection of the Constitution.’ Milivojevic does not provide any evidence to back up his claim. Be this as it may, he merely speaks vaguely of Germany’s ‘involvement’ with Croatia’s UNS at this stage; he does not claim what Gibbs claims, that German intelligence began ‘building up’ Croatia’s UNS already in 1990. His article covers the period up to 1994; he writes that ‘As regards the type of assistance provided by Germany to Croatia’s intelligence services, staff training has reportedly been the most important input.’ Gibbs has turned this unsourced ‘reportedly’ into ‘well documented’, and simply assumed it refers to as far back as 1990.

Milivojevic does not give any sources, but he appears to have simply regurgitated a lot of the allegations made in Gibbs’s other source, which Gibbs cites second in his book but which was actually published first: Gregory Copley, ‘FRG helps develop Croatian security’, *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, February–March 1994. This article claims that ‘The Croatian leadership decided, at the beginning of 1991, to organise its own intelligence and security services.’ It thereby contradicts the claim made by Milivojevic, that these intelligence services already existed in 1990, and Gibbs’s claim, that Germany was already ‘building up’ Croatia’s intelligence services in 1990. This article claims that ‘German intelligence officers provided significant support and training at all stages, both in Croatia and in Germany.’ It does, therefore, agree with Gibbs that the support and training began, if not in 1990, then at least at the start of 1991, prior to Croatia’s declaration of independence. It does not, however, provide any evidence to back up its allegations.

The value of Copley, president of the ‘International Strategic Studies Association’ as an authority on the war in the former Yugoslavia may be gleaned by the fact that he has made statements such as the following: ‘the Clinton Administration had, during the war, facilitated the Islamist terrorist activities because of the Clinton Administration’s need to demonize the Serbs in order to provide a *casus belli* for US-led military actions in the area to distract from domestic US political problems’. Copley condemned the possibility of ‘an admission of

guilt of Serbs for killing thousands of Muslims who, in fact, were not known to have been killed. Several hundred bodies have been found as a result of the fighting in and around Srebrenica, but the Islamists and their supporters have claimed figures which grow higher with each telling, with figures now claiming some 15,000 alleged deaths.’ Furthermore, according to Copley, ‘the Islamist propaganda [regarding Srebrenica], supported by Ashdown — who has long been disavowed in the UK by his former colleagues in the Royal Marines because of his unequivocal acceptance of Islamist propaganda — is accepted as fact by the R[epublika] S[rpska] Government, thereby admitting guilt for crimes never committed.’

Indeed, Copley is a member of a body of Srebrenica deniers who went on record in September 2003 to claim that ‘the official alleged casualty number of 7,000 victims’ is ‘vastly inflated and unsupported by evidence.’

That, then, is the sort of source that Gibbs relies on to ‘prove’ that Germany encouraged the secession of Croatia.

With thanks to DW and JG

Update: Gibbs has admitted his inability to respond: ‘I will make no pretense that I answer all of Hoare’s allegations, which I find impossible, given the huge quantity of his charges.’ Anyone who has followed this exchange will draw the appropriate conclusions, though the sort of bone-headed left-wing fundamentalists who read his book and subscribe to his thesis won’t be put off by any refutation, however crushing. For who cares about the truth when you uphold the righteous ideology of ‘anti-imperialism’, right?

I posted the following conclusion about Gibbs at Americans for Bosnia:

‘Quite apart from Gibbs’s deficiencies as a scholar, the reason why he and similar revisionists fail so badly is that – as I mentioned in my initial post about him – they don’t treat the wars in the former Yugoslavia as a serious subject of scholarly enquiry, but merely as another battlefield for their ideological campaign against “Western imperialism”.

Any attempt at open-minded research would force them to examine carefully then abandon as worthless the Serb-nationalist or “anti-imperialist” myths about the wars, and to develop more objective interpretations. But since their priority is to uphold the myths, not to carry out open-minded research, they are stuck supporting the ridiculous.

In trying to write a book on that basis, Gibbs failed as soon as he began.’

THE MYTH THAT ‘MOST OF BOSNIA WAS OWNED BY THE SERBS BEFORE THE WAR’

The myth that Slobodan Milosevic’s regime in Serbia and Radovan Karadzic’s Bosnian Serb rebels were victims of hostile Western intervention, indeed of a veritable Western imperialist conspiracy, is a bit like the idea that God exists – it really does rest on faith over reason. Ageing Western left-wing extremists who spent their entire lives believing that the Communist dictatorships of the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, etc. represented some sort of advance on liberal capitalism, were unwilling to jettison this shibboleth just because Communism collapsed ignominiously across Eastern Europe from 1989. They emotionally needed to believe that even the decaying remnant of this *ancien regime* represented by Milosevic’s dictatorship *must* have been the object of Western imperialist hostility in the 1990s, and their tribal loyalties moved them to solidarise with it in the face of all the evidence of its murderous nature. The solidarity was then perversely extended to Karadzic’s ideologically right-wing, anti-Communist Bosnian Serb rebels.

One of the clearest pieces of evidence that the Western alliance was *not* hostile to Karadzic’s Bosnian Serb rebels, however, was the fact that three and a half years of Western intervention in the Bosnian war culminated in a peace settlement that was remarkably favourable to them: not only were they granted a virtual state, through the recognition of their self-proclaimed ‘Republika Srpska’, with its own government, parliament, army, etc., but they were awarded 49% of Bosnia’s territory, despite the fact

that Serbs constituted only 31% of Bosnia's population at the time the war began in 1992. Meanwhile, the supposed 'imperialist clients', the Bosniaks or Bosnian Muslims, had their Bosnian republic virtually dissolved and broken into two entities, with the Muslims and Croats, who comprised 60% of Bosnia's population in 1992, receiving only 51% of the territory.

Can you imagine the US treating one of its real allies this way? Granting 49% of Israel to the Palestinians or 49% of Colombia to FARC?

The percentages are problematic not only for the myth of Western hostility to Karadzic's Serb nationalists, but also to those believing in the justice of the Serb nationalist cause in Bosnia. To square this circle, the latter have traditionally claimed that the Serb-nationalist conquest of so much Bosnian land is not really a conquest at all, since Bosnian Serbs 'already owned' 65% (or 60%, or 56%, or whatever) of Bosnian private land.

The first problem with this argument is that private ownership of land is not the same as state ownership of territory, nor should it be. In a hypothetical country whose population was made up 90% of poor black peasants and 10% of rich white landowners, but in which the white minority owned 99% of the privately owned land and the black majority only 1%, nobody would seriously argue that the whites had the right to their own state comprising 99% of the country's territory.

Nor is the area of a country's territory the same as the area of its privately owned land, since part of the land of any country – particularly a Communist-ruled country like Bosnia – will be owned communally or by the state.

Nor does private ownership imply military control; if in another hypothetical country the native population owned 100% of the privately owned land but the country was heavily occupied by a colonial power, it would not follow that the native population 'controlled' the land.

The second problem with the argument that the majority of Bosnia's land was owned by Serbs is that the figure itself is a myth – whether it is given as 65%, or 60%, or 56% or whatever.

No evidence was ever produced to show that Serbs really did own more than half of Bosnia's land.

David N. Gibbs, in *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2009) has this to say on the matter:

'It is clear that Serb forces were on the offensive during much of the war, and they conquered large areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the extent of Serb aggression was once again exaggerated. Newspaper articles repeatedly noted that Serbs controlled some 70 percent of Bosnia's territory, despite the fact that they constituted only 31% the [sic] total population... There was an insinuation that the Serbs must have conquered most of the 70 percent. Why, the reader might wonder, should the Serbs control so much land if they account for less than one-third of the population? What such reports omitted was that the Serbs had always occupied most of Bosnia's land area, owing to their demographic dominance in rural regions. The Dutch government's investigation estimates that ethnic Serbs controlled 56 percent of Bosnia's land prior to the war. During the 1992-1995 period, Serbs extended their control of Bosnia's land area by approximately 14 percent above the amount of land that Serbs had held before the war. Clearly this 14 percent was gained through military conquest – but the extent of this conquest was nowhere near the levels implied in press reports. Such distortions appeared not only in newspaper articles, but also in US government reports.'
(p. 124)

This argument allows Gibbs to claim that the various Western peace plans which awarded over 40% of Bosnian territory to the Serb rebels, even though Serbs comprised only 31% of Bosnia's pre-war population, were actually unfavourable to the Serbs:

'In fact, the Vance-Owen Plan was not especially favourable toward the Serbs, and for the most part it did not reward ethnic cleansing. The 43% that the Serbs were to receive under the plan was considerably less than the land area controlled

by Serbs prior to the onset of the fighting. Critics of the plan ignored the fact that the Serbs had always controlled most of the land in Bosnia – since they were disproportionately agricultural – even before the war. When the war began in 1992, the Serbs owned or controlled some 56% of the total land, a proportion above what they were allocated by the Vance-Owen Plan.’ (p. 144)

Gibbs’s claim is already meaningless, since he doesn’t appear to know whether he is referring to ‘ownership’ or to ‘control’ of land by the Serbs – and as we have seen, the two are not the same and cannot be conflated.

Be that as it may, his source for the assertion that ‘the Serbs owned or controlled some 56% of the total land’ in Bosnia before the war is the 2002 report on the Srebrenica massacre of the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD), commissioned by the Dutch government. In Gibbs’s words, ‘The report states: “Prior to the 1992 conflict, 56% of Bosnian territory was in Serb hands.”’ (*First Do No Harm*, p. 269)

It is certainly true that the NIOD report claims the following:

‘Prior to the 1992 conflict, 56 per cent of Bosnian territory was in Serb hands, although they constituted no more than 31 per cent of the population’ (Part I, Chapter 3, Section, 2, p. 189).

Unfortunately, however, the NIOD report is, as regards historical background, a sloppy, unscholarly source. The NIOD report’s source for this claim is the book by Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (M.E. Sharp, New York and London, 1999, p. 28). Yet the NIOD report has cited Burg and Shoup falsely. What they actually claimed was the following:

‘If the cadastral opstina [municipality] was used as the unit to measure population distribution, about 56 percent of the area of Bosnia-Herzegovina could be said to have been inhabited by Serbs before the conflict began – a figure that should not be confused with the claim of the Bosnian Serbs

that they “owned” 64% of the land. (This claim, even if true, can only refer to privately owned land.’

The claim by Burg and Shoup that 56% of Bosnia was ‘inhabited by Serbs’ is vague (what does it mean that 56% of Bosnia was ‘inhabited’ by Serbs? Is a municipality in which Serbs comprise a small minority still considered to be ‘inhabited’ by Serbs, or must they constitute a majority? How many Muslims, Croats and other non-Serbs also inhabited the 56% of the territory that was ‘inhabited by Serbs’? And how is ‘56% of Bosnia’ defined? Does it mean that municipalities with a Serb majority comprised 56% of Bosnian territory? Was the city of Sarajevo, with its large Serb population but larger Muslim population, defined as ‘inhabited by Serbs’? Are uninhabited mountains located within Serb-majority municipalities included in the 56% or in the 44%? etc. etc.).

Leaving that aside, Burg and Shoup specifically state that ‘inhabited by’ does not mean ‘ownership of’; nor do they claim that it meant ‘controlled by’. The NIOD report has changed the meaning of Shoup’s and Burg’s statement from ‘56% of Bosnia’s territory was inhabited by Serbs’ to ‘56% of Bosnia’s territory was in Serb hands’. Not bothering to check NIOD’s source, Gibbs has then used the NIOD report to claim that ‘56% of Bosnian land was owned or controlled by the Serbs’.

In other words, Gibbs’s confused and meaningless claim is based upon the NIOD report’s miscitation of Shoup’s and Burg’s already unclear claim – even though the original claim, however unclear it might be, very specifically does *not* mean what Gibbs claims it means. And he uses this essentially manufactured ‘fact’ to claim that successive Western peace-plans were unfavourable to the Serbs, since they awarded them less than the 56% of Bosnia they had supposedly originally ‘owned or controlled’!

But are there any real figures concerning Bosnian land that can help us establish the truth? One source whose reliability, we hope, will not be called into question, is the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, whose second edition was published in Yugoslavia during the 1980s. The entry for Bosnia-Hercegovina, which we

cite here in the English edition of its published offprint (*The Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina*, Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, Zagreb, 1983), has this to say:

'The total area of B-H [Bosnia-Hercegovina] is 5,113,000 ha, which is 20% of the total area of Yugoslavia. Agricultural areas include 2,573,000 ha, that is more than a half of the area of B-H (50.3%), or less than 1/5 (17.9%) of all the agricultural area of Yugoslavia.' (p. 137). Furthermore, *'private holdings even now occupy almost all of the arable land (94.9%)'*... (p. 139).

So according to this official source, private agricultural land holdings in Bosnia comprised just under half the total territory of Bosnia, and agricultural land as a whole comprised barely more than half.

Furthermore, according to a book published by the Republican Office of Statistics of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1976, *the majority of the rural population of Bosnia-Hercegovina at the time was non-Serb*. Specifically, in 1971, the village population of Bosnia-Hercegovina was 45.5% Serb and 53.7% Muslim and Croat (Ejub Sijercic, *Migracije stanovništva Bosne i Hercegovine*, Republicki zavod za statistiku SRBiH, Sarajevo, 1976, p. 52).

Gibbs's claim that 'Serbs had always occupied most of Bosnia's land area, owing to their demographic dominance in rural regions' and that 'the Serbs had always controlled most of the land in Bosnia – since they were disproportionately rural' is therefore false. His deduction, based on this falsehood, that Western peace-plans that awarded over 40% of Bosnia to the Serb rebels were actually *unfavourable* to them, can therefore be exposed as an attempt to fabricate Serb victimhood at Western hands.

I shall be adding to this critique of Gibbs in future.

HOW MARGARET THATCHER TURNED THE LEFT UPSIDE DOWN

By Guest | Published: April 10, 2013

When I was growing up in the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher was the incarnation of evil. I came from a left-wing family and was an activist from an early age, joining the Labour Party Young Socialists at fifteen or sixteen.

I was active in support of striking teachers and ambulance workers and against the poll-tax; I attended the great London demonstration against the poll-tax of 31 March 1990.

In those days, political rights and wrongs were very simple: right-wing was bad and left-wing was good. Thatcher, along with the US's Ronald Reagan, was the number one left-wing hate-figure; most demos involved the ritual chant of 'Maggie! Maggie! Maggie! Out! Out! Out!' Her fall in November 1990 was a time of joy.

My two-dimensional political world began to collapse in 1991, when Serbia's fascistic dictator Slobodan Milosevic launched full-scale war in the former Yugoslavia, from where my own mother came. The crimes of Milosevic's forces, culminating in the genocide in Bosnia, made the real or supposed crimes of Thatcher and the Tories – the sinking of the Belgrano, the crushing of the miners, the poll tax, etc. – pale in comparison.

I naively hoped that the radical left's opposition to oppression and injustice would lead it to show solidarity to Milosevic's Kosovar, Croatian and Bosnian victims, as it did to black South Africans, Catholic Northern Irish, Palestinians and Kurds. After all, Milosevic's aggression and genocide enjoyed the active complicity of the West, above all of the Conservative government of Thatcher's successor, John Major.

A UN arms embargo, staunchly backed by Major's Britain, prevented Milosevic's Bosnian victims from defending themselves properly. Britain worked to destroy Bosnia and reward Serbia, and blocked military intervention against Serb forces.

Solidarity with the Bosnians, in the face of Western collusion in their slaughter, should have been an anti-imperialist cause par excellence.

But it was not to be.

Milosevic was a reconstituted Communist – his party was called the ‘Socialist Party of Serbia’ – and for most of the radical left, tribal solidarity with a ‘socialist’ regime trumped everything else. The ‘socialist’ regimes of Eastern Europe had, in their ignominious collapse in 1989-1991, revealed their complete political, economic and moral bankruptcy to all who weren’t willfully blind. Yet left-wing radicals preferred to be on the wrong side of history, and either refused to oppose or actively sympathised with this final, anachronistic act of barbarity by Communists in Europe.

Kosovars, Croatians and Bosnians were – to borrow Noam Chomsky’s term – ‘unworthy victims’. One by one, the heroes of my youth – Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Dennis Skinner, John Pilger, Steve Bell and others, as well as groups like the Socialist Workers Party – revealed themselves to be Her Majesty’s Loyal Non-Opposition to Major’s Bosnia policy; the left flank of Tory British imperialism.

The days when Milosevic’s Western-abetted killing machine rolled on over Bosnia and its people, apparently inexorably, were dark indeed. Yet at the height of the darkness, on 13 April 1993, a glorious flash of light occurred, when one of the Conservative government’s most hardline, radical critics spectacularly denounced its policy on British prime-time television.

In a BBC interview, Baroness Thatcher called for the arming of the Bosnian army, and when the interviewer mentioned Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd’s argument, that this would create a ‘level killing field’, she denounced this as a ‘terrible and disgraceful phrase’. She compared Bosnia’s defending army with the British fighters at the Battle of Britain, and compared the West’s role in the Bosnian war to ‘an accomplice to massacre’.

It was the statement of solidarity to the victims of oppression and injustice in their struggle that most leading British left-wingers

should have given, but didn't. That was when Thatcher turned the world of the left upside-down.

Since then, the facile assumption that the radical left holds the moral high-ground vis-a-vis mainstream Western politicians has been disproven repeatedly: in 1999, it was Tony Blair, not Tony Benn, who flew off to Kosovo to promise the Albanian victims of Milosevic's genocidal campaign that he would not abandon them; in 2003, it was the US neoconservatives, not the SWP, who supported the Iraqi democrats and Kurds against Saddam Hussein's tyranny; in 2011, it was the Tory-dominated coalition government, not the British radical left, that saved the Libyan revolution from being drowned in blood by Gaddafi.

The return of the Conservatives to power in Britain in 2010 has reminded us of just how negative so much of Thatcher's legacy has been, as they attack public services and the living standards of ordinary people. Thatcher was a disaster for British society, culture and morals. Yet since her intervention of April 1993 nobody can justifiably assume simply that 'left-wing is good; right-wing is bad'. The reality is more complicated.

EGYPT: THE WEST FACES ANOTHER BOSNIA MOMENT

Western policy during the break-up of Yugoslavia and the wars in Croatia and Bosnia of the 1990s was contemptible not merely for its moral bankruptcy – for its collusion with the dictator Slobodan Milosevic's genocide and aggression – but also for its sheer blindness to the way that history was going. It should have been obvious when the war broke out in Croatia in the summer of 1991, both that Yugoslavia was finished as a state and that Milosevic's attempt to replace it with a Great Serbia was a deeply regressive and destructive project that could only end in disaster. Western interests would have been best served by looking to the future and defending the Yugoslav successor-states of Croatia and Bosnia. Instead, the Western powers continued to support a united Yugoslavia that was already dead. This rapidly mutated into a policy of appeasing the Serbian strongman, which

continued for four sorry years. Western diplomacy twice rescued the collapsing Serbian forces from defeat – in Croatia in late 1991 and in Bosnia in the autumn of 1995 – while calls for military action to halt Serbian aggression were fended off. In the end, the policy of appeasement was abandoned and Milosevic was militarily confronted and eventually put on trial for war-crimes. But only after the Western alliance had been seriously jeopardised and discredited, Milosevic had embarked on yet another round of ethnic cleansing in Kosova, and irreparable damage had been done to the Western Balkans.

In the Egyptian crisis today, Western leaders face another Bosnia moment. Mubarak having launched his violent assault on the Egyptian revolution, they can now take decisive action to halt him – through demanding that he step down immediately in favour of a broadly based caretaker administration and permit free and fair elections, and by making clear that all US and European economic assistance will be withdrawn from Egypt unless he does. It makes no sense to say that the West should keep out of Egypt and mind its own business; the huge economic assistance and political support Mubarak has received from us up till now mean that we are already deeply and inextricably involved and responsible.

Or Western leaders can wring their hands and continue to vacillate, thereby effectively giving Mubarak the same green light they once gave Milosevic. In which case, they will be responsible for the bloodshed and repression that will follow, but they will not achieve the much vaunted ‘stability’. Mubarak’s violence and repression may start a civil war, or may simply warp and poison Egyptian and Middle Eastern politics for years to come, as domestic opposition to his regime, denied the chance to express itself through a normal democratic process and justifiably angry at Western betrayal, is channelled toward extremism and violence – think Algeria or Chechnya. Instead of an Egyptian democratic revolution starting to lift the Middle East out of its cesspool of dictatorship and religious extremism, a more repressive, violent and unstable Egypt under a crumbling, desperate regime will drag the region further down into the depths.

Saddam Hussein and Mubarak

The most murderous acts of state violence are often the work of remnants of decaying regimes that had previously, in their prime, appeared relatively moderate and benign. So it was in Bosnia, where the genocide was spearheaded by the Yugoslav People's Army that had once served Tito's enlightened despotism and, before that, had been born from a liberation struggle against the Nazis. So it was in Rwanda, where Juvenal Habyarimana's dictatorship, previously stable and relatively benevolent in its treatment of the Tutsi, collapsed in a genocidal orgy that (almost certainly) first claimed the life of Habyarimana himself.

The Egyptian crisis has already forced us to confront some painful truths. I have long greatly admired Tony Blair, but his praise for Mubarak as 'immensely courageous and a force for good' – even if it was in relation to Mubarak's input into the Israeli-Palestinian peace-process rather than a general description – was simply disgraceful. Reminiscent, in fact, of Blair's unfinest hour back in 1999, when he endorsed Vladimir Putin's fledgling tyranny while its murderous assault on Chechnya was at its height. And look what that got us – a vicious autocracy more hostile to the West than any regime in Moscow since the Cold War.

Unlike with regard to Blair, one expects very little from a hardline-nationalist brute like Israel's Binyamin Netanyahu, who has not only aligned himself with, but actually outdone, the monstrous Saudi regime in his support for the Egyptian dictator and his opposition to Egyptian democracy. The idea of Israel as a 'beacon of democracy' in the Middle East has always been wishful thinking on the part of its admirers – essentially the mirror-image of the myth, put about by the other side, of Israel as the root of all evil in the region. Israel is neither an angel nor a devil; it is a flawed democracy whose political classes are in the grip of an obnoxious nationalist mind-set, putting it roughly on a par with contemporary Turkey, Greece or Serbia. Of course, the Israeli government has legitimate security concerns regarding how a post-Mubarak Egypt will behave, but there is also the rather less legitimate concern as to how its ongoing criminal policy of colonising the West Bank will fare without Mubarak to guard its

rear. Hence, not so much a ‘beacon of democracy’ as a beacon for beleaguered tyrants. Arab oppression and Israeli oppression are two sides of the same coin and will fall together; both Israeli security and Palestinian independence will best be achieved by the democratisation of the Arab world.

The Middle East is at a historic crossroads, and Western policy toward the Middle East is at a historic crossroads. Barack Obama and David Cameron have been less than glorious in their reaction to the crisis so far, but nor have they discredited themselves totally, as Bill Clinton and John Major did over Bosnia. There is still time for them to choose the right path. History will judge them.

THE DIFFICULT ROAD TO BALKAN STABILITY

The Balkans are only a step away from normalisation, but it may be a step too far for Western policy-makers.

Normalisation for the Balkans would mean the region’s definite establishment as a set of functioning, democratic nation-states on the model of Western Europe; undivided by serious conflicts or live territorial disputes. The region’s national questions would be resolved, to the point that they would be as unlikely to spill over into large-scale bloodshed as the national questions of Belgium, Scotland or Catalonia. The Balkan states would all be integrated into the EU, and ideally NATO as well.

This is not an ambitious ideal, yet it is far from being realised. Regional progress is still being derailed by a series of conflicts of varying severity between the Balkan states. The Slovenian-Croatian border dispute for a while threatened to derail the entire region’s EU integration, though this appears to have been averted. Greek-Turkish rivalry over Cyprus, the Aegean Sea and other areas remains latent, something for which the anti-Turkish rhetoric on the part of candidates in the recent Greek parliamentary elections has served as a reminder. Both Turkey and Greece are problematic: the first is, under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the process of developing a new

regional role for itself, one that appears to be taking it closer to authoritarian and radical states like Russia, Iran and Syria; the second is pursuing a damaging regional policy, involving hostility to the fragile states of Macedonia and Kosovo. With its campaign against Macedonia, in particular, Greece is threatening the stability of a neighbouring state where relations between the majority Macedonians and minority Albanians are already dangerously unstable.

Meanwhile, the policies of Serbia and Serb nationalism remain the single greatest source of Balkan instability. Serbia is still failing to arrest war criminals indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, thereby obstructing its own EU integration. But more dangerously, it is pursuing a dog-in-the-manger policy vis-a-vis Kosovo, preventing the newly independent state from consolidating itself and integrating itself properly into the international community. The Serbia-Kosovo dispute poisons regional relations; Belgrade recently rebuked Skopje for the latter's agreement with Pristina to resolve the Macedonia-Kosovo border dispute.

The most intractable regional problem of all, however, remains Bosnia-Herzegovina. The state is saddled with the unworkable constitutional order imposed upon it by the Dayton Accords of 1995, ensuring that the state cannot function and must remain in a state of permanent political crisis. Bosnia's recent exclusion, along with Albania, from the EU's grant of visa liberalisation to the western Balkans, that was applied to Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, has further entrenched divisions in the country and the wider region. Milorad Dodik, prime minister of Bosnia's Serb entity, the Republika Srpska, is openly pursuing Bosnia's full dismemberment; the aggressive and provocative nature of his policy was recently highlighted by the warm welcome he extended to the convicted war-criminal Biljana Plavsic, following her early release from prison in Sweden.

These home-grown Balkan problems are being exacerbated by the policies of outside powers. The revanchist, neo-Soviet regime in Russia is aggressively backing Serbia over Kosovo, preventing the dispute from being resolved. By doing so, Moscow

is not merely undermining Kosovo, but is undermining also Serbia's own complete transition into a post-nationalist liberal democratic state. Moscow aims to keep the Balkans divided to prevent their full integration into the Euro-Atlantic framework. Hence, Dodik was looking to Moscow when he unilaterally withdrew Bosnian Serb soldiers from participation in NATO exercises in Georgia.

The second major external source of Balkan instability is the weak and vacillating policy of the EU, dominated as the latter is by the Franco-German axis. Germany is pursuing a pro-Russian policy that is making the new East Central European members of NATO and the EU very uncomfortable, while France continues to seek a dissident role in the Western alliance vis-a-vis the Anglo-Saxon powers. Hence, the EU's muted reaction to the Georgian war; the crushing of Washington's Georgian ally was not allowed to get in the way of growing EU-Russian collaboration. The Georgian war was facilitated by the Franco-German blocking of the grant of NATO Membership Action Plans to Georgia, along with Ukraine, in the spring of 2008. French President Nicolas Sarkozy, pursuing his Gaullist policy of Mediterranean union, sees fit also to support Greece against Macedonia.

Such an attitude on the part of the EU also involves toleration of Serbian trouble-making vis-a-vis Kosovo and Bosnia. The Netherlands is essentially isolated in its continued insistence that Serbia's progress on EU accession be linked to its arrest of war criminals. The EU, for its part, would like to see the Office of the High Representative (OHR) for Bosnia closed. Yet the OHR has been the principal integrating force in Bosnia since 1995. Take away the OHR, and Bosnia moves another step toward full partition.

The EU's resolve over the Balkans is further weakened by the activities of dissident members. No unified EU policy exists over Kosovo on account of the refusal of five EU members to recognise the new state – all for nationalistic reasons. Romania and Slovakia perceive a 'separatist' parallel between the Kosovo Albanians and their own maltreated Hungarian minorities. Likewise, Spain is obsessed with 'separatist' parallels of its own

vis-a-vis Catalonia and the Basque Country. Greece and Cyprus are traditional allies of Serbia; Cyprus also equates Kosovo with Turkish-occupied Cyprus. None of these states' reasons for opposing Kosovo's independence are very noble, yet the EU has no means of compelling them to keep ranks with the majority; the EU therefore pursues the policy of the lowest common denominator.

Although the EU has been as an instrument for bringing nations together, its recent policies in the Balkans are having the opposite effect. The veto that EU members enjoy in relation to membership bids by aspiring members places a weapon in the hands of trouble-makers lucky enough to already be in the club. The Slovenian-Croatian border dispute was exacerbated by Ljubljana's use of its veto against Croatia. Although Ljubljana threatened to use its veto to keep Croatia out of NATO as well, Washington quickly put a stop to this mischief. Unfortunately, the EU states are much less ready than the US to put pressure on their partners to cease misbehaviour, and though Ljubljana did eventually lift its veto, this was not before it had won concessions over the border dispute at Zagreb's expense.

Still more destructive has been the EU's exacerbation of the Greek-Macedonian dispute. Despite the thoroughly pre-democratic and chauvinistic nature of Greece's campaign against Macedonia, EU members have been wholly unwilling to put pressure on Athens to change it. So, rather than the whole club forcing a badly behaved member to behave better, the policy of the trouble-maker is imposed on the whole. The bad apple poisons the whole basket; the tail wags the dog.

The structural factors underlying the EU's damaging policies vis-a-vis the Balkans are likely to become worse in the years to come. The accession of new members will give more states vetoes to use against aspiring members. After joining the EU, Croatia may use its veto against Serbia. If Macedonia does back down to Athens, Albania might be encouraged to use its veto to keep Macedonia out of NATO, to extract concessions regarding the Albanian minority in Macedonia. For while both Croatia and Albania have pursued responsible regional policies over the past

ten years, the EU is sending out to them the wrong signals: that bad behaviour brings dividends.

Meanwhile, the EU's growing energy dependency on Russia is likely further to dampen the EU's resolve to resist the mischief of Moscow and Belgrade in the Balkans. Russian plans to build the 'North Stream' gas pipeline direct to Germany, bypassing the former-Communist states of East Central Europe, will allow it to exert leverage over its neighbours without simultaneously punishing its German ally.

As the EU moves increasingly to accommodate a dangerous and hostile power, so it is alienating an important power that has long assisted Balkan stability. Paris and Berlin have made it very clear they do not wish to allow Turkey to join the EU. This has had the predictable result that Turkey is losing its faith in the possibility of a European future, and is turning increasingly toward Russia, Iran, Syria and other radical and anti-Western states. Turkey has made huge strides this decade in improving its human rights record, as required by its bid for EU membership. For the same reason, it has facilitated a resolution of the Cyprus dispute through its support for the 2004 Annan Plan. As the prize of EU membership moves further from its grasp, Ankara may backslide over both human rights and Cyprus as well. There are worrying signs that the pace of democratisation in Turkey is indeed slowing – such as the record fine recently imposed on Dogan Yayin Holding AS – Turkey's largest media group and critical of the AKP government.

A hardening of Turkey's stance on Cyprus could lead to the collapse of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement, further damaging the prospects for the Balkans' normalisation. For all its human rights abuses, Turkey has been playing a constructive role in the region, as the ally of the weak and vulnerable states of Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. We do not know what the full consequences would be if Turkey fully abandons its European moorings and goes off in a new direction. But at the very least, an authoritarian Turkey headed by an Islamic-populist regime on the border of the Balkans will not have a positive effect on the region.

Unfortunately, alongside Russia and the EU, there is a third external factor whose contribution to Balkan stability currently raises concerns: the Obama Administration in the US. The latter's abandonment of the Bush Administration's plans to base a missile-defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic, in order to appease Moscow in the hope of obtaining Russian support vis-a-vis Iran, is a worrying indication of US passivity vis-a-vis Europe and Russia. The capitulation amounts to a betrayal of the security of allies in order to appease a hostile power, with echoes of Cold-War-style sphere-of-influence politics. While it is too soon to press the panic button over Obama's policy toward Eastern and South Eastern Europe, we should be very concerned if Obama goes any further down this path.

For all these internal and external problems facing the Balkans, the success stories and models for future success are close at hand. Romania and Bulgaria are far from model democracies, and have serious problems with corruption and organised crime. Yet neither has engaged in military aggression or seriously attempted territorial expansionism since joining the free world in 1989; both are members of the EU and NATO. Turkey and Greece, following their heavy military defeats in World War I and the Greco-Turkish War respectively, pursued an enlightened policy of rapprochement vis-a-vis one another, eschewing territorial expansionism. This rapprochement was only derailed by the outbreak of the Cyprus conflict from the 1950s, and later resumed: Greece today is a vocal champion of Turkey's EU membership. Croatia, too, following its unsuccessful expansionist adventure in Bosnia in the first half of the 1990s has, since the death of Franjo Tudjman in 1999, abandoned expansionism to pursue a responsible regional policy and EU membership.

The key to turning aggressive, expansionist Balkan states into responsible members of the European family, therefore, is for the international community to shut off all avenues for their expansionism and keep them firmly confined within their own borders. With all due qualifications, this is the way it has been for Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and Croatia. Where these

states have been less than responsible – as, for example, in the case of Turkey vis-a-vis Cyprus or Greece vis-a-vis Macedonia – this has occurred when there have been insufficient limits placed on their ability to coerce neighbours.

The biggest source of instability in the Balkans remains the fact that, thanks to the weakness and vacillation of Western and above all EU policy, Serbia has not been firmly confined within its borders, despite its defeat in the wars of the 1990s. Instead, Belgrade continues to destabilise the neighbouring states of Kosovo and Bosnia. Its ability to do so means that Serbia – unlike Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Greece and to an extent Turkey – is unable to develop a post-expansionist state identity; one that does not revolve around territorial aspirations towards neighbouring states. This is bad above all for Serbia itself – the reason why it is still a long way from EU membership, despite being before the 1990s more prosperous, developed and liberal than either Romania or Bulgaria.

The problem is not, however, ultimately with Serbia itself. In parliamentary elections following Kosovo's independence last year, the Serbian electorate handed victory to the pro-European rather than the hardline nationalist parties, revealing what little stomach it has for renewed confrontation over Kosovo. Belgrade has also played its trump card with its case against Kosovo's independence before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and there is every reason to believe that the Court will not rule in its favour, even leaving aside the strength of Kosovo's case. The ICJ's judges come from different countries and their verdict will likely represent some form of compromise rather than award outright victory to one side or the other. Anything less than a full victory for Belgrade will effectively be a defeat, ambiguity leaving the door open for more states to recognise Kosovo's independence while plausibly claiming to do so legally. In other words, both in terms of its range of available strategies and in terms of the popular support it enjoys, Serbian expansionism vis-a-vis Kosovo is a broken reed. With the Kosovo Albanians enjoying a comfortable majority in their country, their ultimate ability to consolidate their state is assured.

The principal problem for the region is the Bosnian question, and the policy of the Western alliance toward it. Unlike for all the other Balkan regional problems, for Bosnia, stability will not come through persuading or coercing the states involved to accept reality or to reach a compromise. For Bosnia, it is the very legal status quo and 'compromise', born at Dayton in 1995, that is generating instability for the state and the region. The Dayton order provides a framework that is gradually enabling the Bosnian Serb separatists, currently headed by Dodik, to establish the Bosnian Serb entity as a de facto independent state while preparing the ground for formal secession. The Bosniaks will, however, go to war to prevent this happening. It is a moot point what the outcome of such a military confrontation would be, but it is not something to which we should look forward.

Bosnia remains, therefore, the weak foundation-stone of Balkan stability. Only the transformation of Bosnia into a functioning state, through the transfer of most state powers from the entities to the central government, will guarantee against the outbreak of a new Bosnian war, and provide a final and definite check to Serbia's expansionism, forcing that state wholly onto the post-expansionist path and removing the principal obstacle to the region's progress.

Unfortunately, with Western and particular EU policy being what it is at present, such a decisive step seems unlikely. The problems facing the Balkans are neither huge nor insurmountable, yet Western passivity and vacillation seem set to allow these small problems to turn into larger ones. The Balkans look set for a rocky road ahead.

This article was published today on the website of the Henry Jackson Society. A longer version was given as a presentation to the Sussex European Institute on 3 November, entitled 'How far are the Balkans from normalisation?'

Monday, 9 November 2009

WHAT IS AT STAKE
IN THE STRUGGLE FOR SERBIA?

‘The list of countries refusing to recognise Kosovo’s sovereignty reads like a global A-Z of separatist strife.’ So says *Reuters*. Indeed, the division of the world, between states that are and states that are not recognising Kosovo’s independence is very largely a division between the majority of democratic countries on the one hand, and those that *either* themselves fear ‘separatist’ threats to their own territorial integrity, *or* that are politically hostile to the West. Russia falls into the second camp. Having itself promoted the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia, and of Transnistria from Moldova, Russia cannot seriously be described as ‘fearing separatism’. Russian President Vladimir Putin has deliberately manufactured an international crisis over the Kosovo issue with the express intention of disrupting the expansion of the EU and NATO and of splitting the ranks of their existing members. This has been openly stated by Moscow’s ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, who has *threatened force in the event that the EU adopts a common policy over Kosovo*: ‘If the EU works out a single position or if NATO steps beyond its mandate in Kosovo, these organizations will be in conflict with the U.N., and then I think we will also begin operating under the assumption that in order to be respected, one needs to use force.’

Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez naturally opposes recognition: ‘We do not recognize the independence of Kosovo’, he said; ‘This cannot be accepted. It’s a very dangerous precedent for the entire world’. The parliament of Belarus has condemned Kosovo’s declaration of independence; Belarus’s despot Alexander Lukashenka lamenting the fact that opponents of Kosovo’s independence ‘betrayed our fraternal Slavic nation’ in 1999 and failed to defend Serbia from NATO. Sri Lanka’s ambassador to the UN, Dayan Jayatilleka, criticised Serbia for having failed to stand its ground against NATO in the Kosovo War: ‘Never withdraw the armed forces from any part of [your] territory in which they are challenged, and never permit a foreign presence on [your] soil.’ (Sri

Lanka is fighting a brutal war against its Tamil population). The chorus of voices raised internationally against Kosova's independence is a chorus of demagogues, despots and xenophobes.

Within the EU, the mature democracies that make up the core of the alliance have been largely united in their readiness to recognise Kosova's independence. Opposition has come from those whose experience of democracy is more recent and which themselves have nationalistic reasons for opposing recognition: Spain and Greece were dictatorships as recently as the mid-1970s; Slovakia and Romania as recently as 1989. Slovakia, Romania, Greece and Cyprus all have strong recent histories of xenophobic bigotry and intolerance. While Spain is in most respects a mature democracy, it is in a sense the exception that proves the rule; its historic fear of Catalan and Basque separation, manifested most brutally by Francisco Franco and the Spanish fascists in the 1930s and after, is guiding its Kosova policy.

In this international context, in which enemies of the West are seeking to attack us over Kosova and profit from our divisions, and with EU ranks suffering from dissention on the part of those members not fully assimilated to post-nationalist European values, it is absolutely essential that our resolution does not waver. Given existing British and US commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, some might be tempted to say that we cannot afford a major commitment in the Balkans. In fact, we cannot afford not to make such a commitment. The danger is that if Russia and Serbia succeed in embarrassing us over Kosova, both our credibility in the eyes of the world and EU unity itself could be jeopardised.

Western credibility was already slightly dented by the Serb attack on Kosova's border crossings with Serbia, against which sufficient precautions were not taken. Northern Kosova, with its artificial Serb majority manufactured by ethnic cleansing, has long been an unhealed sore, and is an area where Serb obstructionists can cause problems for us if we do not resolve the problem promptly. An informally partitioned Kosova, such as exists at present, will not simply be another Cyprus – an annoying problem whose resolution can be postponed indefinitely at minor but

bearable cost to Western interests. Serbia in northern Kosova, unlike Turkey in northern Cyprus, is not ready to rest content with a quiet, *de facto* partition. The Serbian government minister for Kosova, Slobodan Samardzic, has stated openly that the attack on the border crossings was 'in accordance with general [Serbian] government policies.' In other words, Belgrade intends to use northern Kosova as a weapon with which to destabilise the whole of Kosova and the stability of the Western Balkans in general. Indeed, some of the Serbs who attacked the border were in all probability agents of the Serbian Interior Ministry.

Belgrade will undoubtedly make life difficult for newly independent Kosova. Ultimately, however, Serbia is not strong enough to overturn the new order in Kosova. This raises the question of what the Serbian government is hoping to achieve by engaging in a struggle it cannot possibly win. A lot of commentators in the West like to stereotype the Serbian people as irrationally and spontaneously nationalist, and their politicians and statesmen as simply expressions of this characteristic. According to such a model, the attack on the Kosova border, as well as Thursday's demonstration and rioting in Belgrade, simply reflected atavistic Serb nationalism, which reacted to the recognition of Kosova like a bull to a red rag.

In reality, three things about Thursday's demonstration are apparent. The first is that a demonstration of that size does not take place spontaneously; it was the result of careful planning and organisation by the Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and his supporters and allies, above all Tomislav Nikolic's extreme-right Serbian Radical Party. Workers and schoolchildren were given the day off and bussed into Belgrade from all over the country to participate. The second point to note is that, this being the case, a demonstration that enjoyed the full logistical support of the Serbian state but still numbered only 150-200,000 is actually a fairly sorry affair. Milosevic's regime in its prime was capable of mobilising demonstrations several times larger, reaching up to and above one million people. And the third point to note is that the demonstration rapidly spawned a riot in which, not only the US embassy was attacked but also the

Croatian and Bosnian embassies, McDonald's restaurants and several shops, some of which were looted in the process. In other words, this was a demonstration of the state-organised hooligan fringe of Serbian society, to which the ordinary citizens and celebrities who attended merely added a respectable veneer.

'The "dangerous class", the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.'

– Karl Marx

During the Kosovo War of 1999, I lived for more than a month in an ordinary Belgrade suburb, solely in the company of the native people of Belgrade and without any contact with other foreigners. Several times, during and immediately after this war, I crossed the Serbian international border. During this period, on *not one single occasion* did I, as a Briton, experience so much as a curse or a rude word from any Serbian citizen or border guard, despite the fact that my country's airforce was bombing their country. One border guard even said to his colleague, in front of me, that what NATO was doing had nothing to do with me, but was the fault of higher powers. The Serbian people, for the most part, are not hooligans and do not engage in random acts of mob violence and destruction. Why should yesterday's demonstrators have attacked McDonald's restaurants, when during the Kosovo War the local management of these restaurants patriotically (as they saw it) supported the Serbian defence against NATO? McDonald's posters in 1999 Belgrade displayed the colours of the Serbian flag and promised a share of their profits to a fund for military invalids. Those who view themselves as engaged in a righteous act of national self-defence (as most Serbian people, however misguidedly, genuinely did in 1999), do not degrade themselves with acts of rioting and looting. One rioter was burned to death in the attack on the US embassy; this wave of violence, which has already produced dozens of injuries in recent days, is already violent in comparison with the revolution that overthrew Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000.

This rioting and looting was not just the action of a few troublemakers; it is an expression of the new climate of violence and intimidation that the Kostunica regime and its allies in the Serbian Radical Party and other extreme right-wing and nationalist groups are deliberately encouraging. Hence the deliberate failure of the police to restrain the rioters or to protect the embassies. Former Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Zivkovic said of the police: 'I am sure they were told to let thugs smash all embassies on their way and then to deal with the aftermath.' He said that Kostunica's supporters 'are now in a position to freely spit on everything that sounds and looks even remotely European... This is the decline of democracy in Serbia.' Serbian Minister of the Economy Mladjan Dinkic condemned the 'political parties that are justifying hooliganism, and are abusing the misery of the Serbian nation for political gains.' Dinkic is an ally of Serbia's pro-European President Boris Tadic. Significantly, the Croatian and Bosnian embassies were also attacked, even though Bosnia has no plans to recognise Kosova while Croatia has been fairly reticent about it: the vandals were venting chauvinistic rage – against symbols of the West and against Serbia's 'enemies' in general – that reflects the new climate, and that has little specifically to do with Kosova. The Radicals, who provide the backbone to this nationalist coalition, are *bona fide* fascists: direct and conscious political heirs of the Nazi-collaborationist Chetniks of World War II; friends of France's Jean-Marie Le Pen; and organisers of paramilitary forces directly involved in the mass-murder and ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia in the 1990s.

The target is not ultimately the US and its allies, or even the Kosova Albanians, but domestic opponents. Thugs attacked the headquarters in several cities of the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, which accepts Kosova's right to self-determination, as well as the homes of its leaders. According to Liberal Democrat sources, government minister Velimir Ilic threatened that Liberal Democrat leader Cedomir Jovanovic should feel 'lucky if he stays alive until March, but that it will not be easy.' Serbia's organs of law and order have failed to respond to the attacks on the Liberal Democrats. Aleksandar Vucic, Secretary General of the Radicals, said the victims were themselves to blame: 'parties

which recognize Kosovo's independence were responsible for the riots.' Serbia's leading independent media station, B92, is also under threat. According to its director, Veran Matic: 'The threats escalated in the last couple of days through e-mails and on different internet forums where some people openly make plans for burning the B92 building. This building is state property and B92 is only a tenant. The last threat came as a video on Youtube in which someone calls for the assassination of our journalists. The B92 shop in the centre of Belgrade was destroyed during the protest last Sunday.' Ilic personally threatened: 'Those people at B92 and other media had better be careful how they talk about those young people [the rioters].' When rebuked by Snezana Markovic, Minister for Youth and Sport, Ilic threatened her too: 'Madam, you have been in sports for two months, and I have been for twenty years. Be careful, the sportspeople will come to you.'

Over the past week, reporters, photographers and TV crews have been frequently attacked and injured by masked assailants. Meanwhile Ivica Dacic, the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia, said he would call for a ban on all political parties and non-governmental organisations which recognise Kosovo's independence. He singled out in particular the human-rights activist Natasa Kandic.

Although it is the media, human-rights activists and the Liberal Democrats that are on the receiving end of the violence, the ultimate target is the section of the Serbian political establishment grouped around pro-European President Tadic and his Democratic Party, which shares power in Serbia's coalition government with Kostunica's supporters. Tadic defeated the Radical leader Tomislav Nikolic in the presidential election earlier this month, and has been falling out with his erstwhile ally, Prime Minister Kostunica, who failed to support him against Nikolic, while Kostunica's own popular support has been dwindling. The nationalists grouped around Nikolic and Kostunica were therefore faced with a political eclipse. They are using the Kosova crisis to regain the upper hand in their power-struggle with Tadic. The latter is the prisoner of his own contradictory policy: pro-European but supportive of the nationalist position over Kosova, he

has found himself outflanked by the chauvinistic eruption that Kostunica is fostering. Serbian Defence Minister Dragan Sutanovic, a member of Tadic's Democratic Party, said that yesterday was 'one of Belgrade's saddest days' on account of the violence. But it is a tragedy for which Tadic and the Democratic Party are in large part responsible: by failing to challenge the nationalist consensus over Kosova, they have left themselves and democratic Serbia defenceless against an assault of this kind. For all his undoubted pro-European sympathies, Tadic has played the role of a Serbian Hindenburg. This may not save him: on the day of the Belgrade demonstration, Russian state television lauded the assassination of his predecessor, Serbian Prime Minister and Democratic Party leader Zoran Djindjic, describing him as a 'puppet of the West' who 'received the bullet he deserved'.

The nationalist-fascist coalition behind Nikolic and Kostunica is therefore trying to achieve through mob violence and intimidation what its members have failed to achieve through the polls. Its ultimate goal is the establishment of a Putin- or Lukashenka-style authoritarian-nationalist regime in Serbia, under which the media will be controlled, journalists and human-rights activists assassinated when necessary, and the economy colonised by Russia. Serbia's suspension of diplomatic relations with Western states that are recognising Kosova conveniently burns the bridges to the democratic West and creates the isolation that the nationalists crave. This is not what most Serbian people want. It is one thing to be unhappy about the loss of Kosova, but to favour turning Serbia into an isolated, impoverished Cuban- or North-Korean-stye satrapy of Russia, under a repressive regime that condones mob rule and murders dissidents, is quite another. The opinion of the majority of Serbians is probably best represented by Tadic: angry about losing Kosova, they nevertheless do not want this issue to stand in the way of Serbia's European integration. The Serb-nationalist commentator at the inappropriately named website *Antiwar.com*, Nebojsa Malic, a supporter of Nikolic and of the late Milosevic, wrote bitterly that Tadic's election victory proved that the Serbian people were insufficiently warlike, and would not want war in response to the loss of Kosova: 'After all, what are the Serbs going to do, fight? They've

just shown they don't have the guts.' Which is one way of describing a healthy Serbian popular aversion to renewed war and isolation. But as in Italy in the early 1920s and Germany in the early 1930s, a violent, determined minority is entirely capable of intimidating and crushing a passive majority.

This brings us back to where we began: the alignment of forces in the world for and against Kosova's independence. On the one side stands most of the democratic world; on the other, an unholy alliance of authoritarian regimes that are either hostile to the West, or that want to be free to crush their subject nationalities without fear of outside interference. The conflict within Serbia is essentially the same struggle in miniature. In this context, to abandon democratic Serbia – both the mainstream pro-European democrats under Tadic and the brave independent journalists and human rights activists – would be to hand a victory to our enemies globally.

We must stand by democratic Serbia. This means continuing to work with all pro-European elements towards Serbia's Euro-Atlantic integration, while pressing them to confront more resolutely the chauvinistic poison. Tadic must be pressed to come down off the fence, to break completely with Kostunica and the nationalists and to repudiate publicly their destabilisation of Kosova and intimidation of domestic opponents. *Not one inch of ground* should be conceded to the nationalist-fascist coalition, in Kosova, Bosnia or anywhere else. Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of Bosnia's Serb Republic (Republika Srpska – RS), spoke at yesterday's demonstration in Belgrade and aligned himself with the nationalists, stating that Serbia, and not Bosnia, was the RS's 'fatherland'. This appears to mark the beginning of his campaign to break up Bosnia and unite the RS with Serbia to form a Great Serbia. It is high time that we completed the reintegration into a unified Bosnia of the RS – the product of a genocide that the International Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights and the UN's war-crimes tribunal in the Hague have all recognised. This would serve the dual purpose of reducing the nationalist ability for mischief-making in the Balkans and strengthening Bosnia as a pillar of the European order. The

Stabilisation and Association Agreement should be signed with Serbia as soon as possible – to punish Serbia with further isolation would only play into the hands of the nationalist-fascist coalition that *wants* isolation. Above all, we must take the necessary steps to secure fully the Kosova-Serbia border, prevent the entry of Serbian government personnel and other trouble-makers, and rapidly reintegrate northern Kosova with the rest of the country.

This is a battle that, provided the leaders of Europe and the US are resolute, we cannot lose. It will not be won overnight; as with the overthrow of Milosevic, the defeat of the new crop of Serbian fascists may require years of patient promotion of a democratic alternative. But if our will falters and we do lose, the consequences could be catastrophic, not just for the Balkans, but for Europe and the world.

This article was published today on the website of the Henry Jackson Society.

Hat tip: Eric Gordy, East Ethnia

Sunday, 24 February 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

DEJAN JOVIC, DAVID N. GIBBS
AND THE GREAT SERBIAN NARRATIVE

On 21 January, the Croatian journalists' website autograf.hr published an article about me written by Dejan Jovic, chief analyst and special coordinator at the office of the president of Croatia, Ivo Josipovic. The Croatian newspaper Vecernji list republished Jovic's article, then published my reply on 30 January, which is reproduced here with Croatian-language passages translated into English. My reply was also published in BCS translation by tacno.net.

Sir,

Dejan Jovic's attack on me, published by autograf.hr on 21 January, contains numerous falsehoods. For example, he accuses me: 'To justify the war in Iraq, they employed the metaphor of

Hitler (for Saddam Hussein)'. Yet I have never used the Hitler metaphor to describe Saddam Hussein, and in June 2013 I described the Iraq war in the pages of the *Guardian* as a 'misguided adventure'. He claims 'people like Hoare advocate further interventions as the solution to new problems: in Syria, maybe afterwards in Iran, then who knows where tomorrow.' In fact, I explicitly condemned the idea of a US or Israeli attack on Iran on my blog back in April 2012. Jovic claims: 'Indeed, those same people who attack me have already attacked many others, including the *Washington Times*, *The Guardian*, and proclaimed some other reputable individuals and media outlets to be "genocide deniers".' But I have never accused either the *Washington Times* or the *Guardian* of genocide denial, and I doubt whether Jovic's other critics have either. Jovic links me to the politics of the Henry Jackson Society. Yet I resigned from that organisation at the start of 2012, and have explicitly and strongly condemned its politics repeatedly since.

Jovic's string of *ad hominem* falsehoods directed against me appear to be his way of distracting attention from the matter at hand: his uncritical endorsement of David Gibbs's Great Serb propaganda tract (*First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2009), which denies the Srebrenica genocide. Jovic claims: 'In criticising my review of Gibbs's book, Hoare "forgets" that Gibbs personally replied to his thesis on "genocide denial" – and completely refuted it.' But this is untrue. In his book (p. 281), Gibbs says of Srebrenica: 'Certainly, the murder of eight thousand people is a grave crime, but to call it "genocide" needlessly exaggerates the scale of the crime' (p. 281). Furthermore, Gibbs claims the massacre was provoked by the Bosniak victims: 'The origin of the Srebrenica massacre lay in a series of Muslim attacks that began in the spring of 1995... Such actions invited Serb reprisals, and this dynamic contributed to the fall of the safe area' (p. 160). As for Jovic's claim that Gibbs 'totally refuted' my accusation of genocide denial: this is also untrue; Gibbs was completely unable to defend himself from the charge. Readers can view my refutation of him and see for themselves.

Jovic first tries to deny that Gibbs engages in genocide denial, then tries to justify Gibbs's genocide denial. He argues that 'in the academic community – not our own post-Yugoslav one, but more broadly – there is no consensus on whether in the wars in the former Yugoslavia genocide was committed or not.' But none of the people he cites, in support of the view that there was no genocide, is an expert on the former Yugoslavia. Jovic then claims 'courts have ruled that in Bosnia-Herzegovina there was no genocide (apart from in Srebrenica)'. But this is untrue: the ICTY has not ruled that there was no genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina apart from in Srebrenica. Both Karadzic and Mladic are currently being tried for genocide in municipalities across Bosnia-Herzegovina – not only in Srebrenica. Karadzic's acquittal by the ICTY Trials Chamber for one count of genocide (in municipalities outside of Srebrenica) was recently reversed by the ICTY Appeals Chamber. Furthermore, in 1997, a German court convicted Nikola Jorgic, a Bosnian Serb, for genocide in the north Bosnian region of Dobož in 1992, and this ruling was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights.

Finally, Jovic claims that genocide is something invented by warmongers to justify military intervention, whereas people who deny genocide are really just trying to protect peace:

“Genocide” and “Hitler” are always there when it is necessary to start a new war – they are the “idea” explanation of the reason why one more is being launched. The difference between Gibbs and Hoare is, therefore, that one thinks that the wars are not waged out of altruism and that they do not solve problems, whereas the other maintains that liberal interventions are necessary and important, and that there is nothing controversial in them even if they result in a large number of deaths. One is an advocate of peace, the other of war.’ The reality is somewhat different: both Jovic and Gibbs seek to minimise the guilt of the Serbian aggressor for the 1990s war, and to shift as much blame as possible onto the Croatian and Bosnian victims of the aggression. The agenda of people like Jovic and Gibbs is to ensure that the real warmongers – tyrants like Slobodan Milosevic and Bashar al-Assad – should be free to wage their wars without fear

of Western military intervention, or even of serious condemnation from the Western media.

Following his review of Gibbs's book in *Politicka misao*, Jovic has now for the second time, in his reply to me and to the Bosnian organisations who criticised him, praised this book in glowing terms, while refusing to make any substantial criticisms of it. Yet Gibbs's book is a Great Serbian propaganda pamphlet of no scholarly value. Gibbs has no expertise on the subject of the former Yugoslavia; he does not even read Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian; and his arguments are based on the distortion and manipulation of source material. He minimises the guilt and crimes of the regimes of Milosevic and Karadzic and of the JNA; exaggerates the guilt and crimes of the Croats and Bosnians; and seeks to blame the West for the break-up of Yugoslavia and war.

- 1) Gibbs writes 'And we will see later in the chapter that the post-Yugoslav state of Croatia, which became independent in 1991, had important historical links with Pavelic's puppet state.' (p. 48).

Discussing World War II, Gibbs mentions Ustasha genocide and collaboration, as well as the collaboration of Bosnian Muslims and Albanians, but fails to mention the crimes or collaboration of the Chetniks, or of Serbia's Nedic regime.

- 2) Gibbs claims Tudjman 'recommended' genocidal violence against the Jews (p. 67)
- 3) Gibbs claims Croatia and Slovenia were not experiencing any oppression at Serb hands prior to declaring independence, so had no legitimate grounds for seceding: 'In fact, there was no serious evidence of Serb oppression in Slovenia or Croatia prior to the secessionist actions. The main reasons for seceding, as we saw in the previous chapter, were economic in nature. The JNA's initial use of force in Slovenia was quite mild' (p. 97). Thus, he disregards the Serbian economic sanctions against Slovenia; the JNA's disarming of the Slovenian and Croatian territorial defence; the Serb rebellion in Croatia; the 'Log Revolution'; the JNA's intervention in support of the Serb rebels; and the massacre of Croatian policemen at Borovo Selo.

- 4) Gibbs blames the war in Croatia on the Croatian side: ‘The Croatian war had its origins with the nationalist forces that were unleashed during the election campaign of 1990, when Franjo Tudjman’s HDZ party came to power.’ (p. 87)
- 5) Gibbs claims Germany engineered Croatia’s independence and the war in 1991: ‘We will see that Germany began encouraging Croatian nationalists and preparing them for independence months before the war began. Based on this new information, I argue that German officials did not simply *respond* to the war; they helped initiate it.’ (p. 77)

And again: ‘Germany played a key role in encouraging Slovenia and Croatia to secede, and surreptitiously assured them of external support for the secession efforts. Once the republics actually seceded, the European Community (backed by the United States) condemned the JNA’s efforts to block secession.’ (p. 105)

Gibbs’s anti-German conspiracy theory – which Jovic particularly praises – is based on biased, unserious and manipulated sources; he does not have even a single piece of real evidence to demonstrate that Germany encouraged Croatia to secede from Yugoslavia. I have exposed Gibbs’s anti-German falsifications in detail.

- 6) Gibbs condemns the European Community for recognising Croatia’s independence in its republican borders, and its failure to recognise the independence of the Krajina Serbs: ‘The European Community took the view that Croatia and other republics could not be divided. In effect, this meant the following: Croatia had the right to secede from Yugoslavia but this same right would not be recognised for the Krajina Serbs, who wished to separate from Croatia. In the ensuing conflict in Krajina, the European Community supported the Croatian position and opposed that of the Serbs. At the Hague conference, Van den Broek, the Dutch foreign minister, affirmed that any changes in the republican borders “were not an option”. This anti-Serb bent was evident at many levels.’ (p. 96). And again: ‘On the one hand, the Community accepted the right of Croatia to separate from Yugoslavia, or at least viewed

such separation with leniency. On the other hand, the European Community condemned efforts by the Krajina Serbs to separate from Croatia. Why the double standard?' (p. 97)

- 7) Gibbs claims: 'In addition, the Muslim/Croat alliance of 1990-1991 recreated a similar alliance that had existed during World War II, when the two groups were the main supporters of the pro-Nazi Ustasa state, and both participated in the massacres of the Serbs that occurred during this period.' (p. 116)
- 8) Gibbs claims: 'Operation Storm also generated a humanitarian disaster. The attack forced from 150,000 to 200,000 Serbs to flee, producing what was probably the largest single act of ethnic expulsion of the entire war.' (p. 163)
- 9) Gibbs writes: 'Another feature of the Balkan conflict was the tendency of the Western media needlessly to exaggerate the atrocities committed by Serb armies... Atrocities committed at Serb-run detention camps were presented in sensationalist fashion, for example, and they became "extermination camps" comparable to Auschwitz. President Izetbegovic himself encouraged these interpretations. Yet, in 2003, shortly before his death, Izetbegovic conceded that "there were no extermination camps" in Bosnia. He also conceded that his previous claims to the contrary had been deliberate misrepresentations, intended to outrage Western public opinion and thus trigger Western military intervention against the Serbs.' (p. 216) In this way, Gibbs minimises the criminal nature of Serb concentration-camps like Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje.
- 10) Gibbs accuses the Bosnian armed forces of shelling their own civilians during the siege of Sarajevo, in order to blame it on the Serbs: 'In several cases, Bosnian forces themselves bombarded Sarajevo and blamed the resulting deaths on the Serbs.' (p. 125)

Furthermore: 'In should also be noted that the [Bosnian] government restricted the right of Sarajevo residents to flee the city, effectively blocking the exit for many besieged civilians. This policy increased the potential for casualties and fit in nicely with the government's public relations strategy. In the

world's media, the deaths from shelling and sniper fire were blamed exclusively on Serb forces, but in reality the Bosnian government bore some responsibility as well.' (p. 126)

- 11) Gibbs claims the Serbs legitimately owned most of Bosnia: 'It is clear that Serb forces were on the offensive during much of the war, and they conquered large areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the extent of Serb aggression was once again exaggerated. Newspaper articles repeatedly noted that Serbs controlled some 70 percent of Bosnia's territory, despite the fact that they only constituted 31 percent of the total population... What such reports omitted was that Serbs had always occupied most of Bosnia's land area, owing to their demographic dominance in rural regions.' (p. 124)
- 12) Gibbs claims that it was the Muslims and Croats who caused the war to break out in Bosnia in 1992, whereas the Serbs wanted peace: 'In March 1992, however, before full-scale war had begun, Serb leaders welcomed the Lisbon agreement and they endorsed it in the strongest terms. Radovan Karadzic, who represented the Serbs at Lisbon, called the agreement a "great day for Bosnia and Herzegovina." And it should be recalled that it was the Muslims and the Croats, not the Serbs, who actually reneged. There is no evidence that the Serbs were bent on war at this point.' (p. 111)

So, those are the theses of David Gibbs, which Jovic has now chosen to praise on two occasions. For Jovic to praise so highly Gibbs's extreme anti-Croatian, anti-Bosnian and Great Serb propaganda tract is scandalous. Yet it is scarcely surprising, since in his own book about the break-up of Yugoslavia (*Jugoslavija – država koja je odumrla: Uspom, kriza i pad Kardeljeve Jugoslavije* (1974-1990), Prometej, Zagreb, 2003), Jovic already revealed that his sympathies in the 1990s were with Slobodan Milosevic and the JNA. Jovic praised Milosevic as a fighter for Yugoslav statehood and unity and defender of Tito's legacy, regretted the failure of the JNA to crush Croatian rearmament in 1991, and absolved both Milosevic and the JNA as instigators of the war and perpetrators of the mass killing:

1) Comparing Slobodan Milosevic and Vaclav Havel:

Jovic, p. 56: 'The direction of the protests against the regime, for example in Czechoslovakia and in Serbia, was totally different, so Havel and Milošević became antipodes in everything. While one led a liberal-democratic revolution against the state, the other led an anti-bureaucratic revolution against an anti-state ideology and anarchy, for the establishment of a state.'

2) Lamenting the JNA's inability to halt Croatia's rearmament

Jovic, p. 64: 'The British reaction to separatism in Northern Ireland is a typical example of a liberal (minimal) state, which did not refrain from introducing a state of war and employing tanks in order to halt a civil war before it had begun. In contrast to this, in the state that was withering away, Socialist Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav People's Army turned itself into a filmmaker recording the illegal import of weapons at the border (with Hungary) whose duty it was to protect from that sort of illegal activity.'

3) On Milosevic as a 'Yugoslav nationalist'

Jovic, p. 65n: 'In his first phase, Milosevic was probably a *Yugoslav* nationalist, but he never became a Serb nationalist, as many call him today. Never, indeed, did he want to form a Serb national state. His attachment to Yugoslavia, even to the point when Yugoslavia had become just a name and nothing more, was the main reason why he in the end lost popularity and the elections (2000).'

4) On the Chetniks as a 'strong-pro-Yugoslav resistance movement'

Jovic, p. 141: 'He who claims that Yugoslavia had to collapse in 1941 because of ethnic tension, should have to explain how it was possible that there arose, immediately following the occupation, two strong pro-Yugoslav resistance movements (Mihailovic's and Tito's).'

5) On Milosevic's loyalty to Tito's legacy

Jovic, p. 156: 'In destroying the fourth Yugoslavia, Milosevic rejected Kardelj but not Tito.'

- 6) On Milosevic's desire to bring about the 'unity of Yugoslavia'
Jovic, p. 400: 'His program now [in 1987], for the first time, seemed clear even to those at the lowest level of the social hierarchy, and he carried it out decisively: first the unity of the Serb Party, then unity of Serbia, then of the Yugoslav Party, then of Yugoslavia. That programme had four phases – Milosevic had now accomplished the first; at the third he would be halted, and at the fourth defeated.'
- 7) On Milosevic's desire to restrain Serb nationalism
Jovic, p. 471: 'Treating Milosevic and Kucan with a bit of benevolence, one could say that at least part of their motive could be explained by an attempt to retain power in order to prevent the "real nationalists" (those gathered around the *New Review* or people such as Vuk Draskovic was at the time) from coming to power in Slovenia and Serbia. As David Owen later said of Milosevic, they had to "ride the tiger of nationalism if they did not want the tiger to swallow them" (1995: 129). They appeared powerful, omnipotent, but in reality they were both afraid that the exit of the League of Communists from the political scene could bring about only worse nationalism. They accepted nationalism in order to prevent it.'
- 8) On the JNA's 'good intention' to prevent ethnic conflict in Croatia
Jovic, p. 485: 'When the Croatian government attempted to prevent the [Serb rebel] takeover, the Yugoslav People's Army imposed itself between it and the Serbs, perhaps with the good intention of preventing direct ethnic conflict in Croatia.'
- 9) On Milosevic as 'genuinely surprised' by break up of Yugoslavia and war
Jovic, pp. 491-492: 'The sources that were at the disposal of the author of this book do not give sufficient reason to support the conclusion that the members of the Yugoslav political elite in this period (including, thus, Slobodan Milosevic and Milan Kucan as well) intended to destroy Yugoslavia. Many of them, like most Yugoslavs, most analysts at home and abroad and the international political community as a whole, were

genuinely surprised by the break-up, and still more by the war that broke out after that.’

10) On war in Yugoslavia as expression of state weakness and ‘private violence’

Jovic, pp. 492-493: “The violence that, in the ruins of Yugoslavia, in a stateless terrain, erupted in the ‘90s of last century had, indeed, the same cause as the collapse itself: it was the expression of a weak, ineffective state that was not in a position to suppress the private armies, private revenge, private “laws” and private violence. The wars that were waged in those ruins were to a large extent private revenge in which neighbours repaid some imaginary quid pro quo to their neighbours.’

Jovic is right about one thing: the criticisms being made against him are political, not academic in motivation. If Jovic were simply a scholar expressing his private opinion, it would not matter that his work rehabilitates Milosevic and the JNA. It would not matter that he praises a propaganda pamphlet with no academic value, that supports Croatia’s territorial dismemberment and denies the Srebrenica genocide. Jovic has the right, as a scholar, to express his views freely. But he is the Croatian president’s chief analyst and special coordinator. It is dangerous to both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina for someone holding such views, and with such poor analytical judgement and grasp of reality, to occupy the position that he does.

Yours faithfully, Marko Attila Hoare

2

Friends and Enemies (Ideology for Dummies)

THE CHETNIKS AND THE JEWS

Last week, the Serbian daily Blic published another contribution to the long-running efforts of anti-Communist Serb nationalists to rehabilitate the Nazi-collaborationalist Serbian Chetnik movement of World War II. Such efforts represent an affront to the Serbian anti-fascist heritage and to all those who survived the Chetniks' crimes. I am therefore publishing here an extract from my book "Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia: The Partisans and the Chetniks, 1941-1943", Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006 (pp. 156-162) that illustrates the anti-Semitic and genocidal character of the Chetnik movement.

As the Chetnik-Partisan breach widened, Chetnik propaganda laid increasing stress on the allegedly 'non-Serb' character of the Partisans. From the start, Chetnik leader Draza Mihailovic portrayed the Communists as an ethnically alien, non-Serb element. In negotiations with the Germans in November 1941, in the course of assuring the latter that 'it is not my intention to fight against the occupiers', Mihailovic claimed that 'I have never made a genuine agreement with the Communists, for they do not care about the people. They are led by foreigners who are

not Serbs: the Bulgarian Jankovic, the Jew Lindmajer, the Magyar Borota, two Muslims whose names I do not know and the Ustasha Major Boganic. That is all I know of the Communist leadership.' (1) Rhetoric of this kind was rapidly adopted by the Bosnian Chetniks and became more virulent as their conflict with the Partisans intensified. Chetnik propaganda stressed in particular the presence in Partisan ranks of Muslims and Croats, some of whom were allegedly former Ustashas. A bulletin issued by the staff of Bosko Todorovic, the Chetnik commander of Operational Units for East Bosnia and Hercegovina, probably in January 1942, spoke of 'the leaders of the Partisans from Montenegro, among whom an important role is played by JEWS, TURKS and CROATS' [emphasis in original].(2) A bulletin issued from the same source in February spoke of 'a shock detachment of Montenegrin Partisans, under the command of someone called Vlado Segrt, filled with criminal-Ustasha Turks from Hercegovina, some of whom had until recently been throwing our brother Serbs into pits'.(3)

Propaganda pamphlets issued by Todorovic's staff in this period warned the Serbs in Partisan ranks that the Communists would eventually purge them: 'And who will carry out this cleansing? The Turks and the Croats, who will be in the majority. In the majority because the number of Serbs among the Partisans will continuously fall, while the number of Turks and Croats will continuously rise.'(4) According to Todorovic: 'In the ranks of the Partisans are convicts, outlaws, ne'er-do-wells and Ustashas, who want, on Serb lands, to establish a Communist Croatia in place of the Ustasha Croatia.'(5) So far as the Communist leadership was concerned: 'They are administered and ordered by the Communist headquarters for the Balkans... In these headquarters sit kikes, Magyars, Croats, Turks, Bulgarians, Albanians and Germans, and occasionally a fallen Serb is found among them.'(6) Jezdimir Dangic's Mountain Staff of the Bosnian Chetnik Detachments denounced the Partisan detachments 'which are led by the KIKE Mosa Pijade, the TURK Safet Mujic, the MAGYAR Franjo Vajnert and that so-and-so Petar Ilic whose real name nobody knows...' [emphasis in original].(7) According to the same source: 'the Partisans and Ustashas have

the same goal: TO BREAK UP AND DESTROY SERBDOM. That, and that alone!' [emphasis in original].(8)

The Chetniks viewed their struggle against the Muslims and their struggle against the Partisans as two halves of the same coin. This belief found its most detailed formulation in a pamphlet entitled *The guns of Nevesinje*, issued in late 1941 for the purpose of appealing to the Serbs under Communist leadership. The pamphlet carried an endorsement from Todorovic, who claimed it was 'full of truth' and entreated his readers: 'If anyone tries to forbid you from reading it or claims that what is written in this pamphlet is a lie, be assured, brother Serbs, that that person is a Turk or a *Skutor* [Croat] or their "faithful comrade". From such as these, hide it and read it secretly. For there is no longer any point in talking to them. They have sold or given their soul to a foreigner – the German Jew Karl Marx and his followers.' The pamphlet presented the Chetnik struggle with the Partisans in terms of a Serb struggle against the Muslims: 'If the Communist Party continues to kill Serbs and to accept into its society Turks and *Skutors*, if it continues to push Serbs into a pointless and amateurishly led struggle with the occupiers, there where the Serb villages suffer after every attack, then the Turks and others in Yugoslavia will choose a Communist regime in order not only to be equal to the Serbs but to be in a better position to them, but then the Serbs, who want to be free and to avenge their martyrs, will choose the 'regime of the forest' and become outlaws.' To this possibility the Chetniks presented their favoured alternative:

When it achieves freedom, a golden Serb freedom, then the Serb nation will – freely and without bloodshed, by means of the free elections which we are accustomed to in the Serbia of King Peter I – take its destiny into its own hands and freely say, whether it loves more its independent Great Serbia, cleansed of Turks and other non-Serbs, or some other state in which Turks and Jews will once again be ministers, commissars, officers and 'comrades'.(9)

The pamphlet explicitly condemned the Communist policy toward Muslims as an unfavourable alternative to the extermination

of the latter, as favoured by the Chetniks: 'If they [the Communists] were fighting for their people then they would take account of the desire of the Serb people, that the Turks and Muslims be exterminated in or at least expelled from Bosnia-Hercegovina. But they are fighting for themselves and their Party, and in order to win, they are ready to help the Turks not only in preventing the revenge of the Serbs, but in exterminating dissatisfied Serbs.' The pamphlet further declared one of its post-war goals to be: 'The extermination or expulsion of all non-Serbs, particularly the Turks, with whom the Serbs never again wish to live intermingled.'⁽¹⁰⁾

The chauvinism of the Chetniks, and particularly their anti-Semitism, closely mirrored that of the Nedic regime, which in turn was part of the general ideological climate created by the Nazi hegemony. Nedic peppered his speeches in this period with references to a 'Communist-Jewish rabble' and a 'Communist-Masonic-Jewish-English mafia'.⁽¹¹⁾ Such rhetoric was linked to Nazi policy toward the Jews, in which quisling Serbia was deeply implicated, for the German military decree of 31 May 1941 had charged the Serbian authorities with responsibility for enforcing anti-Jewish and anti-Gypsy regulations.⁽¹²⁾ The mass imprisonment of the Jews in Serbia began in August and, as Israel Gutman's *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* notes, a key role in this was played by 'the Serbian quisling puppet government, under Milan Nedic, whose police and gendarmerie assisted the Germans in rounding up the Jews.'⁽¹³⁾ The Serbian Jews were then exterminated by the Nazis between the autumn of 1941 and the spring of 1942. Nedic himself appears to have been eager to impress the Nazis with his anti-Semitic zeal, and on 22 June 1942 he wrote to General Bader, complaining of the fact that Serbian prisoners-of-war in German camps were being confined alongside Jews and Communists, and requesting that 'it would be very desirable if Jews and leftists-Communists be removed from the common camps and kept apart from the nationally healthy officers.' Consequently: 'The Serbian government, concerned by this action, would be extremely grateful if the German Reich would take effective measures for a maximally rapid separation, etc.'⁽¹⁴⁾

The frequent reference in Chetnik propaganda to the 'Jews' in Partisan ranks may have been influenced in part by this desire of Serb quislings to please their Nazi overlords. The Nazi Holocaust of the Jews in Serbia was well under way by the time the Chetniks were making the anti-Semitic statements cited above, a fact of which, given their close ties to the Nedic regime, they cannot have been unaware. This anti-Semitism was by no means purely cynical, but reflected the sentiments of many individual Chetniks. Marijan Stilinovic, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, recalls meeting a group of Chetniks outside Ivancici in January 1942 who had defected from the Partisans on the grounds that the Partisan leaders were 'Jews' and Vajner-Cica was a 'Kraut'.⁽¹⁵⁾ Nor did Chetnik anti-Semitism stop at words. As the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* notes: 'As the Chetniks increased their cooperation with the Germans, their attitude toward the Jews in the areas under their control deteriorated, and they identified the Jews with the hated Communists. There were many instances of Chetniks murdering Jews or handing them over to the Germans.'⁽¹⁶⁾

Chauvinist and antisemitic themes in Chetnik propaganda were not confined to the winter and spring of 1941-42, but remained a constant in the months and years that followed – an integral element in a movement whose goal was an ethnically pure Great Serbia inhabited solely by Orthodox Serbs. At a rally in Trebinje in Hercegovina in July 1942, the Chetniks denounced the Partisans as being 'for the Serb nation more dangerous than any others', whose 'leaders were for the most part Bosnian Muslims, Catholics and Jews'. They declared: 'The Serb lands must be cleansed of Catholics and Muslims. In them must live only Serbs.'⁽¹⁷⁾ Dobroslav Jevdjevic, Mihailovic's delegate in eastern Bosnia and Hercegovina, issued a proclamation to the 'Serbs of eastern Bosnia and Hercegovina' in July 1942, in which he claimed: 'Tito, the supreme military chief of the Partisans, is a Croat from Zagreb. Pijade, the supreme political chief of the Partisans, is a Jew. Four fifths of all armed Partisans were supplied to them by Pavelic's Croatian Army. Two thirds of their officers are former Croatian officers. The financing of their movement is carried out by the powerful Croatian capitalists of Zagreb, Split,

Sarajevo and Dubrovnik. Fifty percent of the Ustashas responsible for the massacres of Serbs are now in their ranks.' Jevdjevic levelled a still more bizarre charge against the Partisans: 'They have destroyed Serb churches and established mosques, synagogues and Catholic temples.'⁽¹⁸⁾ That Jevdjevic himself shared the prejudices to which he appealed is suggested by his claim, in an internal report of June 1942, that the Proletarian brigades contained many 'Jews, Gypsies and Muslims.'⁽¹⁹⁾

A Chetnik proclamation of September 1942 defined the difference between the Partisan and Chetnik movements as being that 'the Chetnik movement is a Serb national organisation whose goal is to establish a Serb state that will unite all Serbs', while 'the Partisan movement is a multinational organisation whose goal is to establish a non-national Soviet revolutionary state in the Serb lands'; the difference between the Chetniks and Partisans was that 'only a true Serb can become a Chetnik' whereas 'an Ustasha, German, Jew or Gypsy may become a Partisan; in other words anyone willing on behalf of the foreigner to participate in the slaughter and killing of the best Serb sons.'⁽²⁰⁾ It was the belief of Stevan Botic, Dangic's successor at the head of the Mountain Staff of the Bosnian Chetnik Detachments, that the Muslims were supporting the Partisans on an anti-Serb basis: 'The Turks, when they saw the work of the Partisans, i.e. when they saw how the Partisans mercilessly killed Serbs, immediately saw that collaboration with the Partisans would be very profitable.'⁽²¹⁾

Petar Bacovic, Todorovic's successor as commander of the Chetnik Operational Units in eastern Bosnia and Hercegovina, issued an appeal to the Serbs in Partisan ranks in October 1942, which attributed the appearance of the Partisan movement to the fact that 'the Jews, associated with much of the scum of the earth, fled to our country and began to propagate such better and happier state of affairs in a Communist state.' The Partisans were guilty of destroying traditional Serb society and morals:

Dividing and ruining Serb villages and Serb peasants; banning Serbs from practising their Orthodox religion; corrupting many Serb youth; teaching children not to listen to their parents; propagating free love among the youth; saying that

brother and sister, son and mother, father and daughter can live together as husband and wife; bringing with them many fallen women from the towns – teachers, students, workers etc. – to serve the Communist bosses for the purpose of physical pleasure; and in the wake of their terror pushing many of our honourable peasants to kill each other and to kill all those honourable and national Serbs, who did not wish to join them and accept their bloody and corrupt ideology: godlessness, irreligion, familial corruption and immorality of every kind.(22)

The proclamation lamented to the Serb Partisans: ‘You are still being led by Tito, Mosa Pijade, Rocko Colakovic, Vlado Segrt, Rade Hamovic, Savo Mizera and many other Jews, Muslims, Croats, Magyars, Bulgarians and other scum of the earth.’(23)

A pamphlet distributed by the Chetniks around Sarajevo in the autumn of 1942 spoke of ‘the Communists whose leaders are Jews and who wish to impose Jewish rule on the world; [though] their and the Ustashas’ collapse is inevitable.’(24) A Chetnik pamphlet distributed in eastern Hercegovina in December 1942 claimed: ‘The Yugoslav Communists who are today so bloodily and heartlessly fighting against the Serb nation’ were a nationally alien, criminal riff-raff; and that ‘the Supreme Commander of all Communist forces in the country is some Comrade Tito, whose real name nobody knows, but we know only that he is a Zagreb Jew. His leading collaborators are Mosa Pijade, a Belgrade Jew; Frano Vajner, a Hungarian Jew; Azija Kokuder, a Bosnian Turk; Safet Mujije, a Turk from Mostar; Vlado Segrt, a former convict; and many others similar to them. Their names best testify as to whom they are and to how much they fight from their heart for our people.’(25) Mihailovic himself informed his subordinates in December 1942: ‘The units of the Partisans are filled with thugs of the most varied kinds, such as Ustashas – the worst butchers of the Serb people – Jews, Croats, Dalmatians, Bulgarians, Turks, Magyars and all the other nations of the world.’(26)

An issue of the Bosnian Chetnik newspaper *Vidovdan* appearing at the start of February 1943 claimed that Tito’s officers were ‘the Belgrade Jew Mosa Pijade, who was not even born on

the territory of Yugoslavia' and that 'The other members of the Communist-Partisan staff are mostly Jews, who have very little sympathy for the pain and suffering of our people.' It complained also that 'the Communists have promised the Croats a "Croatian Soviet Republic" in which [Croat Peasant Party leader] Macek would be president.'⁽²⁷⁾ On 10 February the Chetnik commanders for East Bosnia, Hercegovina, Dalmatia and Lika issued a joint proclamation to the 'people of Bosnia, Lika and Dalmatia', claiming that 'since we have cleansed Serbia, Montenegro and Hercegovina, we have come to help you to crush the pitiful remnants of the Communist international, criminal band of Tito, Mosa Pijade, Levi Vajnert and other paid Jews'. The Partisan rank-and-file was called upon to 'kill the political commissars and join our ranks right away', like the 'hundreds and hundreds who are surrendering every day, conscious that they have been betrayed and swindled by the Communist Jews'.⁽²⁸⁾ The proclamation was signed by Ilija Mihic, Momcilo Djujic, Petar Bacovic and Radovan Ivanisevic. The 9 March issue of *Vidovdan* described the Partisans as 'bandits led by the Zagreb Jew "Tito" and the Belgrade Jew Mosa Pijade'.⁽²⁹⁾ A Chetnik leaflet distributed in the Sarajevo region in April described the Partisans as 'the scourge of God'.⁽³⁰⁾

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Hat tip: Daniel of Srebrenica Genocide Blog.

JASA ALMULI AND HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM: THE MAKING OF A SERBIAN ANTI-WIESENTHAL

Earlier this year, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Belgrade came under attack from Jasa Almuli, a Serbian journalist and former president of the Belgrade Jewish community. What apparently provoked Almuli’s ire was the claim made by the Helsinki Committee’s 2006 report: ‘During the course of the Second World War, the Jews in Serbia perished at a high rate, not only at the hands of the German occupation authorities, but at the hands of the Government of National Salvation of Milan Nedic, the Ljoticites [Serbian fascists], gendarmes and Special Police, whose effective work contributed to the fact that, already in August 1942, Belgrade, as the first European capital city, was proclaimed a city cleansed of Jews (*Judenrein*).’

Almuli objected: 'This equation of the German occupiers and the quisling organs in the destruction of the Serbian Jews does not accord with the truth.' Allegedly basing himself on Serbian Jewish sources, Almuli claimed that 'they all state that *the German occupiers alone decided on the destruction of the Jews in Serbia* and that the perpetrators were German organs.'

This is far from the first attempt by Almuli to defend the Serbian fascists and quislings of World War II from the charge that they participated in the Holocaust. In a letter published in the UK's *Sunday Telegraph* on 27 February 1994, Almuli wrote:

'As one of the few Serbian Jews who survived the Holocaust I can testify that the Serbian government of Milan Nedic under German military occupation did not "manage to deport every Serbian Jew to face the Holocaust", as Tom Carter alleged (letter, February 20). The deportation of Jews in Serbia and their complete destruction was a crime exclusively committed by the Nazi Germans. They alone deported the Jews and killed them in camps they established in Serbia. The Serbs, who always resisted German invasion, rebelled against the Nazis and were subjected to exceptionally cruel reprisals in which for each German soldier killed by the Serbian partisans 100 Serbian hostages were executed. All Jewish males were killed by the German army as Serbian hostages, and no history of the Holocaust written by Jews blamed the Serbs for their deportation.'

However, what Almuli claims – that the Serbian quislings of Milan Nedic were innocent of any role in the Holocaust, and that no history of the Holocaust written by Jews blames 'the Serbs' for deporting Jews to the Nazis – is untrue. According to Israeli historian Menachem Shelah, writing in Israel Gutman's *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (MacMillan, New York, 1990), the extermination of Serbia's Jews was indeed the work of the Nazi SS and military leaders, but 'Others involved in determining and carrying out Jewish policy were... the Serbian quisling puppet government, under Milan Nedic, whose police and gendarmerie assisted the Germans in rounding up the Jews.' (p.

1341) Shelah writes in the same volume (p. 289): ‘There were many instances of Chetniks murdering Jews or handing them over to the Germans.’

Thus, whereas Almuli claims that the deportation and extermination of the Serbian Jews was ‘exclusively’ the work of the Nazis and that the Serbian quislings were innocent of any involvement, a respected standard reference work on the Holocaust says otherwise.

This is not the extent of Almuli’s efforts to whitewash the role of the Serbian quislings in the Holocaust. But before I go into this in greater detail, it is necessary to say a few words about him. According to the Serbian independent news magazine *Vreme* in June 1992, Almuli was one of a group of Serbian Jewish leaders who ‘directed all their efforts to just one goal: to be as close as possible to the existing regime.’ The regime in question was the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. This resulted, *Vreme’s* journalist continued, in ‘the fact that Mr Almuli was a frequent guest at sessions of the Serbian government, at which propaganda activities were discussed.’ (Ivan Radovanovic, ‘Guzva u jevrejskoj opštini: Ovozemaljski izbori’, *Vreme*, 1 June 1992). Another member of this group of Serbian Jewish leaders was Klara Mandic, who founded the ‘Serbian-Jewish Friendship Society’ in 1987, to lobby the Jewish world, and in particular Israel, on behalf of Milosevic’s Serbia. Mandic had been a close ally of Milosevic and his intermediary in dealings with semilegal business enterprises on whose support he drew. She lived for nine months with the Serb paramilitary leader Dragan Vasiljkovic (‘Captain Dragan’) and was a close associate of both Radovan Karadzic and Zeljko Raznatovic ‘Arkan’. She was murdered in Belgrade shortly after the overthrow of Milosevic.

According to *Vreme’s* journalist, Almuli resigned as Belgrade Jewish community president in the face of opposition from among Belgrade Jews to his initiative to publish an attack on the leadership of the sister Jewish community in Zagreb (for its own alleged closeness to its ruling regime – in this case, Croatian). He subsequently emigrated to the UK. Whereas Mandic was a flamboyant propagandist for the Serbian nationalist cause,

her former mentor Almuli more quietly wrote letters in defence of the Serbian cause, as he saw it, for publication in newspapers.

On 25 May 1992, at the height of the Bosnian genocide, a letter of Almuli's was published in the *Jerusalem Post*, attacking what he claimed was the Israeli newspaper's 'lack of objectivity' with regard to Serbia: 'We deplore your one-sided, biased presentation of the situation in the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. You do not state a single fact or argument bearing out your claims that Serbia is "aggressive and cruel", that it has become a "grave danger to stability in Europe" and that it should be punished by a "total trade embargo and diplomatic isolation".' In a *non sequitur* which was already becoming all too familiar to anyone paying attention to Serbian propaganda in the early 1990s, Almuli then jumped straight from the events of 1990s Bosnia into an account of Serb suffering and Croat and Muslim wrongdoing in World War II.

Almuli then proceeded to present the Serb-nationalist case to his Israeli audience:

'We, the Jews, who, together with the Serbs, suffered in Usta-sha death camps – of which Jasenovac is recorded in the Hall of Remembrance in Yad Vashem – understand their current concerns. The Serbs want the Yugoslav crisis settled in a way that will not reduce them in the republics other than Serbia to a helpless minority... The republic of Serbia is not indifferent to the fate of the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the same as Israel is not indifferent to the fate of the Jews in the Diaspora.'

In a further apparent effort to mitigate Serb war-crimes in Bosnia and appeal to Israeli sensibilities, Almuli claimed: 'In recent years, the Republic of Serbia took on the leading role in demanding the re-establishment [by Yugoslavia] of diplomatic relations with Israel.'

In other words Almuli, as the former pro-regime leader of the Belgrade Jewish community, was using these credentials to agitate on behalf of the Serb nationalist cause. Despite his readiness

to attack his fellow Jews in Croatia for their own alleged closeness to their own regime, he frequently presented his polemics in terms of 'we Jews' or 'us Jews' – as if his past history of official service in Serbia qualified him to make statements on behalf of all Jews in the former Yugoslavia. Thus, in a letter published back in November 1993 (see below), Almuli claimed that 'In the present propaganda battle among the warring factions in former Yugoslavia the history of the Holocaust is insistently revised with the aim of making the opposing faction guilty of killing the Jews.' He finished by saying that 'I plead with the warring factions in former Yugoslavia, and with their respective friends abroad, to stop using Jews in their propaganda warfare.' Yet he failed to mention that he himself sided with one of the warring factions, that his own agenda was to whitewash his own country's (Serbia's) role in the Holocaust while emphasising the role of its enemy (Croatia), and that he himself was 'using Jews' in his own propaganda warfare aimed at defending the role of Serbia in the Bosnian war.

Almuli made an additional intervention in the propaganda war over Bosnia in January 1994, in response to an article in the *International Herald Tribune* by Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, who condemned Serb aggression as involving 'genocide' and a 'Holocaust that is taking place in the heart of Europe', and who called for US military action to halt it, and for the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia. Almuli responded:

'It is very dangerous for a Jewish leader to take sides in an alien civil war with strong religious connotations, as Mr. Siegman does in Bosnia. He barely mentions the Catholic Croats, although they exposed themselves to widespread criticism by their military involvement in Bosnia and the resurgence of Ustase elements, which are of grave concern to the local Jewish community. He strongly supports the Bosnian Muslims, despite the fundamentalism of their leader, Alija Izetbegovic. And he invites Western military intervention against the Bosnian Serbs, who are Christian Orthodox, thus provoking possible reactions against Jews in other Christian Orthodox countries.'

In this way, Almuli attempted to silence Jewish criticism of the Serb genocide in Bosnia by raising the spectre of Orthodox Christian retaliation against Jews elsewhere.

In his recent attack on the Serbian Helsinki Committee, Almuli claims:

I am not defending Nedic or his regime, but defamed Serbia, and I fight always against revision of the history of the Holocaust. Therefore I present the question: Do the ladies and gentlemen of the Helsinki Committee in Belgrade not know all this, or did not know how to read? Some great Western powers, in the absence of any kind of international legal basis, claim that Serbia has no moral right to Kosovo, because it has killed there many Albanians at the time of the bombardment in 1999. Does this moral disqualification of Serbia need to be covered by the lie that Serbia is just as guilty as the Germans for the murder of the Serbian Jews?!

So it is, that this former leader of the Belgrade Jewish community sees his task as ‘defending defamed Serbia’ over Kosovo by white-washing Serbia’s Nazi collaborators.

If readers are wondering why I am bringing up the subject at this time, it is not only because I have only just learned of Almuli’s attack on the Helsinki Committee, but also because I figured in his attack, as a ‘Briton with family links to Croatia’, who has also been ‘guilty’ of bringing up the Nedic regime’s role in the Holocaust. Almuli refers to a letter he had published in the London Review of Books back in November 1993, in which he accused me – back when I was a 21-year-old undergraduate – of making false claims about the Nedic regime. You can read his letter here. Indeed, I made some mistakes; above all, I put the figure for Jewish Holocaust victims in Serbia at 23,000, when it was closer to 15,000 (though Almuli, through confusing the territory of wartime Croatia proper – which I referred to – with the territory of the ‘Independent State of Croatia’, falsely accused me of getting the figure for Croatian Jewish victims wrong as well). I also mistakenly attributed the building of the quisling Serbian death-camp of Banjica to Nedic, though in fact its construction

was initiated in quisling Serbia before Nedic personally took office. Yet while Almuli correctly pointed out the first of these errors, his letter otherwise consisted of a factually inaccurate apology for the quisling regime in Serbia.

Almuli wrote:

The allegation that the regime of Milan Nedic, installed by the Germans in Serbia in August 1941., enthusiastically participated in the Holocaust, is the second incorrect statement in Mr. Hoare's letter. No anti - Jewish legislation was passed by this regime, no death camp for Jews was established or run by it and virtually no killing perpetrated. All that was done by the German Army, police and SS which had almost entirely destroyed the Serbian Jewish population by May 1942., although several hundred Jews were still hiding with Serbian friends. The German police were hunting them and many were caught with the help of police loyal to Nedic's regime, attracted by the financial reward the Germans were paying. This is all that can be found about Nedic in the published research of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia. The Germans themselves dealt with the Jews in Serbia; the duty of Nedic's regime was to carry out internal administration.

The half - truth in Mr. Hoare's letter refers to the concentration camp Banjica in Belgrade. It was indeed a death camp and staffed by Serbian policemen, but it was not destined for Jews. This camp was established by German order and the Serbian personnel were subject to the control of the Gestapo. The camp was intended for Serbs who opposed the German occupation, for Partisans, Communists and liberal patriots. Out of 23,697 persons who were imprisoned in this camp only 455 were Jews.

In absolving the Nedic regime of responsibility for anti-Jewish legislation, Almuli did not choose to mention that the German commander in Serbia had issued an anti-Jewish and anti-gypsy decree on 31 May 1941, which required Jews to register with the Serbian police and wear the yellow star, banned them from public

service, prevented them from visiting theatres and cinemas, and so forth. The decree specified: 'The Serbian authorities are responsible for carrying out the orders contained in this decree.' As Serbian prime minister from August 1941, Nedic presided over the enforcement of this decree by the Serbian authorities. Almulji's claim that the Germans alone were responsible for measures against the Jews, while Nedic merely carried out internal Serbian administration, is therefore false.

As for Almulji's attempt to downplay the role of the Serb quislings in the organisation and management of the Banjica death camp, and its role in the destruction of the Jews, historian Jennie Lebel (Zeni Lebl), in her book 'Until the final solution: The Jews in Belgrade 1521-1942' ('Do konacnog resenja: Jevreji u Beogradu 1521-1942', Cigoja stampa, Belgrade, 2001, pp. 312-313), has this to say:

The decision [to establish the Banjica camp] was taken in the staff of the German military commander for Serbia on 22 June 1941, and the same day the chief of the administrative staff Dr Turner informed the first person of the Commissars' Administration [Serbian quisling government] Milan Acimovic of it. As it was a question of a joint, Nazi-collaborationist camp, the carrying out of the order was entrusted to the administrator of the city of Belgrade, Dragi Jovanovic, i.e. to the Administration of the city of Belgrade, the Belgrade municipality and the Gestapo. Dragi Jovanovic appointed on 5 July Svetozar M. Vujkovic as the first manager of that first concentration camp in Belgrade; and for his assistant, Djordje Kosmajac. They maintained daily close contact with the Special Police and with them decided the question of life or death for tens of thousands of prisoners in the camp. The security of the camp was exercised by a special detachment of the gendarmerie of the city of Belgrade, under the supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and with the special engagement of the Department of the Special Police. The German part of the camp was under the administration of the Gestapo.

The camp building had to be very quickly repaired and organised to suit its new purpose. According to the model of German concentration camps, metal walls, iron doors and bars were put up at Banjica, and grates were put on the windows. The first prisoners were brought to the newly formed camp already on 9 July, while the adaptation of the building was still in progress, even before the building of the high camp walls. The bringing of prisoners, Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, was carried out at a fast tempo, as were their daily executions.’ (emphasis added)

Lebel is not the only historian to write about the role of Banjica in the Holocaust. Sima Begovic, a Yugoslav historian who was himself imprisoned in the camp during the war, is the author of a two-volume history of Banjica (‘Logor Banjica 1941-1944’, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 1989). He writes the following (vol. 2, pp. 25-26):

Larger groups of Jews reached the camp at Banjica on 14, 15 and 16 September 1941. Among them appear the surnames of well known Belgrade Jewish families: Albano, Gris, Finci, Pijade, Konfino, Sabitaj, Demojorovic, Mandilovic, Ruso, Gozes, Solomon, Almulzino, Amar, Demajo, Benvenisti, Janjatovic, Frajdenfeld, Isakovic, Zonensajn, Nisim, Altarac, Singer, Adanja, Melamed, Karic, Masic, Kon, Nahimijas, Kabiljo, Naftali, Grinberger, Anaf, Mor, Razencvajg, Munk, Blau, Hercog, Gutman and others. From the Banat group there were in the Banjica camp four Jews, doctors by profession: Djordje Farago from Petrovgrad (Zrenjanin), Franjo Loza from Srpska Crnja, Pavle Miler from Kovino, and Branko Auspic from Vrsac. In those three days alone 202 Jews were brought to the camp at Banjica. All of these were transferred, as recorded in the first register of the Banjica camp, to a different camp on 17 September 1941. Because the camp at the Old Fairground still was not completely finished, this was probably a matter of transfer to the camp at Topovske supe. It is a still more likely assumption that they were then, or a little later, executed at the village

of Jabuka in the Banat, where the first executions were carried out both of Banjica prisoners and of Jews imprisoned at Topovske supe.

In terms of the numbers of Jewish victims from Banjica, Begovic writes (vol. 2, p. 28):

It is not easy or straightforward to determine the number of Jews who resided at the camp at Banjica and from it taken to the execution site. Judging by the Banjica registers, that number just exceeded 900 individuals. However, not all Jews were recorded in the registers of the Banjica prisoners.

Thus Almuli's claim, that 'only 455' Jews passed through Banjica, is false. His figure of 23,697 prisoners at Banjica is also rejected by both Begovic and Lebel, who point out that this only represents the number of prisoners recorded in the camp registers, and does not include the thousands or possibly tens of thousands more who went unrecorded.

The camp at Topovske supe that Begovic mentions is described by Lebel as 'the first Jewish death camp in Belgrade'. She writes (pp. 312-314) of the incarceration of the Jewish prisoners:

'The guard was kept by Nedic's gendarmes, who were inhuman and, to show their loyalty to the Germans, often worse than the latter. They prohibited them things that the Germans sometimes permitted. At the entrance there were not many guards, and even on the occasion of the transport of the prisoners to work there was not a particularly prominent guard. But it was made clear to them that every attempt at escape would be punished most strictly. They were soon convinced of this: when some nevertheless attempted to escape and were caught, in front of all the prisoners they were hanged in the camp courtyard.'

Nedic himself was an anti-Semite. As I demonstrate in my book, 'Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia: The Partisans and the Chetniks, 1941-1943' (Oxford University Press, London, 2006), he peppered his speeches with references to the 'Communist-Jewish

rabble' and 'Communist-Masonic-Jewish-English-mafia' against which he was supposedly fighting. On 22 June 1942 he wrote to German General Bader to complain that Serbian prisoners-of-war in German camps were being confined alongside Jews and Communists, and requested that 'it would be very desirable if Jews and leftists-Communists be removed from the common camps and kept apart from the nationally healthy officers.' Consequently, 'The Serbian government, concerned by this action, would be extremely grateful if the German Reich would take effective measures for a maximally rapid separation, etc.' ('Genocide and Resistance', pp. 158-159; the citations are from archival documents that I located in Belgrade; photocopies of them are in my possession).

The Serbian historian Olivera Milosavljevic, in her recently published study of the Serbian quislings ('Potisnuta istina: Kolaboracija u Srbiji 1941-1944', Helsinski odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji', Belgrade, 2006, p. 25), based principally on an extensive examination of the Serbian quisling press, has this to say of Nedic's official ideology:

'The principle of a 'clean' nation encompassed all spheres of social life in Nedic's Serbia, in which state officials, professors, pupils and students had to demonstrate that they were Serbs. The 'Aryan paragraph' entered the official documents of Nedic's government which, on the occasion of employment in state service, required that candidates provide evidence that they were of Serb nationality and 'Aryan origin' and that their families did not have 'Jewish or Gypsy blood'. Confirmations were provided by the municipal authorities.'

The Serbian fascist leader Dimitrije Ljotic, a central figure of the Serbian quisling regime, was most explicit in his statements on the Jews. For example, in a speech over Radio Belgrade in August 1941: 'I have said, that the Christian nations have become so blind, that they see danger in every imperialism – except the most dangerous imperialism: the Jewish'; 'Only the Jew could on the one hand be the creator and user of capitalism, and on the other create Marxism and lead revolutions, supposedly against

capitalism'; 'And to the Jews it must be clear that for the foreseeable future the realisation of their dream of world revolution is ended'; 'You will only then, with the fall of red Bolshevik Moscow, see what wrong toward the Russian nation and toward you, Serbian tribe, has been committed by those renegades, who convinced you that that Jewish-Unrussian creation is – your Slavic Russia'. (Dimitrije V. Ljotic, 'Sabrana dela', vol. 8, Iskra, Belgrade, 2003, pp. 46-48). Ljotic's militia was closely involved in hunting down and arresting Jews.

This, then, is the true face of the Serbian quisling regime of World War II, whose record Almuli sees fit to defend. Almuli's record may be set against that of Simon Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor who devoted his life to bringing Nazi war-criminals to justice and fighting Holocaust revisionism. In contrast to Wiesenthal, Almuli has tried his best to ensure that the crimes of his own fellow-countrymen, who participated in the Holocaust, are forgotten.

Addendum: For another defence of Milan Nedic's Nazi-quisling regime, one that writes its role in the Holocaust out of history, see amateur historian Carl Savich at Serbianna.com, who writes that in its collaboration with the Nazis, 'the regime Germany established in Serbia had no choice in the matter. They were not allies or loyal partners as Ante Pavelic was. The goal was to preserve the Serbian population.' The Nedic regime's involvement in Nazi genocide has also been written out of the history of World War II by the Jasenovac Research Institute and other Serb nationalist organisations and websites that claim to deal with the subject.

Saturday, 15 November 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

MONTY PYTHON
AND THE BALKAN ISLAMOFASCIST DIVISION

Among political ‘dissidents’ of one kind or another, it is frequently taken for granted that almost everything about international affairs you read in the daily papers or see on the news is simply imperialist propaganda, which the ruling classes disseminate in order to hoodwink the brainless common people into supporting their policies. Perhaps more than any other part of the world, the former Yugoslavia is portrayed as the place against which imperialist propaganda most frequently sins. All those who for one reason or another were sympathetic to the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milosevic or hostile to the Bosnian Muslims, felt compelled to justify themselves with the claim that Serbian atrocities in the 1990s were massively exaggerated by the imperialist media and/or that Alija Izetbegovic’s Bosnian regime was itself responsible for the bloodshed. This line then gelled with the same folks’ discourse on the Iraq war, whether for or against; it being either claimed that the US had no business preaching about a war against Islamist terror when it had itself supported Izetbegovic’s ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ against the innocent Serbs, or that the war on terror retrospectively proves that the US backed the wrong side in the Yugoslav war. To maintain either of these positions requires conflating the moderate Bosnian Muslims led by Izetbegovic with the genuine Islamofascists of al-Qa’ida – a difficult trick to pull off. In this article we shall show just how difficult it is, by analysing a popular myth of the anti-Muslim lobby: that Bosnia’s Izetbegovic was an Islamofascist who revived the politics of the SS in the Balkans. And there is no better place to start than with our old friend Neil Clark, whose statements on the topic are unfortunately entirely representative of a wider circle of Milosevic supporters and Islamophobes. Indeed, compared to some, Neil ‘Milosevic – prisoner of conscience’ Clark is veritably moderate.

Clark is something of a celebrity as he has recently won this year’s ‘Best UK Blog’ award. Out of a total number of UK bloggers that Clark himself estimates at 4 million, his blog came

first with the impressive tally of 1,116 votes, although some of his more zealous supporters in this contest, such as his frequent sparring-partner Oliver Kamm, admit to having voted for Clark many times over (in Oliver's case, perhaps for ironic reasons). Be that as it may, Clark is justly proud of having captured what he describes as 'the most prestigious prize in blogging', which he attributes to the fact that 'the positions I espouse are (unlike the self-appointed uber elite of bloggers) in tune with the views of the majority of ordinary people.' I should like to take this opportunity to offer Neil my congratulations.

Clark is perhaps best known for his admiration of the late Slobodan Milosevic, of whom he famously said that 'his worst crime was to carry on being a socialist.' He has, consequently, acquired something of a reputation as a Balkan expert among the ranks of both left-wing and right-wing Milosevic supporters. So it is reasonable that he should have a go at fellow Balkan expert Michael Palin of Monty Python for not being sufficiently well informed on recent Balkan history. Apparently, Palin's sin was to remark that Milosevic had 'died of a heart attack at The Hague after his conviction for war crimes.' Clark points out that Milosevic died without being convicted.

And now for something completely serious. Although comical in the eyes of any normal person, Clark is simply one of a number of Milosevic supporters who have been promoting the line that the late Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic was a supporter of the SS in Bosnia during World War II. In fact, in this group, Clark's views have been far from the most outlandish. Others have gone so far as to claim that Izetbegovic was a supporter of the SS during the recent war in Bosnia as well. Yet these more radical elements have arrived at their interpretation through strict adherence to the Neil Clark methodology in historical research. What they all have in common is a desire to rehabilitate Milosevic while demonising the Muslim inhabitants of the Balkans, thereby countering the perceived brainwashing of the human race by imperialist propaganda.

Readers may remember that early last year, in a debate at Harry's Place, Clark was unable to provide any evidence to back up

his assertion that Izetbegovic had recruited for the SS during World War II. This is an old story that has been extensively discussed by Oliver Kamm, among others, and there is no need to go into it again in detail here. The long and the short of it is that, as far as I can tell, the rumour that Izetbegovic recruited for the SS began with a letter allegedly sent by Milan Bulajic (a Srebrenica-denying Serbian historian), to David Binder (an American journalist known for his admiration of Serb Nazi-collaborator Momcilo Djujic and indicted Serb war-criminal Ratko Mladic), claiming that he (Bulajic) had learned of Izetbegovic's pro-SS activities through studying the transcript of his post-war trial by the Communist authorities in Bosnia (it should be noted here that Izetbegovic was not tried as a war-criminal or as a collaborator, but because of his political opposition to the Communist regime). The claim that the teenage Izetbegovic recruited for the SS during World War II thus remains entirely unproven, and will remain so unless Bulajic or anyone else can produce evidence to support it. Nevertheless, the rumour of Izetbegovic's 'SS past' circulated among pro-Milosevic conspiracy theorists until it was picked up by Clark, via an obscure US-based outfit called the 'International Strategic Studies Association' (ISSA), as Kamm has explained here. The article on which Clark based his claim against Izetbegovic was this one, written by a certain Vojin Joksimovich.

Although Clark has become an object of ridicule for many of us (for reasons that Stephen Pollard summarises here), his treatment of Balkan affairs is entirely representative of his wider circle. For example, among the many factual errors that Joksimovich makes is his claim that Izetbegovic's close political collaborator Hasan Cengic was a 'veteran of the 13th Waffen SS Division'. Cengic was, it should be pointed out, born in 1957, and therefore might have found it difficult to serve in the SS. Nevertheless, this accusation against Cengic was repeated by other members of this circle, including Yossef Bodansky, 'Director of Research' at the ISSA and a pioneer in demonising the Izetbegovic regime. Another such conspiracy theorist, a certain Peter Robert North, turned up on Clark's blog to push the line that Cengic had indeed served in the SS twelve years or so before he was even born.

North has written elsewhere that ‘Alija Izetbegovic RESURRECTED this NAZI SS DIVISION back in the early 90’s at the beginning of the war [in Bosnia]’ [emphasis in original]. This same claim was made by members of a US-based circle of Milosevic supporters and Srebrenica deniers, including Francisco Gil-White, who claimed that ‘Alija Izetbegovic in Bosnia proudly recreated the Nazi SS Handzar Division’. Gil-White’s collaborator, the ex-Maoist Jared Israel of the Milosevic-supporting, Srebrenica-denying website Emperor’s Clothes, also makes much of a supposedly recreated Handzar division in Izetbegovic’s Bosnia.

Jared Israel and Francisco Gil-White, as true disciples of the Neil Clark school of documentary evidence, base their claim that a reborn Bosnian SS Division, up to 6,000 strong, existed under Izetbegovic, on a single newspaper article written by Robert Fox and published in the Daily Telegraph on 29 December 1993, and reproduced in full on the Emperor’s Clothes website. Like all good Chomskyites, they view themselves as Wise Men with a unique gift for deciding which newspaper articles represent The Truth and which are simply Imperialist Propaganda. I do not share their genius in this field, so I can only guess how they do it, but it seems that any newspaper article that supports their line represents The Truth, while all those that do not support their line can be dismissed as Imperialist Propaganda – indeed as evidence of just how much Imperialist Propaganda there is, and how determined the Ruling Classes are to propagate it. The Emperor’s Clothes website is, in fact, largely devoted to claiming that the vast number of media reports of atrocities by Milosevic and his forces were all simply fabrications. Yet it has no trouble whatsoever in condemning Izetbegovic as having recreated an SS division in 1990s Bosnia, solely on the basis of a single article from this same, ‘imperialist’ media. Gil-White describes Fox’s article as ‘one of a sprinkling of reports telling the truth about the Sarajevo regime that managed to make it through the censorship screen.’ By which he means, he agrees with this article but doesn’t agree with most articles about Bosnia that were published during the war.

The Bosnian SS Division ‘Handzar’ (or ‘Handschar’) was a unit that existed during World War II, and it is conceivable that there really was a handful of Muslim zealots who, during the recent war, fought on the Bosnian side and grandiloquently named themselves the ‘Handzar Division’ after this historic unit. It is indicative, however, that no other journalist or anyone else seems to have noticed the existence of a unit of ‘up to 6,000 strong’ that named itself after the SS and that was, according to Fox, officered by Albanians and trained by mujahedin veterans from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Fox himself appears to have obtained his information about this alleged ‘Handzar Division’ at second hand, from individual UN officials on the ground.

Be this as it may, Fox does not implicate Izetbegovic or Cengic as being in any way connected with this alleged Handzar Division. He writes as follows: ‘Hardline elements of the Bosnian army, like the Handzar, appear to have the backing of an increasingly extreme leadership in Sarajevo, represented by Mr Ejup Ganic, Foreign Minister, Mr Haris Silajdzic, Prime Minister, and Mr Enver Hadzihasanovic, the new army chief.’

Thus, the alleged link between this supposed ‘Handzar Division’ and the Bosnian leadership boils down to the claim that ‘hardline elements of the Bosnian army’ of which the ‘Handzar’ are merely an example, ‘appear to have the backing’ of ‘an increasingly extreme leadership in Sarajevo’. Fox identifies Ejup Ganic as the first among these, but erroneously describes him as ‘Foreign Minister’ when he was in reality a member of the Bosnian Presidency. He also lists Haris Silajdzic as representative of this ‘extreme’ leadership, even though Silajdzic was actually one of the more moderate elements in the Bosnian government, one who himself came under attack from the Muslim hardliners in 1995.

So what we’re left with is a single newspaper article from the ‘imperialist’ media, which describes at second hand a recreated SS ‘Handzar Division’ that nobody else ever noticed, that is merely an example of hardline Bosnian Army elements that in turn merely ‘appear to have the backing’ of an extreme faction in the Bosnian leadership about whose composition the author of the article is himself pretty hazy.

Damning evidence indeed. John R. Schindler, in his book 'Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qa'ida, and the Rise of Global Jihad' (Zenith Press, 2007), pp. 167-168, was sufficiently convinced by Fox's article to assume its accuracy and repeat the key points, merely tweaking the facts slightly, so that the new 'Handzar Division' was no longer simply officered by Albanians, but now had a 'fair share' of them in its ranks as well. Yet the worthy gentlemen at Emperor's Clothes were not satisfied with their scoop, and felt the need to sex up the evidence a bit. So Jared Israel penned an article entitled 'The Handzar Division lives on in Bosnia', which turns out to be a report on a series of historical articles about the Handzar Division from World War II that appeared in a Bosnian magazine in 1997: 'The photos were taken during World War II, but they provide a glimpse of the truth about what really happened during the recent Bosnia war, and what is happening today.' Indeed, members of this circle often seem genuinely unable to distinguish between the recent war and World War II; thus the extreme conservative Julia Gorin from the US accuses 'Alijah [sic] Izetbegovic' of having been 'part of the Nazi SS Handzar division during World War II', and helpfully provides her reader with a link to Fox's article (which says nothing about Izetbegovic's supposed membership of the World War II Handzar division, and mentions the unit itself only in passing).

Gil-White accused Izetbegovic of having 'proudly recreated the Nazi SS Handzar Division', based entirely on Fox's article, even though Fox did not claim that Izetbegovic had anything to do with either the original World War II division or its alleged 1990s reincarnation. Yet Gil-White is far from the only one to make this factual leap. The amateur historian Carl Savich likewise claims 'The Bosnian Muslim Army and the Bosnian Muslim Government of Alija Izetbegovic and Ejup Ganic sought to re-establish the World War II Nazi Waffen SS Divisions formed out of Bosnian Muslims' – again basing this entirely on Fox's article, which claims no such thing. Yossef Bodansky, the pioneer of Muslim-related Balkan conspiracy theories, writes that 'in mid-1993, Sarajevo revived the Handzar Division with all its fascist culture and preoccupation with the division's role as the worthy successor to its SS predecessors. The Bosnia-Herzegovina

Handzar Division provides the praetorian guards for Izetbegovic and other senior leaders of Sarajevo, clearly reflecting their pride in and support for the revival of the old traditions.’ Bodansky provides no sources to support these claims. Another of Bodansky’s unsourced descriptions of the resurrected Handzar division was picked up and repeated by the white-supremacist website Stormfront, which repeated his description of a force that had by now grown to between 8,500 and 10,500, and was now no longer merely officered by Albanians, but composed of them almost entirely. Stormfront describes this as ‘sizable Islamist forces involved in subversive and terrorist operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.’ Bodansky’s claims were also repeated by Shaul Shay in his book ‘Islamic Terror and the Balkans’ (Transaction Publishers, 2007), p. 68 – again no sources.

There are strange bedfellows in this bizarre campaign of manufacturing a contemporary SS and demonising the Bosnian Muslims. Ted Belman of the extremist pro-Israel Israpundit website repeats Gil-White’s fabrications about Izetbegovic’s supposed reconstitution of the Handzar Division. Belman seems to equate the Bosnian Muslims with the perceived Muslim and Arab enemy: ‘The comparisons of the destruction of Yugoslavia with the destruction of Israel are chilling and instructive’ (apparently, Israel is not the Jewish state we all thought it to be, but is in fact a multinational federation similar to Yugoslavia). Belman’s fellow Israpundit contributor Felix Quigley draws upon Neil Clark’s ‘excellent historical “lesson”’ and ‘very hard work’ in compiling a ‘wonderful history’ of the ‘Bosnian Islamofascists’, that naturally includes a reference to Izetbegovic, now promoted to ‘head organizer of a recruiting drive for the infamous, all Muslim, Waffen SS 20,000-strong Handzar or Hanjar Division’ (Quigley appears ignorant of the fact that the original Handzar Division was not ‘all Muslim’, but contained Croats and Germans as well).

Needless to say, none of these principled individuals mentions the fact that the Yugoslav People’s Army, which under Milosevic’s control carried out the attack on Bosnia and the ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian Muslims, included under its command the paramilitary force known as the ‘Chetniks’ of Vojislav Seselj, named

after the Nazi-collaborationist Chetnik movement of World War II. Seselj was a political friend of Jean-Marie Le Pen. He had been personally decorated by the veteran Chetnik warlord Momcilo Djujic, who had fought alongside the Nazis in World War II. The neo-Nazi Seselj was deputy prime-minister under Milosevic in 1999, while the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovo Albanians was being carried out.

When one takes all this into consideration, Monty Python is a much better source for accurate historical information than Neil Clark and his comrades.

(For further information on Bosnian-war historical revisionism, see the excellent Balkan Witness website and the equally excellent Srebrenica Genocide Blog).

Update: Santa Claus came early for me this year, and deposited through my letter-box a copy of the latest scaremongering book about the Muslim peoples of the Balkans, 'The coming Balkan caliphate: The threat of radical Islam to Europe and the West' (Praeger Security International, 2007), by Christopher Deliso of Balkanalysis.com. Deliso writes of 'Hasan Cengic, a veteran of the World War II SS Handzar Division who reincarnated the unit while serving as Bosnia's deputy defense minister in the early 1990s.' (p. 8). As we noted above, Cengic was born in 1957 and Deliso's accusation that he served in the SS must therefore have been based on some quite spectacularly superficial research; nor does Deliso provide any evidence for his accusation that Cengic 'reincarnated the unit' in the 1990s. Elsewhere, Deliso accuses Izetbegovic of having been 'a recruiter for the Bosnian Muslim Handzar ("Dagger") Division' (p. 5), his only source being Vojin Joksimovich's error-ridden article for the ISSA, mentioned above, though Deliso also cites Robert Fox's article to 'prove' that the Handzar division had been 'resurrected in the 1990s, during the Presidency of Izetbegovic.'

Based on research of this calibre, it is perhaps not surprising that Deliso should conclude that we are faced with a 'coming Balkan caliphate'...

Thursday, 22 November 2007

MONTY PYTHON VS CARL SAVICH AND SERBIANNA: WHO ARE THE REAL COMEDIANS?

Just over a year ago, I wrote here of the mysterious phenomenon of the Muslim Nazi division, named 'Handzar Division' after the Bosnian SS division of World War II, that, according to supporters of the Great Serbian cause, was established in Bosnia by the regime of Alija Izetbegovic during the 1990s. Evidence for the existence of this division, its size, composition and origins, was taken from a single article in a Western newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, by British journalist Robert Fox, who based his information on the testimony of unnamed UN officials. Fox's article was glaringly inaccurate – he described Bosnian presidency member Ejup Ganic, for example, as 'foreign minister' – but was nevertheless assumed by the supporters of Great Serbia to be gospel truth. Indeed, they even embellished it, attributing claims to Fox that he had never made – such as that Izetbegovic himself had founded this 'Handzar Division'. I concluded that 'Monty Python is a much better source for accurate historical information' than the Great Serbia supporters in question.

It has taken nearly a year for a rebuttal of my article to be attempted, by the amateur historian Carl Savich of the Serb-nationalist website Serbianna. Based on Savich's sorry effort, I can only feel that my assertion, that Monty Python is a much better source for accurate historical information than Savich and his fellow Serb nationalists, has been entirely vindicated. But before I show why this is so, I'd first like to take note of Savich's attempt at cutting irony, directed at me, when he says:

'It appears as though the existence of the reformed Handzar Division was not much of a secret. It was only a secret to the befuddled, lost, and delusional Hoare. This is what occurs when Monty Python's Flying Circus is the source of your historical research. Hoare should spend more time on analyzing the war crimes trials at the Hague and less time on watching dated TV reruns. Moreover, for history to have any value or merit, objectivity and neutrality must be the goals. Delusional fantasy and ideological propaganda

constructs have no place in serious scholarship and history. Monty Python should not be the source for historical information on the civil wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina.'

Savich is responding to my quip about Monty Python by accusing me of actually basing my historical research on Monty Python re-runs. Pretty funny, huh?

This is, in fact, a rather unfortunate line of humour for Savich to employ. Readers will have noted the image at the start of this post, which shows a cover of the Sarajevo youth magazine *Novi Vox*, dated October 1991. The cover shows a soldier of the Handzar Division treading on the severed heads of the Bosnian Serb leaders, including Radovan Karadzic, under the headlines 'The Handzar Division is ready' and 'The Fourth Reich is coming – Welcome!' Savich reproduced this image in his response to me. He writes:

'In October, 1991, the Bosnian Muslim magazine Novi Vox in Sarajevo, in issue no. 3, well over half a year before the civil war broke out in 1992, published a front-cover illustration showing a Bosnian Muslim Nazi SS officer in the Handzar Division stepping on the decapitated and bloody heads of Serbian leaders, including Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. The caption read: "The Handzar Division is ready!" Another headline announced: "The Fourth Reich is coming–Welcome!" This revival of Bosnia's Nazi and SS genocidal past was censored, suppressed, and covered-up in the U.S. and the Western media.'

What Savich fails to tell his readers, either because he is dishonest, or – more likely – because he is simply ignorant, is that the magazine in question, *Novi Vox*, was a *satirical magazine* of the alternative youth movement in pre-war Sarajevo, similar in character to the US's *The Onion*, or to the satirical news sections of the UK's *Private Eye*. In the words of cultural anthropologist Ivo Zanic, in his magisterial *Flag on the Mountain: A Political Anthropology of War in Croatia and Bosnia*, Saqi Books, London, 2007 (pp. 332-333):

'Even in cases that were pushed too hard or that were quite tasteless, Vox's constructions contained enough elements for anyone who approached them with minimal common sense to be able without difficulty to realise that this was satire, in other words, an imagined reality that criticised the real reality. Thus its many agendas and declarations are readable, undoubtedly witty, identifiable ironic commentaries on real agendas, actions and declarations by the political figures of the time, particularly Karadzic's SDS of Bosnia-Herzegovina.'

Apparently, however, the 'minimal common sense' needed to realise that *Vox* was a satirical magazine was not possessed by Savich, who treats it as though it were a simple statement of Bosnian Muslim intent. Just imagine someone writing about British politics in the 1980s, who used *Spitting Image* as their source for what Margaret Thatcher's policies were, without realising that it was a satirical comedy. Well, that is what Savich has done in respect to Alija Izetbegovic and *Vox*.

Savich's suspicions should have been aroused by the fact that the price of the magazine, on the cover he reproduces, is given not only in dinars, the Yugoslav currency, but also in the fictional currency 'bukvi', or bukvas. In Zanic's words (pp. 335-336):

'Vox regularly printed its price not only in legal Yugoslav dinars but also in the fictitious bukvas. The joke was clear to anyone with half a brain: it referred to the proposal that the currency in Slovenia be called the lipa, linden, because this tree in Slovenia had the status of national symbol, and bukva would be the Bosnian equivalent. This irony, or self-deprecation, for the word bukva in the South Slav lands metaphorically means thickhead, and there are versions such as bukvan, blockhead, and the very common colloquial phrase 'thick as a bukva', implying someone rather slow, good-natured and harmless, a likeable fellow in fact, as well as a number of other phrases and proverbs.'

To repeat: "The joke was clear to anyone with half a brain." Further comment on Savich's scholarly competence, and on the

tactical wisdom of his attempt at irony regarding research based on comedy, would be superfluous (NB although he describes himself as a 'historian', Savich has no historical qualification higher than a Master's degree; he does not appear ever to have held an academic post, published a book or an article in an academic journal, or visited an archive).

Let us, however, return to the issue of contention: the matter of the 'Handzar Division' in 1990s Bosnia. As I noted in my article a year ago, Savich had commented on this matter. In 2002, he wrote:

'The Bosnian Muslim Army and the Bosnian Muslim Government of Alija Izetbegovic and Ejup Ganic sought to re-establish the World War II Nazi Waffen SS Divisions formed out of Bosnian Muslims, the 13th Waffen Gebirgs Division der SS "Handzar/Handschar" and the 23rd Waffen Gebirgs Division der SS "Kama", formed in 1943-45 by Heinrich Himmler. The London Daily Telegraph of December 29, 1993, in the news report by Robert Fox in Fojnica, "Albanians and Afghans Fight for the Heirs to Bosnia's SS Past", has reported that the Bosnian Muslim forces had formed a new and updated version of the World War II Nazi "Handzar" SS Division, made up of about 6,000 troops and supported by the Muslim leadership.'

This is what I wrote, in response to the Serb nationalists and their supporters, like Savich, who have cited Fox's article:

'The Bosnian SS Division 'Handzar' (or 'Handschar') was a unit that existed during World War II, and it is conceivable that there really was a handful of Muslim zealots who, during the recent war, fought on the Bosnian side and grandiloquently named themselves the 'Handzar Division' after this historic unit. It is indicative, however, that no other journalist or anyone else seems to have noticed the existence of a unit of 'up to 6,000 strong' that named itself after the SS and that was, according to Fox, officered by Albanians and trained by mujahedin veterans from Afghanistan and Pakistan.'

In attempting to rebut me, Savich draws from the documents of the International Criminal Tribunal of the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Of all his earlier claims about the recreated Handzar Division, the only one for which he can find any corroboration at all is the claim that some sort of unit called the ‘Handzar Division’ really existed in Bosnia in the 1990s (and this is not an assertion I ever denied; as I wrote, ‘it is conceivable that there really was a handful of Muslim zealots who, during the recent war, fought on the Bosnian side and grandiloquently named themselves the “Handzar Division” after this historic unit.’)

Other than that,

- 1) Although Savich previously claimed that the recreated ‘Handzar Division’ was made up of ‘about 6,000 troops’, it now transpires, according to the evidence he provides, that the ‘Handzar Division’ was a ‘small unit’; so small, in fact, that it was merged with other units as part of a policy ‘of making larger units out of smaller ones’. Indeed, although Savich’s ICTY source does not provide any figure for the ‘Handzar Division’s’ troop strength, the unit is listed alongside other small units that range from about 30 for ‘Cedo’s wolves’ to 150 for the ‘Prozor Independent Battalion’. So it seems we really are talking about a handful of zealots, rather than an actual division.
- 2) The evidence Savich cites completely fails to substantiate his earlier claim, that Izetbegovic and Ganic had had anything to do with the formation of this ‘Handzar Division’.
Savich now claims: ‘This evidence confirms conclusively that the Bosnian Muslim Government of Alija Izetbegovic and the Bosnian Muslim Army recreated and reformed the Bosnian Muslim Nazi SS Division from World War II.’
This is simply a bare-faced lie, something that will be clear to anyone who reads his article and tries to find the supposed ‘evidence’ (the Bosnian Army, it should be said, was in the habit of incorporating into its ranks independent or autonomous units formed by local strongmen, as well as those of the foreign *mujahedin* and Bosnian Croat nationalists).
- 3) The evidence Savich cites completely fails to substantiate Fox’s claim, which he endorsed, that the recreated ‘Handzar

Division' had been trained by mujahedin from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

- 4) The ICTY's judges, as cited by Savich ('Prosecutor vs Sefer Halilovic: Judgement', 16 November 2005), do not claim to know who formed, named or trained this 'Handzar Division', or how many troops it contained. Based on witness testimony, they say only that the unit was made up of Albanians and that its commander's nickname was 'Dzeki'. Based on the evidence presented to them, they conclude: 'The Trial Chamber has not been furnished with evidence regarding the composition of this unit'. The ICTY's standards of documentary evidence are, it would seem, somewhat more strict than those of Savich and his pals at Serbianna.

What we have here, is a case of a number of Serb nationalists and their fellow travellers, who have made wild claims in an attempt to discredit the former Bosnian regime of Alija Izetbegovic, in order to justify the genocidal campaign for a Great Serbia that they supported. When challenged to provide evidence for their claims, they find themselves unable to do so, so the claims in question shrink accordingly, to the point where they effectively disappear.

Update: A closer examination of one of the documents cited by Savich, the Halilovic trial transcript of 21 February 2005, #050221ED, reveals the following testimony about the troop size of the 'Handzar Division':

'5 Q. *And then which soldiers came?*

6 A. All the units that were there, Cedo's Wolves, the 2nd Independent

7 Battalion, Handzar's Division, Zuka's men, and all the others. In all,

8 there were 100 to 150 soldiers.'

It would seem that the 'Handzar Division', confidently described as numbering 'about 6,000 troops' by our friend, does indeed turn out to be a bit smaller when the available evidence is examined closely...

Wednesday, 10 December 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

NATIONALISM AND COWARDICE

We have commented here on more than one occasion on the less than fearless character of our contemporary South East European chauvinists, Serbs and Croats alike. Whether they were forgoing resistance in order to collaborate with the Nazis and Fascists in World War II, beating defenceless prisoners and raping women in camps in the 1990s, fleeing before enemy armed forces or trying to evade trial at The Hague, the national chauvinists have, for the most part, exhibited cowardice as a defining feature. Indeed, the cowardice of chauvinists is often in proportion to their greed for territorial expansion.

So far as the Great Croat chauvinists are concerned, one of their defining moments came in May 1941, when the Ustasha leader Ante Pavelic, newly installed at the head of the Nazi-puppet 'Independent State of Croatia', signed a treaty that ceded without struggle a large part of the Croatian coast to Fascist Italy. He then proceeded to try to divert the popular anger of the outraged Croatian public away from the Italians and against the apparently defenceless Serb civilian population of the Croatian puppet state – only to find that his anti-Serb genocidal campaign generated a popular resistance, among Serbs and others, that his sorry armed forces were incapable of suppressing, leading him to ever-greater acts of grovelling dependency on his German and Italian masters. Pavelic and his fellow leading Ustasha murderers fled the country in 1945, leaving the remnants of the puppet Croatian army and the civilians who had remained loyal to it to bear the brunt of Partisan retaliation.

Franjo Tudjman, the next chauvinistic despot to rule Croatia, did not approach Pavelic's degree of murderousness, but he was his equal when it was a question of grovelling to the strong while mercilessly persecuting the weak. Tudjman was terrified at the prospect of taking on Serbia and the Yugoslav People's Army, and attempted to obstruct and defuse Croatian resistance efforts at every step, while seeking to reach a deal with Slobodan Milosevic at the expense of those further down the pecking order – above all, the Bosnian Muslims. This involved offering

Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic bits of Croatian or Croat-inhabited Bosnian territory in exchange for other bits of Bosnian territory. This did not stop the Serbian aggression against Croatia, and Croatia was saved from military disaster and dismemberment only by the heroism of its ordinary defenders and by the military and political bankruptcy of the Great Serbian project. Operation Storm, and the liberation of Serbian-occupied central Croatia, came only after Tudjman had received assurances that it would incur neither a Yugoslav Army counter-offensive nor US displeasure. But just as Pavelic's surrender to the Italians went hand in hand with his slaughter of Serb civilians, so Tudjman's slavishness to Milosevic went hand in hand with his merciless campaign against Bosnia and the Muslims. Only naturally, the Bosnian Army, poorly armed though it was, proved more than a match for Tudjman's Bosnian Croat proxies, and routed them all across Central Bosnia in 1993 until they were ignominiously rescued from defeat by US diplomacy.

After that, the very Great Croat chauvinists who had bravely slaughtered Muslim and Serb women, children and old people proved not quite so brave when it was a question of standing trial at The Hague and attempting to justify what they had done, and were quite ready to obstruct Croatia's EU accession in order to save their own skins. This glorious tradition of evading imprisonment is now being continued by the Croatian politician and former warlord of the northern Croatian city of Osijek, Branimir Glavas. Glavas, who openly identifies with the World War II Ustasha movement, was sentenced by a Croatian court on 8 May to ten years' imprisonment for war-crimes against Serb civilians, after which he fled Croatia to Bosnia, whose citizenship he possesses, and is now fighting an extradition battle, while ranting bombastically against the Croatian government and judiciary.

Not all nationalists or even all fascists are cowards, and the type of 'patriotic' mentality represented by individuals such as Tudjman and Glavas requires some explaining...

The Nationalist Coward's Manifesto

- 1) Words count for more than deeds. The biggest patriot is the one who shouts most loudly about his nation. It really is as simple as that.
- 2) Ethics are for suckers. Only the naive really believe in principles such as 'rights for ethnic minorities', 'inviolability of state borders', 'resistance to the occupiers' and so forth, whereas the cunning one, unhampered by such delusions, has the edge when dealing with the naive. The nationalist coward wins by violating ethical rules and lying about it successfully.
- 3) The Raskolnikov syndrome. Since violating ethical rules gives one the edge, it is necessary for the nationalist coward to do this if he wants to achieve great things for his nation. Slaughtering civilians, destroying villages, transferring populations and the like, are an escapable part of nation-building, therefore of being a patriot.
- 4) Heroism is also for suckers. From steps 2) and 3) it follows that dying or even fighting for one's nation against a superior enemy is also the pointless, stupid act of a naive hothead; much better for the nationalist coward coolly to reach an unethical, therefore 'patriotic' agreement with the occupier to get what he wants for his nation.
- 5) Being a patriot means being proud to be an arsehole. Since only by doing bad things can the nationalist coward serve his nation, he should not be ashamed to be accused of being a 'war-criminal', 'dictator', 'fascist', 'Chetnik', 'Ustasha', etc. He should take pride in such compliments! In fact, he should act so as to provoke more of them...
- 6) To the victor, the spoils. Having served his nation by collaborating with the occupier and slaughtering civilians, it is only right that the nationalist coward should reward himself for his efforts, by expropriating the wealth of the state for himself and his family and friends, and by appropriating all power within it. A nation must reward its best sons, after all. To borrow a quip from Vuk Karadzic: the nationalist coward loves his country like a swine loves a forest full of acorns.

- 7) L'etat – c'est moi! As one who has built his nation, the nationalist coward understands that the nation is simply an extension of his own ego. Consequently, unpatriotic elements who attack him for war-crimes, corruption or abuses of the legal or democratic processes are simply attacking the nation, and should be condemned on those grounds as aliens and traitors.
- 8) 'Don't worry, no-one will ever find out'. The nationalist coward realises that other people, particularly representatives of Western powers and members of his own public, are fundamentally stupid. The best way for him to get away with doing bad things is simply to pretend he is doing the opposite. For example, he can spend World War II collaborating with the Nazis, but pretend to be leading a resistance movement. Or he can offer to sell bits of his country to the enemy, while pretending to be defending it! The cunning village huckster will always trick the clueless inhabitants of the big city.
- 9) You'll never take me alive, copper! Since patriotism requires that one violates an ethical rule or two, it is the worst possible affront to the nationalist coward when he is actually, finally, indicted for war-crimes. Why, he carried out these war-crimes because he sincerely believes in the principle that a patriot has the right and duty to do bad things. And now you're telling him that he has to answer for these things before an unpatriotic court of law? Never! There's nothing more patriotic than sacrificing one's country to save oneself.
- 10) Za dom spremni!

Monday, 18 May 2009 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

SWP BLOGGER RICHARD 'LENIN' SEYMOUR
SUPPORTED SERBIAN TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

Show me a politically active person who, during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, claimed to 'oppose all sides equally', and – nineteen times out of twenty – I'll show you a bare-faced liar and hypocrite. Almost invariably, people who claimed 'not to take sides' over the former Yugoslavia were people who tilted in

favour of the Serb-nationalist side but lacked the courage and integrity to come clean about it. The most blatant example of this in the UK was the Trotskyist group 'Socialist Workers Party' (SWP) – more recently notorious as the fellow traveller of Islamists and anti-Semites in the campaign against the Iraq war.

During the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the SWP loudly condemned every instance of Western intervention directed against the Great Serb forces – while remaining deafeningly silent about every instance of Western intervention directed against the Croats or Bosnians. It condemned Western forces when they fired upon Serb forces, but not when they fired upon Croatian or Bosnian forces. It opposed sanctions against Serbia while supporting the arms embargo against Bosnia. It denounced Germany's support for the international recognition of Croatia, while remaining absolutely silent at its own, British Tory government's diplomatic collusion with Serbian aggression. Indeed, it repeatedly defended Serb forces from the charge that they were guilty of either aggression or genocide – but then loudly accused NATO of 'aggression' when it intervened in Kosovo. The SWP lifted not a finger to oppose Serbian atrocities, but actively agitated within the labour movement and among the left against those of us who actually were campaigning against these atrocities. It only began to demonstrate in 1999 – and then it was in defence of Milosevic's Serbia against NATO. It denied Bosnia had any right to exist whatsoever, while agitating in defence of Serbia's 'sovereignty'. The SWP responded to the Serb assault on Srebrenica in the spring of 1993 by accusing Srebrenica's defenders of having massacred local Serbs, so contributing to the political atmosphere in the West that made the Srebrenica genocide possible. It then opposed the UN war-crimes tribunal's efforts to prosecute Serb war-criminals. In effect, the SWP agitated for the Bosnian people to surrender, lie down and die, in order to make way for an ethnically pure Great Serbia.

But formally, it 'didn't take sides'.

The more that time has gone by, however, the more the mask of phoney neutrality has slipped. Last Wednesday (23 July), in response to Radovan Karadzic's arrest, the SWP's most popular

blogger, Richard Seymour of 'Lenin's Tomb', declared that the proper solution to the Serb question in Croatia was 'border rectifications'. In response to a left-wing critic, Paul Fauvet, who responded to his post, Seymour wrote:

So, you just accept the claims of Croatian nationalism, then? No negotiations, no border rectifications, no arrangements for the increasingly oppressed and demonised Serb minority, just take the land and tell the others to fuck off? Some socialist.

And again:

You're stuck with your support for Croatian nationalism, then. It doesn't occur to you for a second that there might be legitimate problems for an oppressed minority following an unnegotiated secession with no dialogue or border rectifications.

In the unlikely event that it isn't clear to any reader what Seymour means when he speaks in favour of 'border rectifications', I should spell it out: he's saying that the proper solution to the Serb question in Croatia was for part of Croatia's territory, where Serbs lived, to have been taken from it and annexed to Serbia, thereby creating a 'Great Serbia'.

Am I being unfair to Seymour? Is there any other possible way of interpreting his words?

To remind readers: before the war, roughly half of all Croatian Serbs lived in the areas of Croatia that were occupied by Serb forces in 1991. These areas amounted to nearly one-third of Croatian territory, and the majority of their inhabitants were Croats and other non-Serbs. If all these occupied areas were annexed to a Great Serbian state through 'border rectifications', there would still have been roughly three-hundred thousand Serbs remaining in a rump, independent Croatia – including large numbers in the Croatian capital of Zagreb and in other large Croatian cities. So 'border rectifications' could not conceivably have provided security for these Serbs; and, of course, they would have provided

no security at all for the indigenous non-Serb majority in these lands. In other words, Seymour's endorsement of Serbian expansionism cannot be justified in terms of supporting minority rights. It amounts simply to a retrospective support for the nationalist war-aims of the imperialist aggressor (NB the official position of Milosevic's Serbian regime, during the war in Croatia, was that Croatia had the right to secede from Yugoslavia, but that the 'Serb areas' of Croatia – i.e. the parts of Croatia occupied by Serb forces – had an equal right to secede from Croatia).

This is not a question of Seymour making an uncharacteristic slip. Yesterday (27 July), Seymour posted an article endorsing the denialist claims of the pro-Milosevic ragsheet *Living Marxism* concerning Serb concentration camps in Bosnia. Putting the term 'concentration camps' in inverted commas, Seymour writes of media coverage of these camps as a 'deception'. His ire is directed not at the Serb fascists who ran these camps, but at the Western journalists who exposed them: 'Journalists had effectively become co-belligerents with the Bosnian army and their mujahideen auxiliaries, and anything that didn't fit the script contrived by PR companies such as Ruder Finn, which was employed by both Croatian and Bosnian governments, or that of Washington and its allies, was out of the picture.' Far from running concentration camps, the Serb fascists were merely running 'a system of camps intended as prisons for those deemed suspect by forces deputised by the Republika Srpska.' (For those who don't know: *Living Marxism's* denialist claims were discredited when it was successfully sued for libel by ITN over its accusations that ITN had falsified its coverage of these camps – Seymour is endorsing a story that has already been very publicly disproved).

Seymour is on record as describing Milosevic's dictatorship as 'a state with an elected government, legal opposition parties, independent trade unions, and opposition demonstrations permitted'. He responded to the International Court of Justice's recognition of the Srebrenica genocide by continuing to deny that genocide had occurred: 'the massacre of thousands of men of military age is an atrocity, but under no reasonable definition is it genocide'.

How do you describe someone who denies a Serb genocide that has been recognised by three different international courts; who supports Serbian territorial expansion; who portrays Milosevic's Serbia as a democracy; and who endorses *Living Marxism's* already discredited denial of the existence of Serb concentration-camps?

One thing's for sure: you don't describe him as someone who 'doesn't take sides'.

Monday, 28 July 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

MORE ON RICHARD 'LENIN' SEYMOUR'S SUPPORT FOR SERBIAN IMPERIALIST EXPANSION

In my last post here, I pointed to the fact that Richard 'Lenin' Seymour of the 'Lenin's Tomb' blog, the most widely read blog of Britain's Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has retrospectively endorsed Serbian territorial expansionism and embraced the arguments of *Living Marxism*, the former pro-Milosevic propaganda publication that denied the existence of Serb concentration-camps in Bosnia. In his response to me, Seymour hasn't really denied any of this. He admits to endorsing the views of Philip Knightley, who was one of *Living Marxism's* supporters in its libel trial against ITN and who endorsed its apologia for the Serb camps; to denying the existence of Serb concentration-camps; and to viewing Milosevic's regime as democratic and pluralistic. And he elaborates on his retrospective support for the principle of Serbian territorial expansionism:

After all, I am not the one who [would have] supported the logic of secessionism in the first place, and therefore I would have no problem explaining why the construction of separate states based on ethnic exclusivity would be no solution. It is Hoare who, considering Croatia's secession legitimate and worthy of full-throated support, has to answer why the Krajina Serbs were not entitled to independence from Croatia (and political union with Serbia if they wished). This is particularly the case since the Serbs living in Krajina were,

like other Serbs living throughout Croatia, genuinely victims of repression and ethnic hatred by a state whose early gestures included the rescuscitation of fascist symbolism. But if there is going to be secession, ought there not be negotiations as opposed to a unilateral military take-over of the territory? Might there not be a concession of territory by both parties, or are the borders of some states eternal and inviolable, like the Holy Mother's virginity?

This is, of course, the same argument that Slobodan Milosevic made at the time of the war in Croatia. In an interview to British Sky Broadcasting TV on 7 August 1991, Milosevic argued:

We are not opposing the Croatian people's right to self-determination. If they want to establish their own independent, national state, there is no reason for us to oppose that. However, if they want to leave Yugoslavia, they cannot take a section of the Serbian people with them. This right to self-determination belongs to the Serbian people as well... The people of Krajina have, first of all, decided to remain within, that is, a part of Yugoslavia and that is all.

(Text of recorded interview with Slobodan Milosevic, President of the Republic of Serbia, by Arnot Van Linden for British Sky Broadcasting television, Belgrade TV 1833 gmt 7 Aug 91, via BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 9 August 1991).

The central controversy of the wars in the former Yugoslavia revolved around this point: whether, given Yugoslavia's break-up, the right of national self-determination should belong to the individual republics or federal units, in their Titoist borders – as I and others argued – or whether these borders should be redrawn to give Serbia a significantly larger share of the territory – as Milosevic, Seymour and various Serb nationalists and their apologists argue (there is also a Tudjmanite Great Croatian variant on this argument, which is that the borders should have been redrawn to give both Serbia *and* Croatia a larger share of the territory, but we'll come to that later).

The Milosevic/Seymour demand for 'self-determination' for the 'Krajina' in a euphemistic way of saying that Serbia should be,

or should have been, allowed to annex part of Croatia's territory as the price for Croatia's secession. As I pointed out in my last post (a point which Seymour did not respond to, because there isn't really a counter-argument):

- 1) Roughly half of the pre-war population of the territories encompassing the 'Serb Republic of Krajina' was comprised of Croats and other non-Serbs; even the territory of 'Krajina' in the narrower sense, i.e. the crescent-shaped stretch of Serb-occupied land in central Croatia, had a substantial Croat population; the Milosevic/Seymour call for 'self-determination of Krajina' simply treats these people as if they don't exist;
- 2) Roughly half of all Croatian Serbs lived outside the territory of the 'Serb Republic of Krajina', in Zagreb, Split and other large Croatian cities and elsewhere; the overwhelming majority lived outside the territory of the 'Krajina' region narrowly defined; the Milosevic/Seymour line, again, treats these people as if they don't exist.

It should not be necessary – but apparently is – to add to this the truism that 'Krajina' was neither a nation, nor a country, nor a historic region, nor any form of legitimate entity, but was simply the name given by the Serb extremists to part of Croatia that they occupied.

So if the Milosevic/Seymour call for 'self-determination for Krajina' cannot be justified on the grounds of self-determination for the inhabitants of the Serb-occupied areas, and cannot be justified on the grounds of self-determination or even minority protection for the Croatian Serbs, what precisely is its justification?

The answer is this: 'self-determination for Krajina' is simply a euphemism for part of Croatia to be annexed to Serbia. Seymour used a slightly less dishonest euphemism in his comments on his own earlier post, when he wrote of "border rectifications". He means the annexation of part of the territory of a smaller, weaker state (Croatia) by the larger, predatory state that is attacking it (Serbia).

How else does Seymour's attempt to justify his support for Milosevic's land-grab in Croatia?

After all, I am not the one who [would have] supported the logic of secessionism in the first place, and therefore I would have no problem explaining why the construction of separate states based on ethnic exclusivity would be no solution.

Seymour is an Irishman, so I am confident that, given his retrospective opposition to the ‘logic of secessionism’, it is only a matter of time before we read a post by him explaining why Ireland should have opposed the ‘logic of secessionism’ and remained in the UK. I hope so, otherwise people might suspect that he was a shameless, lying hypocrite.

As for his straw man ‘I would have no problem explaining why the construction of separate states based on ethnic exclusivity would be no solution’ – this is rather rich coming from a member of a party, the SWP, that did everything possible to sabotage the international campaign in defence of a united, multiethnic Bosnia. And it is particularly amusing that Seymour makes this claim while simultaneously arguing for Croatia’s dismemberment into separate ‘Serb’ and ‘Croat’ areas. No, Einstein, a ‘separate state based on ethnic exclusivity’ is not a good thing, that is why genuine anti-fascists opposed the ethnic partition of both Bosnia and Croatia and supported their self-determination as multiethnic wholes – unlike the SWP, which did not.

Seymour continues:

But if there is going to be secession, ought there not be negotiations as opposed to a unilateral military take-over of the territory? Might there not be a concession of territory by both parties, or are the borders of some states eternal and inviolable, like the Holy Mother’s virginity?

‘Concession of territory by both parties’! Yes, he said that. Now he appears to be arguing that not only some parts of Croatia should be annexed to Serbia, but that some parts of Serbia should be annexed to Croatia! But since Croatia had no territorial claims on Serbia, and since there were no large Croat-inhabited areas in Serbia, it is completely unclear which territories he has in mind, and the suspicion must be that he has simply inserted the phrase

‘by both parties’ in order to retreat from his earlier position of supporting ‘territorial rectifications’ solely in Serbia’s favour and at Croatia’s expense. He can, of course, prove me wrong by simply explaining which parts of each state should have been annexed to the other. We’re all waiting, Richard...

There is, of course, another possibility: that Seymour believes Serbia should have been allowed to annex part of Croatia’s territory, while Croatia should have been compensated with part of Bosnia’s territory where Croats lived. This would make sense: given Seymour’s support for the ‘self-determination of Krajina’; he presumably would also have supported the ‘self-determination of Herceg-Bosna’ – the Croat statelet carved out of Bosnia by Tudjman.

This is, after all what Tudjman himself essentially advocated. Tudjman, in fact, spent the best part of the 1990s engaged in ‘negotiations’ of the kind Seymour favours – for territorial exchanges and the redrawing of borders between Serbs and Croats. This began in March 1991, with the Karadjordjevo talks between Milosevic and Tudjman for the partition of Bosnia. They continued with the Graz agreement in May 1992 between the Serb and Croat extremists, for the delineation of spheres of control in Bosnia. And they culminated in the Dayton Agreement in November 1995, when Tudjman did indeed negotiate the handing over of a portion of Croat-held (Bosnian) territory to Republika Srpska. Tudjman appears to have believed what Seymour argues today: that Milosevic and the Serb extremists were essentially reasonable, and would have called off the war if only the Croats would agree to ‘negotiations’ on ‘border rectifications’.

So unless I am much mistaken, on the key points – support for ‘negotiations’ to determine the borders between Serbs and Croats; support for ‘border rectifications’; and denial of the legitimacy of a unified Bosnia – Seymour is entirely in agreement with the politics of the late President Franjo Tudjman.

This is an irony, but for those of us who have watched the SWP’s moral degeneration over the past two decades, it is hardly a surprise...

Wednesday, 30 July 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

RICHARD SEYMOUR'S
'THE LIBERAL DEFENCE OF MURDER'

The blogger Richard 'Lenin' Seymour of 'Lenin's Tomb', a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), published his first book last year, entitled *The Liberal Defence of Murder* (Verso, London, 2008). Rather than review the whole of the book and make points that other reviewers are likely to make, I am going to focus on the section (pp. 190-212) dealing with my own area of special interest: the former Yugoslavia, to see how Seymour's thesis holds up. I should declare a special interest, in that I am myself quoted critically in passing in this book, and my own parents, Branka Magas and Quintin Hoare, come in for particular criticism in it. Despite this, and despite the fact that I am not exactly a fan of Seymour, his politics or his party, this will be a review in measured tones, as I would like the facts to speak for themselves.

Seymour explains the title in his opening sentence: 'This book seeks to explain a current of irrational thought that supports military occupation and murder in the name of virtue and decency.' Broadly speaking, this book is a critique of liberal and left-wing supporters of humanitarian military intervention, as in the cases of Bosnia, Kosova, Iraq and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, in the section of the book dealing with the wars in Croatia and Bosnia (pp. 190-205), Seymour is unable to provide any evidence that any of his liberal targets did, indeed, support 'murder' - unless simply being in favour of Western military intervention automatically makes one a supporter of 'murder'. Even so, there are no quotations in this section dealing with just how, or in what way, the liberals in question did indeed support military intervention. Seymour tells us, in his own words, that Ken Livingstone 'called for force to be used against the Serbs'; that Michael Foot 'pleaded for a British humanitarian intervention'; and so on. There are no examples provided of any bloodcurdling war-cries, or calls for the Serbs to be bombed back to the Stone Age, or the like. Seymour does a bit better in the section on Kosova (pp. 206-211), where he does provide a couple of quotes, one of which actually comes across as quite bloodthirsty - by Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, who is quoted here as supporting attacks on

the Serbian civilian infrastructure. But that really is just about it: Seymour has no case whatsoever that liberal interventionists supported 'murder' in Croatia or Bosnia, and only one quote by one individual that arguably supports his case with regard to Kosova. So we are left with a tautology: support for military intervention is defined as support for murder, therefore any liberal who supported military intervention is evidence of a 'liberal defence of murder'.

Why, you may ask, did it then take Seymour a whole twenty-one pages to make this point? How does he fill up those pages? Well, Seymour's main argument is not that liberals supported military intervention that might have or did kill Serb civilians. Rather, he attempts to argue that military intervention was wrong because 1) Serb atrocities, and Milosevic's regime, were not as bad as liberal interventionists made them out to be; and 2) that the Croatians and Bosnians were not worthy of being defended by Western military intervention, because their governments were just as bad as Milosevic's – possibly worse – and were guilty of the same atrocities. So far from writing a polemic on the evils of Western military intervention, or on the bloodthirsty character of its supporters, Seymour has written a polemic playing down the evils of Milosevic and Serb nationalism, playing up the evils of Franjo Tudjman and Alija Izetbegovic and Croat and Muslim nationalism, then condemning those liberals who - as he sees it - got the balance wrong. The only quotations he actually produces for his prosecutor's case against the 'liberals' in the entire section on Bosnia and Croatia are quotes expressing condemnation of Serb atrocities, or of Western complicity in them. So we have Alain Finkielkraut quoted using the term 'Guernica'; Bernard-Henri Levi quoted calling for the lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnians; Christopher Hitchens quoted as claiming that Serbia and Croatia were led by 'fascist parties'; Michael Ignatieff quoted describing what was happening as 'genocide', and so forth. But as Seymour makes clear, he does not believe that Milosevic and his Serb forces were fascist, or that genocide occurred, or that the Serb forces ran concentration camps, etc.

This, then, is the case for the prosecution: not that liberals actually supported murder, or even that they supported military intervention, but that they made Milosevic and Serb ethnic-cleansing out to be worse than they were, when really, they weren't bad enough to justify military intervention. Before we turn to Seymour's actual methodology, it is worth pausing to examine what the premise of this argument is. Seymour is saying that if you used terms like 'fascism', 'genocide', 'concentration camps', etc., to describe Milosevic and his forces and what they were doing, you are a liberal supporter of murder. The correct response, in Seymour's view, to news and images of Serb ethnic-cleansing and atrocities (which Seymour does not deny took place) is not to demand action in defence of the victims, but to ensure that the perpetrators of this ethnic cleansing and these atrocities get a fair coverage and are not condemned in too strong terms. So it really doesn't take much to be a liberal defender of murder: if you react to images of Serb persecution of Muslim civilian prisoners in camps by using the term 'concentration camp', or if you describe a Serb ethnic cleanser as a 'fascist', you're one of the bad guys. Whereas if you try to moderate liberal condemnation of the concentration camps and the ethnic cleansers, as Seymour does, you're one of the good guys.

Consequently, what Seymour has written is a defence of the Milosevic regime and Serb ethnic-cleansing from their liberal critics. Complaining about the Western media's treatment of the conflict, Seymour writes that 'while Izetbegovic was deified, Milosevic received no credit for taking risks with his support by urging the Serbs in Krajina and the Republika Srpska to accept various deals to end the conflict.' (p. 205) Thus, Seymour condemns Western journalists for failing to portray Milosevic as the peacenik that, in Seymour's eyes, he really was (as for actual evidence that the Western media 'deified' Izetbegovic – Seymour doesn't provide any).

Seymour's critique centres not on actual liberal support for military intervention, let alone murder, but on what he sees as a mistaken liberal analysis of what was going on in the former Yugoslavia, and on inappropriate terminology. He condemns

the liberals not for having the wrong principles, but for applying them incorrectly. Since there is no real clash of ideals between Seymour and his various liberal targets expressed here, his case rests on how effective his piecemeal demolition job of their case turns out to be.

Rather than bore the reader by going once more into the rights and wrongs of the former Yugoslav conflict, I am going to analyse Seymour's case entirely in its own terms, by looking in turn at his principal charges against his liberal targets.

1) 'Backing secession'.

Seymour begins with a critique of my parents, Branka Magas and Quintin Hoare. He quotes a source as saying that 'when Branka went to visit Zagreb, she flipped over to Croatian nationalism. I mean, she simply backed secession.' (p. 192) Seymour doesn't draw any conclusion from this assertion; he simply allows it to speak for itself.

Who is the source in question? None other than Peter Gowan, a former friend of my mother's and father's who parted company with them over the former Yugoslavia. Gowan isn't by anybody's standards an expert on the former Yugoslavia; he's merely a left-wing writer who broadly shares Seymour's 'anti-imperialist' political views and has similar views on the former Yugoslavia. The source is given as 'author interview with Peter Gowan'.

What Seymour is saying is that he had a chat with his mate Peter, and Peter used to know Branka, and Peter said that Branka supported Croatian nationalism and Croatian secession. We're talking 'man in the pub' scholarship here. But leaving aside the fact that Gowan has zero credibility as an objective judge of Branka's political evolution, the accusation that Branka 'backed secession' is a rather unfortunate one for Seymour to make.

On 31 March 1990, Seymour's party paper, the Socialist Worker, itself 'backed secession' when it wrote: 'The Lithuanian masses overwhelmingly rejected Russian rule given a chance to vote for the first time recently. They want independence. That is their right. Every socialist should support them.'

On 13 July 1991, the Socialist Worker ‘backed secession’ in Yugoslavia as well: ‘First, the mass of people cannot gain by forcing an ethnic group to stay in a state where it doesn’t want to. That means recognising the right of any national minority to separate from the state if it so wishes, and opposing the murderous activities of the Yugoslav army.’

In other words, Branka is condemned as a liberal defender for murder because she supported exactly the same thing for Croatia – the right to national self-determination – that Seymour’s party supported for Lithuania, and which it initially supported for the Croats as well.

2) ‘Unfair accusations of fascism’.

Seymour accuses his liberal targets that they ‘consistently demonised Slobodan Milosevic as a “fascist” or its equivalent, which was a false and unnecessary embellishment when he was merely a bureaucratic thug’ (p. 194). This complaint comes from someone who routinely describes the British far-right party, the ‘British National Party’, not merely as fascist, but as ‘Nazi’; I don’t particularly object to this, but it is clearly a ‘false and unnecessary embellishment’ of the kind that apparently makes one a liberal defender of murder. The only explanation for this double standard is that Seymour supports action against the BNP but retrospectively opposes any action against Milosevic.

But there is no need to trawl through Seymour’s blog to find evidence of his double standards: he devotes nearly a full page (pp. 196-197) to describing the fascist affinities of Croat nationalism. In the space of this one page, he uses the terms ‘fascist’, ‘Nazi’ and ‘Ustashe’ (Croatian fascists) six times in relation to Croatia. It’s true he does not actually describe the Tudjman regime as ‘fascist’ outright. But nor does he mention any equivalent fascist phenomena in relation to Serb nationalism. He does not mention the fact that Serbian paramilitaries called the ‘Chetniks’ – after the Nazi-collaborationist, anti-Semitic, Serb extreme-nationalist movement of World War II – formed part of the Serbian forces, under Belgrade’s control, that assaulted Bosnia in 1992. Or that Milosevic’s

sometime collaborator, Vojislav Seselj, was a friend and ally of France's Jean Marie Le Pen, and had received a decoration from a Chetnik warlord who had fought alongside the Nazis and Ustashe in World War II. Or that the Bosnian Serb nationalists armed and funded by Milosevic's regime openly embraced the Chetnik heritage. Seymour thus simultaneously defends Serb nationalists from the charge of fascism while accusing Croat nationalists of embracing fascism. He condemns liberals as defenders of murder when they accuse Serb nationalists of the same thing of which he accuses the Croat nationalists.

3) 'Abuse of the term "genocide"'

Seymour denies that Serb forces were guilty of genocide, even suggesting that the International Court of Justice may have been guided by political motives when it defined Srebrenica as an act of genocide (p. 204). But while condemning his liberal targets for using the term 'genocide' in relation to Milosevic's Serb forces, he has no qualms at all about tarring Tudjman with the brush of genocide: 'His [Tudjman's] position on the question of genocide had been made very clear: "Genocide is a natural phenomenon... Genocide is not only permitted, it is recommended, even commanded by the word of the Almighty."' Seymour is quoting Tudjman to show that he supports genocide (p. 196).

Where did Seymour get this quote by Tudjman from? Why, from none other than the book *To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia*, written by Michael Parenti, head of the US section of the International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic (ICDSM). Parenti's book, like Seymour's, was published by Verso. Its Serbian-language edition had a foreword written by Slobodan Milosevic himself! Needless to say, Parenti, like Seymour, hasn't read anything Tudjman has written; he doesn't even provide a reference for the quotation. I, on the other hand, have read what Tudjman wrote in the Croatian original (*Franjo Tudjman, Bespuca povijesne zbiljnosti: Rasprava o povijesti i filozofiji zlosilja*, Zagreb, 1989, p. 172):

As we were able to conclude from the preceding study, in the very (Judaic) origins of all our later, Western, civilisation, in that ancient age when the apex of historical-philosophical human thought was expressed by the word of the biblical god Yahweh, genocidal violence is a natural phenomenon, consistent with human-social and mythological-divine nature. It is not only permitted, but even recommended, moreover even found in the words of the all-powerful Yahweh, always when it is necessary for the survival or the restoration of the kingdom of the chosen people, or for the maintenance and spread of their one true religion.

Tudjman, writing as a (third-rate) historian and scholar of genocide, is claiming that the Old Testament god Yahweh endorsed genocide. There is nothing in this passage to suggest that he himself supported genocide. Seymour, however, misquotes Tudjman to suggest that he upheld genocide as an ideal. He does this on the basis of a quotation he got from a book written by an American supporter of Milosevic who has never read anything by Tudjman.

Finally, later in the book Seymour claims that the US's 'atrocities in Indochina were certainly closer to genocide than anything that happened in the former Yugoslavia' (p. 219). Since he provides no evidence or argument whatsoever in support of this tendentious claim, it would appear his expressed concern at the supposed casual misuse of the term 'genocide' by liberal interventionists is not quite sincere.

4) Dodgy source materials and 'imperialist propaganda'

Since Seymour's case against liberal interventionists really just boils down to the accusation that their analysis of the Yugoslav conflict and use of terminology were flawed, it is worth examining Seymour's own scholarly apparatus. Owen Hatherley, the SWP supporter who reviewed Seymour's book for the *New Statesman*, claimed: 'The Liberal Defence of Murder is probably more valuable as history than as polemic.' But would a genuine scholar have made a judgement about Tudjman's views on genocide on the basis of a third- or fourth-hand misquotation from a Milosevic lobbyist?

Indeed, Parenti's grubby little propaganda book is entirely characteristic of the source material that Seymour relies upon. Seymour cites the opinion of 'George Kenney, a former State Department Yugoslavia desk officer', that the Western diplomacy that preceded the Kosovo war was 'equivalent to the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which had been used to justify escalation in Vietnam' (p. 208). Seymour fails to inform his readers that Kenney was a Milosevic sympathiser, who wrote to Milosevic in prison to tell him 'I believed then and still believe that you are innocent of all the charges in the Tribunal's indictments'.

Seymour cites the views of Edward Herman and David Peterson in support of his argument (p. 203); he does not tell his readers that the two are organisers of the 'Srebrenica Research Group', a lobbying group set up to deny the Srebrenica massacre. One of Seymour's principal 'sources' for his claim that 'the SDA [Muslim nationalist party] was one of the nationalist parties seeking to use secession and military conflict to amplify its own power' is Kate Hudson's book *Breaking the South Slav Dream: The Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*. Hudson is the leader of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and a member of the Communist Party of Britain, whose newspaper *The Morning Star* backed the Serb side during the Bosnian war and still publishes Srebrenica-denying articles. Hudson's book, a propaganda tract that casts doubt on the fact of the Srebrenica massacre, is entirely typical of Seymour's source material: his endnotes are filled with references to articles by Diana Johnstone, Alexander Cockburn, John Pilger and other authors who have no genuine expertise on the former Yugoslavia but who share his political views, and whose unsubstantiated claims are treated as 'evidence' for his case.

Thus, for example, Seymour claims: 'Izetbegovic later confessed to having confected Serb death camps in order to precipitate bombing raids.' (p. 200) The 'source' for this claim is an article in the American far-left magazine *Counterpunch* by the Srebrenica-denying Paris-based writer, Diana Johnstone, in which she claims that the Srebrenica massacre was merely a case of Serb soldiers killing Muslim soldiers in battle, and

that it was anyway engineered by the Muslims. Johnstone's source for Izetbegovic's alleged 'confession' was the memoirs of the French politician Bernard Kouchner, but Seymour doesn't bother to consult the French original; he merely takes Johnstone's article as a sound source on which to base his argument, as he did with Parenti.

Even if one assumes Johnstone has cited Kouchner accurately, one wonders how Seymour can criticise liberal interventionists for poor methodology, when he takes every single accusation made by Western politicians against Izetbegovic and the Muslims at face value. Never mind that Kouchner's French government was aiding and abetting Milosevic's destruction of Bosnia, and maintaining an arms embargo against the Bosnians; we are supposed simply to believe his accusations against Izetbegovic.

Likewise, Seymour cites 'Philip Corwin, the UN's chief political officer in Sarajevo during the summer of 1995' as a witness to the fact that 'following the Dayton settlement, thousands of Serbs were vindictively "cleansed" from areas of Bosnia by state police forces.' Seymour continues approvingly: 'Corwin was relentlessly critical of the media depiction of events...' (p. 201). What Seymour doesn't tell his readers is that Corwin was one of the 'advisors and contributors to the work of the Srebrenica Research Group', Edward Herman's Srebrenica-denying outfit, and therefore had political views that might lead a genuine scholar to question the objectivity of his account.

Indeed, one of the unintended achievements of this book is that it marshals enough evidence to demolish convincingly the view that Seymour himself appears to hold: that Izetbegovic's Bosnian regime was the party favoured by 'Western imperialism' while Milosevic and the Serb ethnic-cleansers were the victims of imperialism. Seymour writes (p. 204):

Other stories barely examined [by the Western media] include what might be described as 'false flag' operations, such as the massacre of Bosnian Muslims at the Markale market in 1994, which helped precipitate the Nato bombing of Serb positions. Many UN officials believed that the shelling had

come from the Bosnian army, and Unprofor accused Bosnian government forces of 'firing to provoke the Serbs, and of using hospitals and public buildings as cover for such fire.'

So the representatives of Western imperialism in Bosnia accused the Bosnians of massacring their own people in order to blame it on the Serbs, and of 'provoking' Serb attacks on hospitals and public buildings. Seymour's endorsement of these claims means that his argument cannot by any stretch of the imagination be described as 'anti-imperialist' – on the contrary, he upholds the claims made by Western imperialist officials against the victims of Western intervention; that they were to blame for their own suffering. This is, it seems, the only way he can construct his critique of the defenders of Bosnia.

5) 'Inflated casualty figures'

Seymour devotes some space to trying to show that liberal interventionist estimates of Bosnian or Muslim casualty figures in the war have 'not stood the test of time' (p. 203). This is taken as evidence of the weakness of the liberal-interventionist case. Consequently, Seymour cites the evidence of the Sarajevo-based Research and Documentation Centre, that calculated the total number of people directly killed in the Bosnian war on all sides, both civilian and military, to be in the region of 100,000, or considerably less than the 'up to 330,000' deaths claimed, according to Seymour, by the liberal interventionists.

This being such a key element in his argument, how does Seymour himself deal with the casualty figures for Serb victims? With regard to the Srebrenica massacre, Seymour writes: 'In the run-up to that atrocity, a wave of terror, including rape, by Bosnian Muslim forces in surrounding areas had killed thousands of Serbs.' (p. 204). Yet according to the figures of the Research and Documentation Centre itself, which Seymour himself cites, the total number of Serb civilians killed in the entire wider region of Podrinje, where Srebrenica was located, during the whole of the war was 849. In other words, the figures that Seymour himself cites – and which were not available to liberal

defenders of Bosnia during the war – disprove his own claim that a Bosnian Army ‘wave of terror’ killed ‘thousands of Serbs’ near Srebrenica. In fact, the Research and Documentation Centre has specifically refuted the claim that ‘thousands’ of Serb civilians were killed in the atrocities Seymour cites; it calculates the total number of Serb civilians killed in the locality in question during the war to be 119.

Likewise, Seymour claims that Croatia was guilty of the ‘ethnic cleansing of up to 300,000 Serbs during Operation Storm’ (p. 203). This figure of ‘up to 300,000’ is apparently taken from Hudson, who also writes of a ‘massive population flight of up to 300,000 Serbs’ resulting from Operation Storm (Hudson, p. 119). But what was the real figure? According to Amnesty International, ‘In May and August 1995, the Croatian Army and police forces recaptured Western Slavonia and the Krajina region. During and after these military offensives, some 200,000 Croatian Serbs, including the entire Croatian Serb Army, fled to the neighbouring Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina under Bosnian Serb control.’ According to the ICTY’s indictment of the Croatian general Ante Gotovina: ‘The “Oluja” offensive resulted in the displacement of an estimated 150,000 – 200,000 Krajina Serbs, who fled or were forced to flee, during, and in the aftermath, of the said offensive.’ The top figure of this range – 200,000 – includes the Krajina Serb army, which numbered about 40,000. The number of displaced Serb civilians was therefore closer to 150,000.

If exaggerating casualty figures is a crime that makes one a ‘liberal defender of murder’, then what does it make Seymour? In conclusion, it is really very difficult to work out what Seymour intends to achieve with this poorly researched, poorly sourced, repeatedly self-contradictory and entirely unsuccessful exercise in nit-picking, which amounts, as we have seen, simply to a series of spectacular own goals. But even if we were to concede Seymour’s main points (which we don’t, of course), and to accept that the Milosevic regime was not fascist, did not commit genocide and was not qualitatively worse than the Tudjman or Izetbegovic regimes, would he have a

case? Are people who reacted to the horrors of Omarska, Srebrenica and the siege of Sarajevo by calling for Western military intervention to halt them really defenders of murder?

This is perhaps what is most shocking about Seymour's whole, sorry ideological exercise: the perverse obsession with trying to prove that the people who wanted to stop the racist mass-murder and close the concentration camps were the bad guys.

Update: Seymour has written a response to me. He writes:

'Hoare is scandalised that I impute "political motives" to the International Court of Justice: the problem is that I don't. He is referring to page 204, which explicitly references the ICTY, a wholly different (and highly politicised) body.'

This is what Seymour writes, on p. 204:

'Designed to ethnically cleanse the territory and capture it decisively for the Republika Srpska, the operation [against Srebrenica] is now considered by the US-sponsored ICTY and the International Court of Justice as the only instance of "genocide" that can be shown to have occurred. Serbia, however, was cleared of involvement in the massacre. Some scholarly opinion has cast doubt on the verdict of genocide, and it could be argued that the purpose of the judicial process was less to establish the facts of the case than to determine a politically convenient verdict.'

Carry on digging, comrade...

Update no. 2: In his response to me, Seymour is now attempting to justify his claim that a Bosnian Army 'wave of terror' in the area around Srebrenica had killed 'thousands' of Serbs by insisting he was referring to Serb military casualties as well as civilians:

'I did say "Serbs" and not "Serb civilians", and the total number of Serbs killed in that area, according to Hoare's

source, is 5573. He might have been more attentive to what he was reading.’

Even if we accept the extremely dubious proposition that Serb military casualties should be counted as victims of a Muslim ‘wave of terror’, the figures still do not support Seymour’s claim.

Firstly, he has cited the wrong figure: 5,573 refers to the deaths of Serbs from Podrinje, including those killed in other parts of Bosnia. The number of Serbs killed in Podrinje, including those from other parts of Bosnia, is 4,848. But this refers to all Serbs killed in the whole of the Podrinje region during the whole of the war, not just those killed near Srebrenica.

Secondly, and more importantly, the Research and Documentation Centre, whose data Seymour relies upon to make his case, has calculated the total number of Serb civilian and military deaths in the ‘wave of terror’ that Seymour refers to. It puts Serb civilian deaths at 119 and Serb military deaths at 448. This puts the maximum possible number of Serb deaths in Seymour’s ‘wave of terror’ at 567, rather than in the ‘thousands’ that he claims.

Wednesday, 18 February 2009 Posted by *Marko Attila Hoare* | Anti-Semitism, Balkans, Bosnia, Croatia, Former Yugoslavia, Genocide, Kosovo, Red-Brown Alliance, Serbia, SWP, The Left | 1 Comment

3

Balkan Rules

IS ISLAMOPHOBIA EQUIVALENT TO RACISM OR ANTI-SEMITISM? THE VIEW FROM THE BALKANS

There is some resistance among liberal intellectuals to the term ‘Islamophobia’, because it is assumed that Islam is a religion, therefore an ideology, and it is questioned if one can be prejudiced against an ideology. Yet such a distinction is not satisfactory from the standpoint of a scholar of the Balkans; or indeed, from the historical standpoint generally. To treat chauvinism against a religious community as being fundamentally different from chauvinism against an ethnic or racial group is to superimpose a modern understanding of religion onto the past. We may believe in the ideals of the separation of church and state; and of religion as a private, personal matter of conscience; but it is anachronistic to impose this liberal ideal onto past human history.

We are all aware of the distinction between religious and racial anti-Semitism, but also of the connections between the two – of the fact that even the Nazis used religious background to determine who was Jewish. In the Balkans, at least, the model for chauvinism that anti-Semitism provides – in which prejudice against a religious community evolves into an ethnic or racial prejudice – is the rule rather than the exception. Religious and ethnic prejudice are not distinct categories, and it makes no historical sense to see them as such.

The Ottoman Empire ruled over much of the Balkans from the late Middle Ages until the nineteenth century, and it was the Ottoman system that laid the basis for modern ethnicity and nationality in the Balkans. The Ottoman empire was organised on the basis of different legal statuses for Muslims and non-Muslims, in which Muslims were the dominant and privileged group but Christians and Jews nevertheless enjoyed a degree of communal autonomy. This laid the basis for the different religious communities to evolve into separate nationalities.

When the Orthodox nationalities of the Balkans rose up against the Ottoman overlords during the nineteenth century with the goal of establishing their independence from the empire, the process involved the expulsion or extermination of much of the non-Christian population, which was identified as an alien, non-national element. This process of ethnic or religious cleansing was directed primarily against the Muslim population that was concentrated in the towns. But it targeted also the Jews, who were also concentrated in the towns and who were, in the eyes of the predominantly peasant and Christian rebels, equally alien and part of the Ottoman presence. This was something that occurred in the violence that accompanied the uprisings themselves, with rebels spontaneously massacring non-Christians. But it also took place more quietly in the decades that followed the establishment of autonomy or independence, as the new governments encouraged ethnic homogenisation.

Thus, for example, in Serbia during the nineteenth century, the number of mosques in the main cities rapidly declined. The Serbian capital of Belgrade was largely Muslim before the nineteenth century. But following the establishment of an autonomous Serbian principality in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Muslim population was mostly expelled and most of the mosques were destroyed or dismantled. Similarly, the Jewish communities suffered restrictions they had not suffered in the Ottoman period, and were expelled or relocated from the towns outside Belgrade. This, of course, is a generalisation: the extent to which Muslims or Jews were massacred, expelled or persecuted varied according to country and period. This was not a matter of

Nazi-style total extermination. Persecution and expulsion alternated and overlapped with efforts at cooption, assimilation and toleration. But the model of nationhood remained very much one that was based on Orthodox Christianity, in which non-Orthodox were, at best, viewed as less national than the Orthodox.

This model of religiously determined nationhood was not adopted only by Orthodox Christians, but also by the Muslim Turks. The establishment of a Turkish nation-state in the 1910s and 1920s involved the extermination or expulsion of literally millions of Christians. Formally, they were Greeks or Armenians. But this included Turkish-speaking Christians who were excluded from the Turkish nation solely because of their religion. Turkish nationhood, therefore, was based on the Muslim religion: it was inclusive of Kurds and other non-Turkish-speaking Muslims who inhabited Anatolia. But it was exclusive of Turkish-speaking Christians.

After establishing their nation-state, the Turks had a rather better record of treating the Jews than did the Balkan Christians. This was a legacy of the fact that the Muslims, as the elite group in the Ottoman Empire, had not viewed the Jews as outsiders in the same way that the Christians had done. But there was still some anti-Jewish activity on the part of the Turkish state which, with Nazi encouragement, reached its peak during World War II. Furthermore, in the great anti-Greek pogrom in Istanbul in 1955, Jews were also targeted.

Another example serves to illustrate the connection between religion and ethnicity in the Balkans. Both Serbia and Croatia entered the modern age with relatively small Jewish communities that could readily assimilate into the dominant Serbian and Croatian nations respectively. By contrast, in Bosnia there was no dominant nationality. So members of the Sephardic Jewish community in Bosnia developed a distinct sense of nationality of their own. They saw themselves as distinct from the Ashkenazim, who were culturally different. And as they were not oppressed by a dominant nationality that treated them as outsiders, they were less receptive to Zionism than were the Jews of most Central European countries. So the Bosnian Sephardim followed the general

Bosnian pattern, whereby the different religious communities evolved into different nationalities.

There were some exceptions to the general rule of religiously based nationhood in the Balkans. The Albanians are the only major example of a Balkan nation for which religion is not the determining factor. The most likely explanation is that Albanian nationalism originated with the Catholic population among the Albanian-speakers. And the Catholics were not legally and economically subordinate to Muslim landlords in the way that Orthodox peasants throughout the Balkans were subordinate to Muslim landlords. So there was not the same degree of class oppression tied into the religious divide between Catholics and Muslims among the Albanian-speakers, as there was between Orthodox and Muslims among the Slavic-, Greek- and Turkish-speaking peoples. Interestingly, the Albanians' record with regard to the Jews during the Holocaust was about the best in all of Nazi-occupied Europe; Albanians sheltered Jews more solidly than almost any other occupied people.

Another interesting case, for the purposes of comparison, is that of the Croats. Croatia was not part of the Ottoman Empire, so its social structure was not determined by the Ottoman system. Croatia had a relatively small Jewish community, so its anti-Semitism was fairly typical by the standards of Christian Europe. However, Croat nationalists were almost unique in Europe in the extent to which they were ready to embrace Muslims. Ante Starcevic, the father of integral Croat-nationalism, viewed the Bosnian Muslims as the purest of all Croats. According to the tradition he established, the Bosnian Muslims were the 'flower of the Croat nation'. This was possible for Croat nationalists because, unlike the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans, Croatia had not been ruled and oppressed by the Ottomans. The Islamophile character of Croat nationalism was, of course, a way for it to lay claim to Bosnia, where the Catholics were only a small minority.

The different ways in which Serb and Croat nationalist ideology perceived the Muslims became apparent during World War II. Serb extreme nationalists – the Chetniks – carried out systematic massacres of Muslims and Catholics, and also murdered

Jews or handed them over to the Nazis. Croat extreme nationalists – the Ustashas – carried out systematic massacres of the Orthodox Serbs and Jews. But not of Muslims, as the policy of the Ustashas was to treat Bosnian Muslims as Islamic Croats. In contrast to the nationalism of the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans, it was only in the 1990s that the Croat-nationalist mainstream became overtly anti-Islamic; this was due to the policy of the Croatian despot Franjo Tudjman, who aimed to join with the Serbs in partitioning Bosnia. What made the difference for Croat nationalists by the 1990s, compared to the 1940s, was that by then the Muslims had been formally recognised within the Yugoslav constitutional system as a nation in their own right, distinct from the Serbs and Croats. When Muslims could no longer be viewed as Islamic Croats and potentially assimilated, they became open to persecution by expansionist Croat nationalism.

By this period – the 1990s – both Serb and Croat nationalists were more likely to identify with Israel on an anti-Muslim basis than they were to indulge in anti-Semitism. Although the more extreme elements among Serb and Croat nationalists in the 1990s did sometimes express anti-Semitic views, they were generally astute enough to know the propaganda value of not being seen to be anti-Semitic, and they did try to appeal to Jewish opinion – though not very successfully. Albania and Croatia, therefore, are the exceptions that prove the rule: firstly, that anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish prejudice in the Balkans are essentially similar, in that both are prejudices directed against ethnic groups that have their origins in religious differences; and secondly, that Muslims are targeted and persecuted as an alien ethnic group – like the Jews – not simply as a religious community.

To go back to the case of the Serb Chetniks in World War II: they were an extreme-nationalist movement that systematically persecuted and killed the non-Orthodox population in Bosnia: Muslims, Croats and Jews. The Chetniks were engaged in a vicious war against the Yugoslav Partisans, who were a multinational resistance movement led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The Chetniks identified the Communists with the Jews, but also with the Muslims and Croats. One Chetnik leader even

accused the Communists of destroying Orthodox Churches, and building mosques, synagogues and Catholic churches. In World War II, however, it was still possible for the Chetniks to waver between massacring Muslims, and attempting to co-opt them, on the grounds that Bosnian Muslims were 'really' Serbs. So as late as World War II, both Serb- and Croat-nationalists could still make some pretence at treating the Muslims as a religious group within their respective nations. One can compare this to the confusion among modern anti-Semites, until quite late in the day, as to whether the Jews were a religious or a racial group.

By the 1990s, however, despite lip service to the traditional nationalist view, that Bosnian Muslims were really just Islamic Serbs or Croats, in practice, this kind of assimilationism was no longer possible or relevant. Muslims were treated in practice as a hated, alien ethnic minority. There was no policy of forced conversion. Serb nationalists, and to a lesser extent Croat nationalists, ethnically cleansed Bosnia of Muslims who spoke their language, much as the Serbian regime attempted to cleanse Kosovo of the Albanians who spoke an entirely different language. Rather like anti-Semites, extreme Serb and Croat nationalists in Bosnia in the 1990s simultaneously viewed Muslims as a racially alien element, while portraying them in their propaganda as part of an international, global threat to Christian Europe.

Of course, there are differences between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism: anti-Semites traditionally portray the global Jewish conspiracy in terms of sneaky, intelligent puppet-masters working behind the scenes, whereas Balkan Islamophobes portray the global Islamic conspiracy in terms of mindless but fully visible – indeed visually striking – fanaticism. Hatred of Islam and Muslims has, for all its intensity as felt by Balkan Christian nationalists, never quite achieved the intensity of being an all-consuming end in itself, as it has for some anti-Semites. And of course, Balkan Islamophobes do not formally treat global Islam as a race, in the way that anti-Semites treat global Jewry as a race. But we are ultimately talking about ideological window-dressing used to justify the same type of persecution and violence.

It is nonsensical to argue that the systematic destruction of mosques and the Islamic heritage in Bosnia by Serbian forces, combined with a propaganda that stressed the role of mujahedin and of foreign Islamic states, was not an expression of Islamophobia, on the grounds that Islamophobia does not exist. But equally, it is nonsensical to argue that this campaign was genuinely motivated by hostility to Islam as an ideology: there was no pretence that Muslims were a danger because they might indoctrinate the Serbian population with subversive views. Serb nationalists in the 1980s and 90s made much of the growing threat of the Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia, and of Albanian Muslims in Serbia. But the danger they presented was not that these groups would spread Islam to the Serbs, and Islamify Serbia. Rather, the danger was that these groups would increasingly outbreed the Serbs, and turn them into increasingly small minorities in their own countries.

Thus, we are not talking about a threat equivalent to the Communist threat, as it was viewed in McCarthy's US, or to the counter-revolutionary threat, as it was viewed in Stalin's USSR. Muslim children in Serb-occupied Bosnia were not simply deported along with their parents, as they might have been if they were viewed as the children of subversives. Still less were they subjected to ideological reprogramming. Rather, they were themselves singled out for rape, torture and murder. Muslim women were raped with the stated goal of making them give birth to Serb babies. Biljana Plasvic, the Bosnian Serb vice-president, theorised about the Muslims being a genetically defective offshoot of the Serb nation.

In sum, Islamophobia, in the Bosnian war, was an expression of hatred directed against an ethnic group, or groups. One of the paradoxes of this is that for all the Islamophobic hatred directed against the Balkan Muslim peoples by Balkan Christian nationalists, and indeed by the anti-Muslim bigots in the West who supported them, the Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo Albanians are among the most secularised Muslim peoples in the world. Just as Jewish atheists will always be the Christ-killers or ritual slaughterers of Christian children in the eyes of certain anti

-Semites, so Bosnian Muslim and Albanian atheists will always be jihadis in the eyes of Islamophobes.

This paper was presented at the conference *'Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: Comparisons – contrasts – connections'*, that took place at University College London on 22-24 June.

Tuesday, 1 July 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

BASHIR INDICTED AND KARADZIC ARRESTED – WHAT ARE THE LESSONS?

The record of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has not been a glorious one. Most of the top-ranking leaders of Serbia, Montenegro and the Yugoslav People's Army who planned and executed the war of aggression and genocide in the former Yugoslavia were never indicted. The only top-ranking leader to be indicted, Slobodan Milosevic, died before he could be convicted and sentenced. For all their horrendous suffering, the Bosnian people must be content with the prosecution of a few secondary figures. The Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic is one such secondary figure, and his belated arrest may serve as a small scrap of comfort for the victims of his murderous, criminal actions.

The real success over Karadzic is, however, not so much that he has finally been arrested, but that he was indicted in the first place. His indictment back in 1995 ensured that he would be driven out of political life and underground, where he was no longer in a position to dominate Bosnian Serb politics and obstruct peace and reconstruction in Bosnia. The same was true for Milosevic: he was indicted by the ICTY in 1999 and his political fate was sealed; every rational person in Serbia, even among the ranks of the nationalists and regime apparatchiks, knew that an indicted war-criminal could not long remain a European head-of-state. The Milosevic indictment was, along with the Serbian defeat by NATO in Kosova, a major blow to Milosevic's credibility among his own supporters that helped pave the way for his overthrow.

All this is worth remembering when we consider the indictment issued by International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo of Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir for genocide and other crimes. The indictment has inspired a chorus of wailing and hand-wringing from various Cassandras and members of the Neville Chamberlain brigade. That the African Union and several of its members have condemned the indictment is undoubtedly a good reason why it should be celebrated; several other heads of state of African Union countries should undoubtedly also be prosecuted as criminals. Countries like South Africa, China and Russia that oppose the indictment of Bashir have also stood out as defenders of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. What a coincidence! No doubt these sensitive humanitarians are deeply concerned that the indictment may endanger peacekeepers and jeopardise peace negotiations in Sudan... Yeah, right...

Those that align themselves with the genocidal tyrant, Russia and China against the ICC are either extremely naive, or they are likely to view things like international justice and human rights simply as figleaves for 'Western imperialism'. Veteran Sudan correspondent Julie Flint has aligned herself with the appeasers on this question; she really ought to know better. As for *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Steele, his polemic in opposition to the indictment of Bashir is an absolute disgrace; he actually uses phrases like 'The conflict in Darfur is too complex and the attempts to resolve it are too delicate for so one-sided and blunt an approach', and even 'Atrocities have been committed on all sides'. Steele followed this up with a eulogy to the Russian regime of Dmitry Medvedev, even complaining that Medvedev has been 'pilloried in Britain and the US for allegedly backing down on sanctions against Mugabe.' Pilloried for defending Mugabe – how outrageous! Even as I write, no doubt many a bereaved mother in Zimbabwe and Chechnya is shedding tears of blood for the indignity suffered by the Russian President. According to Steele, 'Russia has not always behaved well over the past decade and a half, but it is more provokee than provoker.' If Steele can reduce Moscow's slaughter of the Chechens, defence of Mugabe and attempts to sabotage Kosova's independence and Balkan stability to it having

simply ‘not always behaved well over the past decade and a half’, it is unsurprising he is less than enthusiastic about the prospect of Bashir being made to answer for his crimes. And it is a good reason why any sane person should support the opposite of what he advocates.

The Bashir indictment is to be celebrated, because whether or not it results in the tyrant ever facing justice, it represents a nail in his political coffin; a push sending him further along the road already trodden by Milosevic and Karadzic. His international isolation will increase; what is left of his legitimacy will decrease; it will be more difficult for other states to collaborate with him; and if he survives his eventual overthrow, the successor regime will have to collaborate with the ICC in bringing him to trial, which will be a catalyst to its own democratic reform – just as enforced collaboration with the ICTY catalysed democratic reform in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. Of course, this presupposes that Russia, China and the African Union will not succeed in sabotaging the indictment; I’m not betting my life’s savings that they won’t.

Returning to Karadzic; the principal reason why we should celebrate his arrest is that it indicates the new Serbian government’s commitment to improving relations with the West. This is what Aleksandar Vucic of the neo-Nazi Serbian Radical Party believes; he points out that the Karadzic arrest is occurring simultaneously with the return of Serbia’s ambassadors to states that have recognised Kosova. Five months after the Western recognition of Kosova’s independence, Serbia is making better progress on the arrest of war-criminals than it has done since the time of Zoran Djindjic. The Karadzic arrest bodes well for the future peace and stability of the Balkans.

There is also the tantalising possibility that now he is behind bars, Karadzic may spill the beans on Serbia’s involvement in the Bosnian genocide, and on Western collusion with it. I’m not holding my breath, as earlier Hague indictees have not revealed anything shocking in this regard. But we can always hope...

Tuesday, 22 July 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

FLORENCE HARTMANN INDICTED;
HAGUE TRIBUNAL TRIES TO SILENCE A WHISTLEBLOWER

Florence Hartmann, former spokeswoman for ICTY chief prosecutor Carla del Ponte, was last week indicted by the ICTY, on the charge of contempt of court, for allegedly disclosing classified information relating to the proceedings against Slobodan Milosevic. This information was allegedly published in her book, *Peace and Punishment (Paix et chatiment)* and in an article published on the website of the Bosnian Institute. Hartmann has rejected the charges, arguing that she has not revealed confidential information, but only information she had gathered through her work as a journalist, and that her indictment represents a blow by the Office of the Prosecutor against free speech and transparency. She has pledged to fight the charges.

Hartmann is the first Western citizen without roots in the former Yugoslavia, and the first former ICTY official to be indicted by the Tribunal. As she points out, her book was published a year ago, while the Bosnian Institute article was published in January, making the delay in the issuing of her indictment peculiar. The charges refer to a case that is no longer actual, and cannot be motivated by any desire to ensure the proper functioning of the proceedings. The indictment appears, indeed, to be an attempt to muzzle a whistleblower who has revealed information about the internal politics and incompetence within the Tribunal, and a warning to other former Tribunal officials who might be tempted to reveal more such information.

The ICTY is a highly flawed institution with a very patchy record; badly organised, filled with many incompetent apparatchiks alongside some committed professionals, riven with internal factionalism and corrupted by political pressures both external and self-induced, it has failed to deliver justice to the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. I am myself a former official of the Tribunal, and my biggest criticism of it has been its failure to indict most of the principal Serbian and Montenegrin war-criminals, a failure that, on the basis of my eyewitness experience, I attribute in large part to the poor strategy of

del Ponte as Chief Prosecutor. But a perhaps even more shameful failing on the Tribunal's part was the one about which Florence writes: the decision of the judges in the Milosevic case to allow Serbia, when submitting to the Tribunal the minutes of the 'Supreme Defence Council' of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to censor parts of it in the version that was made public. As Florence argues, it was thanks to the Tribunal's collusion with Serbia in the suppression of this crucial piece of evidence, that Bosnia was not able to draw upon the latter in its case against Serbia for genocide at the International Court of Justice, leading to Serbia's unjustified acquittal. Far from punishing the perpetrators of genocide in the former Yugoslavia, the Tribunal has helped to shield them (NB to date, only one individual, a lowly deputy corps commander of the Bosnian Serb army, has been successfully prosecuted for a genocide-related offence by the ICTY, while not a single official from Serbia has yet been convicted of any war-crime in Bosnia whatsoever).

The Tribunal may or may not have a legal case against Hartmann. What is certain, however, is that Hartmann was acting in the public interest in revealing the information she did. The people of the former Yugoslavia have a right to know why they have not received much in the way of justice from the ICTY, while the citizens of the world have a right to know why this UN court, funded by their taxes, has produced such poor results. Public interest would best be served if more former Tribunal officials showed as much principle and courage as Florence, and came forward with more insider information so that we can better understand this whole, sorry story. This would help to ensure that other international courts could avoid the ICTY's mistakes. But we are all aware that there is a risk: I myself, after being interviewed about the ICTY by the Croatian journalist Domagoj Margetic last year, received a threatening letter from the Tribunal, warning me that I had, when taking up the post back in 2001, signed a declaration promising to respect the Tribunal's confidentiality (Florence, too, apparently received such a letter when she first began publicly to speak about the ICTY). Although I did not take this threat seriously at the time, it appears my complacency has been misguided.

Florence is a brave, principled and committed individual who has done more than anyone to reveal the extent to which the international community and the international courts have betrayed the cause of justice for the former Yugoslavia. Although I disagree with some of what she says in her book, it is nevertheless a splendid, damning critique of this betrayal, and her accusations of Western complicity in Radovan Karadzic's evasion of arrest for thirteen years have been essentially vindicated; I would recommend anyone interested in the subject to read it. Florence is fighting the battle for truth on behalf of all the victims of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, and all present and future historians. We are 100% on her side.

Monday, 1 September 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

FLORENCE HARTMANN'S
'PEACE AND PUNISHMENT'

Florence Hartmann, former spokeswoman for Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is the first senior official of the ICTY to have written a book discussing its inner workings (*Paix et chatiment: Les guerres secretees de la politique et de la justice internationales*, Flammarion, 2007). She has used her eyewitness's insight into the inner workings of the ICTY to support her blistering critique of the failure of the Western alliance to support the cause of justice for the former Yugoslavia. Her book paints a portrait of Western powers, above all the US, Britain and France, stifling the ICTY and preventing the arrest of war-criminals through a combination of obstruction, manipulation, mutual rivalry and sheer inertia.

One of the best parts of the book concerns what Hartmann terms the 'fictitious pursuit' of the two most prominent Bosnian Serb war-criminals, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, involving repeated failures to arrest them. Hartmann gives various reasons why the Western powers might have behaved in this manner, among them the alleged agreement in 1995 between Milosevic, Mladic and French President Jacques Chirac, that in

return for the release of two French pilots shot down by the Serbs over Bosnia, Mladic would never be prosecuted by the ICTY; the similar alleged agreement between Karadzic, Mladic and the US's Richard Holbrooke in 1996, for Karadzic to withdraw from political life in return for a guarantee that he would never be prosecuted; and the readiness in 2002 of Bosnia's High Representative, Britain's Paddy Ashdown, to sabotage the attempts of Bosnian intelligence chief Munir Alibabic to track down Karadzic, out of rivalry with the French intelligence services with which Alibabic was working.

Hartmann has done an admirable job in compiling a comprehensive account of all these rumours, and in reminding us of just how much may have been going on behind the scenes. The problem is that they remain only rumours, ones that often originated from Serb officials themselves. The merciless portrait of the failure of international justice is one that we should all recognise; Hartmann has brought a welcome dose of hard-headed cynicism to discussions of the topic, marking a refreshing change from the rose-tinted view of too many liberal commentators. But it is in her attempts at interpreting this failure that Hartmann's book becomes more problematic. That the US under Clinton was unwilling to risk the lives of its troops in attempts to arrest war-criminals; that the US under Bush was unsympathetic to international courts in principle and unwilling to allow the war-criminals issue to become a distraction from the War on Terror; and that the US was in general unwilling to allow sensitive classified information of its own to be used in prosecutions of war-criminals, thus putting its own 'national security' before international justice – all this seems uncontroversial. But Hartmann does not stop at such observations; she portrays a comprehensive policy of the 'Anglo-Saxons' to sabotage international justice, in order that the Western powers' own prior collusion with Serb war-criminals not be brought to light. And while such a thesis does not in principle sound unlikely, Hartmann has a) failed to provide any real evidence to support it; b) attempted to explain too much through it; and c) failed to resolve the paradoxes that it necessarily gives rise to.

It is unclear how Western powers that have been applying very real if inconsistent pressure on Serbia to hand over war-criminals to the ICTY, and that acquiesced in Milosevic's deportation to and trial in the Hague, can have been pursuing such a single-minded policy of sabotaging international justice motivated by an overarching concern to keep their own complicity hidden. A more convincing and nuanced interpretation would be that the Western powers were pursuing a contradictory policy toward Serbia and the ICTY, with different individuals and institutions in Britain, France and the US acting at variance with one another – the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing. But such an interpretation could only with difficulty be reconciled with Hartmann's thesis, which is really something close to a conspiracy theory: that the 'Anglo-Saxon' powers of Britain and the US are all-powerful puppet-masters in control of events and pursuing an entirely consistent and uniform policy.

The concept of 'Anglo-Saxons' is one that Hartmann uses liberally, and it suggests a peculiarly French perspective. Hartmann is ready to point out French complicity in the failure of international justice, but she nevertheless allows a degree of nuance in her interpretation of French policy that she is unwilling to recognise for the 'Anglo-Saxons'. Treating the US and Britain as if they were a uniform bloc with regard to the former Yugoslavia is, in fact, problematic: for most of the Bosnian war it was the British and French who generally stood together in opposition to American calls for a tougher policy vis-a-vis the Bosnian Serb rebels; it was France, not Britain, that was the first to break ranks and move closer to the US position; and more recently the British and French have stood together in supporting the International Criminal Court, which the US has refused to recognise. So the concept of a uniform 'Anglo-Saxon' policy with regard to the ICTY is already questionable. But Hartmann goes further, and accuses 'Anglo-Saxon' employees of the ICTY in general – i.e. Americans, British, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans – of being agents of this same 'Anglo-Saxon' policy. And this is where Hartmann's thesis does become simply a conspiracy theory.

I myself worked as a Research Officer at the ICTY's Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) for seven months, and many of the quirks and flaws of the ICTY's organisation that Hartmann describes are ones that I recognise. The predominance of officials from the white Anglophone countries, particularly in the more senior ranks, was very marked, and was something I interpreted at the time simply as an expression of an unfortunate preference of officials to work with others speaking the same native language and sharing a similar cultural background. The division of OTP investigators into different teams investigating the crimes of different groups of former Yugoslavs, with several different teams devoted to Bosnian Serb war-criminals but only one to Serbia's crimes in Bosnia - contributing to there being numerous indictments of Bosnian Serbs but very few of members of the Belgrade leadership or Yugoslav army for war-crimes in Bosnia - was also apparent. Hartmann attributes to the OTP's Australian deputy prosecutor, Graham Blewitt, an unwillingness to ascribe blame to Belgrade for war crimes in Bosnia; indeed, a reluctance to work on the prosecution of Milosevic at all, on the assumption that it was a waste of time as he would never be deported to the Hague.

I do not know whether this accusation against Blewitt is correct or not; Hartmann may have garnered enough inside information to be able to support it. But it is unclear how she can then jump to the conclusion that the OTP under Blewitt and Chief Prosecutor Richard Goldstone, one of del Ponte's predecessors and a South African, 'rejected any attempt to overstep the obstacles put up by the Great Powers that at Dayton had *de facto* distributed impunity to their principal suspect. The Westerners did not wish for the Tribunal to interest itself too closely with the orchestrator of the policy of ethnic cleansing that ravaged the former Yugoslavia' (p. 89) - it was, after all, Goldstone who originally indicted Karadzic and Mladic, who Hartmann then argues were precisely the ones whom the Western powers did not want to face justice. Or the conclusion that she comes to regarding the resistance of the Blewitt faction in the OTP to del Ponte's attempts to indict Milosevic for genocide and for war-crimes in Srebrenica and Sarajevo: 'Srebrenica, the genocide charge and,

secondarily, Sarajevo were not only the cause of perpetual friction within the Office of the Prosecutor, but also between the ICTY and the Great Powers. Hence the question of the impact of the strategy of the Anglo-Saxon governments and their enmeshing of the Prosecution, too insidious to be quantifiable but that could not have been unrelated to the absence of a will to indict Milosevic and to the reticence that arose over every key episode of the case.' (p. 91).

Hartmann's accusations become wilder: 'All the officers occupying the key posts within the Serb forces in Bosnia, engaged in the capture of Srebrenica and the massacres that followed, all without exception had been released from service by the general staff of the army of Belgrade and continued to have their salaries paid by Belgrade. For nearly ten years, the MAT [Military Analysis Team] obscured this information, thus preventing the Prosecution from inquiring about the true nature of the control exercised by the central power in Belgrade over the cadres of the Bosnian Serb army during the Srebrenica episode.' ... 'To dismiss facts that they wished to obscure, members of the MAT would proclaim that a witness or unwelcome parts of their testimony were not credible... The Anglo-Saxon military analysts (there were no French), deliberately and systematically concealed directly Milosevic's responsibility for crimes in Bosnia, particularly at Srebrenica. On the orders of their governments, they long determined the interpretation of documents in the manner that they wished, and ensured that the Tribunal, established to conceal their impotence, should not by any chance reveal the cowardice of the Great Powers during the time of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.' (pp. 103-106).

And wilder: on the reluctance of Geoffrey Nice, chief prosecutor in the Milosevic trial, to indict Milosevic for genocide and for the Srebrenica massacre, Hartmann writes that 'Rather than convincing the judges, beyond all reasonable doubt, of Milosevic's responsibility for genocide, he [Nice], attempted to convince del Ponte to abandon the prosecution... Instead of helping the Tribunal in its search for the truth, he entered into the game of the Great Powers.' To which is added, in a footnote, a pointed

claim, based solely on the testimony of Kosovar politician Azem Vllasi, that Nice had worked for British intelligence during the 1960s (pp. 140-141).

Thus, Hartmann portrays those lawyers and researchers who disagreed with del Ponte over strategy, or who interpreted evidence differently, or who failed to produce the right evidence, as being agents of the Great Powers, in particular the 'Anglo-Saxon' powers. It is one thing to be critical of the performance or strategy of individuals or teams within the OTP; but to accuse them of deliberately sabotaging the Prosecution's work on the orders of the Great Powers, without providing any evidence, is something else entirely: it strangely resembles the propaganda of the Milosevic regime and the Serb nationalists, according to which all opposition to the Great Serbian cause was orchestrated by the imperialists, and all Serb critics of the regime were Western stooges. Not to mention the Serb nationalists' oft-repeated claim, that the ICTY itself is simply a tool of Western imperialism.

I am entirely ready to believe that the British and American intelligence services had their agents in the OTP, and I have no doubt that the OTP contained many incompetent officials who obstructed its work. But that is a far cry from saying that the 'Anglo-Saxon' powers had so many agents in the Tribunal that they were effectively able to control it. My own experience of working at the OTP does not confirm such a claim. I worked for the Leadership Research Team, of which Hartmann writes: 'This pool of experts on the Balkans was confided to a South African who continued to reject links between the local command structures and Belgrade, to the great displeasure of his team.' (p. 90). This may or may not have been true of the late 1990s, but when I arrived at the Leadership Research Team in early 2001, it was under an American, Pat Treanor, who had been with the ICTY from the beginning and who immediately assigned me to work on analysing the command structures through which Belgrade controlled Serb forces in Bosnia.

The team investigating the leadership of Serbia/Yugoslavia's war-crimes in Bosnia, 'Team 5', with which I worked, was headed by an Australian, Bernie O'Donnell; the first draft indictment

of Milosevic for war-crimes in Bosnia, on which I, Bernie and other members of Team 5 worked, was a collective indictment of senior members of the 'joint criminal enterprise', including not only Milosevic but also Veljko Kadijevic, Blagoje Adzic, Borislav Jovic, Branko Kostic, Momir Bulatovic and others. As I have said many times before, it was on del Ponte's intervention that this draft was rejected, and the indictment limited to Milosevic alone, as a result of which most of these individuals were never indicted. So on the basis of my personal experience, it was the 'Anglo-Saxons' who wanted to pursue the Serbian/Yugoslav leadership, and del Ponte who restricted the indictment.

More generally, in the seven months in which I worked at the OTP I got to know many other investigators, 'Anglo-Saxons' and others, some of them quite well, and some of whom I had known from before any of us were working for the ICTY. There was plenty of rumour and gossip going around, but nothing that would suggest a large-scale infiltration of the OTP by British and American secret agents. Finally, del Ponte's predecessor as Chief Prosecutor, the Quebecoise Louise Arbour, herself apparently clashed with the Great Powers and with her colleagues in the OTP for the same reasons that del Ponte did, according to Hartmann. Leaving one to wonder how the Anglo-Saxon puppet-masters could have been so careless as to allow two French-speaking trouble-makers in a row to become chief prosecutor.

Hartmann portrays del Ponte as the heroine of the story, fighting for justice against the ill-intentioned Western powers and their agents in her own team. Her book, therefore, is interesting for what it reveals about what preoccupied del Ponte: above all, the arrest and prosecution of Karadzic and Mladic, and the indictment of Milosevic for genocide, for the Srebrenica massacre and for the siege of Sarajevo. While I entirely sympathise with del Ponte's determination to indict Milosevic for genocide, I am less convinced of the importance of indicting him for Srebrenica and for Sarajevo. The importance of Srebrenica may appear justified in hindsight, as it was the only case for which genocide was proven to have taken place by the ICTY – though I am not convinced that del Ponte could have predicted

this. But Sarajevo? The reason for del Ponte's determination to indict Milosevic for Srebrenica and Sarajevo was, according to Hartmann, that they were 'the two most symbolic episodes of the war in Bosnia.' (p. 88). Which tends to confirm my suspicion that del Ponte's policies were guided above all by public perceptions of what was important, rather than by what really was. Hence the obsession with the household names, Mladic and Karadzic, and complete lack of interest in suspects like Kadijevic, Jovic and Adzic, forgotten in the West, who were actually much more responsible for what took place in Bosnia: Mladic was a nobody handpicked by the Belgrade leadership for the role he was to play.

There is, indeed, something of a contradiction between the preoccupation of del Ponte and Hartmann with Karadzic and Mladic, and Hartmann's simultaneous insistence that the Bosnian Serbs were acting always under Belgrade's control. For if, indeed, Karadzic and Mladic were acting at all times under Belgrade's control or guidance, then it is unclear why the Western powers should have been ready to allow Milosevic's deportation to the Hague, but not Karadzic's or Mladic's – did the minions really possess information about Western complicity that was so much more embarrassing than anything possessed by their boss? Nor is it easy to reconcile the supposed determination of the 'Anglo-Saxons' to acquit Serbia of war-crimes in Bosnia with their supposed equal determination to shield Karadzic and Mladic, rather than Milosevic, from prosecution. One explanation might be that it was precisely Karadzic and Mladic who could have revealed the extent of Belgrade's direction of the Bosnian Serb war-crimes. But do Karadzic and Mladic really know so much more than Biljana Plavsic, Momcilo Krajisnik, Jovica Stanisic, Momcilo Perisic and all the other indictees who have been successfully turned over to the ICTY? And even if they do, can the Western powers really have known this and engineered events to ensure that it was only Karadzic and Mladic who escaped justice? Such an interpretation stretches plausibility to breaking point.

Peace and Punishment, nevertheless, remains essential reading for several reasons. It reminds us that, however critical one may be of del Ponte's performance as Chief Prosecutor, she was

very far from being the only senior individual responsible for the ICTY's failures. It gives an insight into the sort of debates and conflicts over strategy that preoccupied war-crimes investigators at the OTP. And it highlights the fact that, far from being an agent of Western imperialism, the Chief Prosecutor was acting in a frequently hostile international arena, in which she had to struggle for international cooperation, and in which the ICTY was frequently squeezed rather than supported by the Great Powers. Although, as I have indicated, I am highly critical of several aspects of this book, I would nevertheless recommend it to anyone interested in the subject of why international justice has failed the peoples of the former Yugoslavia.

Thursday, 10 January 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

THE ICTY'S U-TURN OVER GENOCIDE IN BOSNIA

The Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has acquitted Radovan Karadzic, wartime president of the Bosnian Serb nationalist rebels' 'Republika Srpska', of one count of genocide, relating to crimes committed in municipalities across Bosnia in 1992. According to its press release:

The Chamber's oral ruling was delivered pursuant to Rule 98 bis of the Tribunal's Rules of Procedure and Evidence which provides that at the close of the Prosecutor's case, the Trial Chamber shall, by oral decision, and after hearing the oral submissions of the parties, enter a judgement of acquittal on any count if there is no evidence capable of supporting a conviction.

...

The Chamber found that whilst the evidence it had heard indicates that the circumstances in which the Bosnian Muslims and/or Bosnian Croats in the Municipalities were forcibly transferred or displaced from their homes were attended by conditions of great hardship and suffering, and that

some of those displaced may have suffered serious bodily or mental harm during this process, this evidence does not rise to the level which could sustain a conclusion that the serious bodily or mental harm suffered by those forcibly transferred in the Municipalities was attended by such circumstances as to lead to the death of the whole or part of the displaced population for the purposes of the actus reus for genocide.

This represents a 180-degree U-turn from the Trial Chamber's decision eight years ago over Slobodan Milosevic. On 16 June 2004, in 'Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic: Decision on Motion for Judgement of Acquittal', the Trial Chamber refused to acquit Milosevic on the same grounds, and ruled:

246. On the basis of the inference that may be drawn from this evidence, a Trial Chamber could be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that there existed a joint criminal enterprise, which included members of the Bosnian Serb leadership, whose aim and intention was to destroy a part of the Bosnian Muslim population, and that genocide was in fact committed in Brcko, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Srebrenica, Bijeljina, Kljuc and Bosanski Novi. The genocidal intent of the Bosnian Serb leadership can be inferred from all the evidence, including the evidence set out in paragraphs 238-245. The scale and pattern of the attacks, their intensity, the substantial number of Muslims killed in the seven municipalities, the detention of Muslims, their brutal treatment in detention centres and elsewhere, and the targeting of persons essential to the survival of the Muslims as a group are all factors that point to genocide.

247. Having examined the evidence, the Trial Chamber finds no evidence of genocide in Kotor Varos.

...

323. With respect to the Amici Curiae submissions concerning genocide, the Trial Chamber, except for its holding in paragraph 324, DISMISSES the Motion and holds that there is sufficient evidence that

(1) *there existed a joint criminal enterprise, which included members of the Bosnian Serb leadership, the aim and intention of which was to destroy a part of the Bosnian Muslims as a group, and that its participants committed genocide in Brcko, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Srebrenica, Bijeljina, Kljuc and Bosanski Novi;*

(2) *the Accused [Slobodan Milosevic] was a participant in that joint criminal enterprise, Judge Kwon dissenting ;*

(3) *the Accused was a participant in a joint criminal enterprise, which included members of the Bosnian Serb leadership, to commit other crimes than genocide and it was reasonably foreseeable to him that, as a consequence of the commission of those crimes, genocide of a part of the Bosnian Muslims as a group would be committed by other participants in the joint criminal enterprise, and it was committed;*

(4) *the Accused aided and abetted or was complicit in the commission of the crime of genocide in that he had knowledge of the joint criminal enterprise, and that he gave its participants substantial assistance, being aware that its aim and intention was the destruction of a part of the Bosnian Muslims as group;*

(5) *the Accused was a superior to certain persons whom he knew or had reason to know were about to commit or had committed genocide of a part of the Bosnian Muslims as a group, and he failed to take the necessary measures to prevent the commission of genocide, or punish the perpetrators thereof.*

324. *The Trial Chamber finds no evidence that genocide was committed in Kotor Varos.*

The contradiction between the Trial Chamber's rulings over Milosevic in 2004 and Karadzic in 2012 indicates that it is not operating on the basis of consistent legal principles, and suggests a change of policy. A full analysis of the reasons behind this shift will have to await the Tribunal's publication of the text of its decision.

I have been arguing since 2005 that the ICTY has been retreating in the face of international and Serbian resistance to its pursuit of justice. The list of failures, retreats, betrayals and unethical compromises has only grown over the years: the failure even to indict most of the principal members of the Joint Criminal Enterprise from Serbia and Montenegro – Veljko Kadijevic, Blagoje Adzic, Momir Bulatovic, Borisav Jovic, Branko Kostic and others; the failure to indict anyone at all for the destruction of the Croatian town of Vukovar; the indictment of only six officials in total from Serbia and Montenegro for war-crimes in Bosnia, and the conviction to date of only one of them; the sentencing of Republika Srpska vice-president Biljana Plavsic to only eleven years in prison, without making her testify, and her release after serving only seven years, despite her withdrawal of her acknowledgement of guilt; the censoring of the minutes of the Supreme Defence Council, preventing their use by Bosnia in its case against Serbia at the International Court of Justice; the prosecution of the ICTY's own former chief prosecutor's spokeswoman, Florence Hartmann, for having the temerity to reveal its dubious underhand dealings.

The ICTY's U-turn over genocide in Bosnia is therefore par for the course. The people of the former Yugoslavia have not received justice from this tribunal.

LET'S TRADE RATKO MLADIC FOR REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

Bosnia-Hercegovina, the weakest spot in the European order in the Balkans, may be closer to renewed violent conflict than at any time since the war ended there in 1995. Milorad Dodik, prime minister of Bosnia's Serb entity, the 'Republika Srpska' (RS), openly expresses his opposition to Bosnia's continued existence, while working methodically to undermine it from within, paving the way for the Serb entity's eventual secession. His radical stance appears to be catalysed by his desire to avoid investigation for fraud, corruption and misuse of finances by Bosnia's central bodies. After Bosnia's State Investigation and Protection Agency

sent a report to the state prosecutor's office detailing allegations against Dodik, the latter responded that 'Even the little faith I had in the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina is now lost due to this farce with the criminal charges against me' and 'They have made this country pointless.' Bosnia's Muslims, or Bosniaks, are meanwhile preparing to resist the secession of the Serb entity through force of arms. Serbia's President Boris Tadic, torn between pro-European and nationalist impulses, has aligned himself with Dodik, claiming he is the victim of a 'daily witch-hunt'. The Bosnian central state has virtually ceased to function. Already last autumn, the former High Representative of Bosnia, Lord (Paddy) Ashdown, and the architect of the Dayton Peace Accords, Richard Holbrooke, wrote in an article in *The Guardian* that Bosnia 'is in real danger of collapse'. Yet the situation has only become worse since that article was penned, and shows every sign of deteriorating further.

It is, therefore, clear to anyone who cares to look that the constitutional order established in Bosnia by Dayton, based as it is upon two semi-independent entities (the RS and the Muslim-Croat Bosnian Federation) has ceased to function and has become a danger to regional peace and stability. The question is not whether this order needs to be replaced, but what it should be replaced with. The question ultimately boils down to whether Bosnia should be recentralised and reintegrated, so that the central institutions can function properly again, or whether Bosnia should be allowed effectively to disappear altogether.

Some argue that the RS should be allowed to secede and become an independent state, as Kosova has been allowed to secede from Serbia and Montenegro was allowed to secede from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Yet this is a false parallel that demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the constitutional nature of Bosnia on the part of those that draw it. Contemporary Bosnia is not a federation of entities that came together formally on the basis of their own individual sovereign wills, as was the old Yugoslav federation. After World War II, Montenegro, Serbia and the other Yugoslav republics came together voluntarily to form a federal union of sovereign members, while Kosova joined the People's Republic of Serbia formally on the basis of a

decision of its own assembly. By contrast, the RS was created as part of the overall peace settlement at Dayton that also created the two-entity Bosnia in place of the old Bosnian republic, and that was based on certain mutually agreed terms and conditions. The trade-off was that, on the one hand, the RS would be recognised as one of Bosnia's two entities in extremely generous borders encompassing 49% of Bosnia's territory, despite the fact that Serbs had comprised only slightly over half of the pre-war population of this territory, and only 31% of the pre-war population of Bosnia as a whole. And on the other hand, the RS would recognise that it formed an integral part of a unified Bosnian state.

Secession of the RS from Bosnia would constitute a violation of the terms of the Dayton Accords, therefore nullifying any obligation on the part of the other Bosnian parties and the international community to recognise its existence. Such an act of illegal secession would inevitably result in a Bosniak military response; the Western alliance would then effectively be faced with the unenviable choice between colluding in the illegal secession or colluding in its military crushing by the Bosniaks, with all the bloodshed that would involve. A successful dismembering of Bosnia would further encourage Serb efforts at dismembering Kosova, resurrecting Serbian expansionism and encouraging similar impulses on the parts of other Balkan peoples, such as the secession of the Albanian minority in Macedonia, with potentially catastrophic consequences for the region.

Far better, then, to ensure that the RS does not secede. Those complaining that the Serbs are supposedly being discriminated against by the international community, so far as national self-determination is concerned, should politely be reminded that the Bosnian Serbs are not being accorded any fewer rights in this respect than the Bosnian Croats, or than the Albanians in Macedonia – indeed, they have been accorded a higher degree of autonomy than either. Furthermore, the right to national self-determination also belongs to the non-Serb inhabitants of the territory of the RS who were expelled during the war; like Bosnia as a whole, the RS belongs to all its peoples, not just the Serbs or any other single ethnic group.

Indeed, the recognition of the RS in 1995 was made contingent upon its acceptance of additional terms, including that it permit the return of Muslim and Croat refugees to its territory and cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). These terms have not been fulfilled: the RS, whose territory was nearly half Muslim and Croat in 1992, is today still almost entirely ethnically purely Serb, while its record of collaboration with the ICTY is the worst of any state or entity in the region. Ratko Mladic, the architect of the genocidal Srebrenica massacre and one of the two most high-profile Bosnian Serb war-crimes indictees, has still not been delivered to The Hague, while the other, former RS president Radovan Karadzic, was arrested in Belgrade only last year, having previously enjoyed years of fugitive existence in the RS and Serbia, undisturbed by their authorities. Not only has the RS no right to secede, but by violating the terms of the Dayton Accord, it has forfeited the right to exist in the form mandated by Dayton. In the name of both justice and regional stability, we have every reason to scale back the autonomy of the RS and reintegrate it with the rest of the country, so that the Bosnian central institutions are able to function. Bosnia is heading toward either partition or reintegration; since it cannot be partitioned without catastrophe, it must be reintegrated. The RS may continue to exist at the administrative and ceremonial level, as a district of Bosnia with its own flag and other symbols, but real sovereignty over the whole of Bosnia must reside in Sarajevo if the state is to function.

The reintegration of Bosnia can serve to kill two birds with one stone; it can solve the Bosnian problem, and solve the Serbian problem as well. Leaving aside the question of Kosova, the problem with Serbia is that it is not being allowed to join the EU given its failure to arrest Mladic. Yet what the EU views as punishment, the anti-European nationalists in Serbia view as reward: as Sonja Biserko, head of Serbia's Helsinki Committee, has argued, punishing Serbia over Mladic by keeping it out of the EU is counterproductive, as it further weakens the already weak pro-European element in Serbian politics. Biserko therefore favours Serbia's unconditional entry into the EU. Yet the Bosniaks would rightly see an end to European pressure on Serbia over

Mladic as grossly unfair; they would be entirely justified in responding to such a European betrayal of the terms of the Dayton Accords with more radical measures.

Allowing Serbia to join the EU without arresting Mladic would be a reasonable *quid pro quo* for the reintegration of the RS into Bosnia, solving both the Serbian and Bosnian problems, bolstering the pro-European element in Serbia while compensating the Bosniaks and Bosnian citizens as a whole for the failure to arrest Mladic. The warrant for Mladic's arrest can remain outstanding, should he ever resurface.

This would leave the unresolved dispute over Kosova as the principal remaining source of instability in the former Yugoslavia. It is unrealistic to expect Serbia to recognise Kosovo as a condition for EU membership. But the EU could impose more reasonable conditions: firstly, an end to Serbia's destabilisation of and embargo against Kosova, and to its promotion of parallel structures among the Serb minority there; secondly, a formal undertaking not to veto Kosova's eventual membership of the EU; and thirdly, an undertaking to respect the autonomy, unity and indivisibility of Kosova, something that Belgrade already formally adheres to. This would leave only an unresolved dispute between Belgrade and the majority of EU states over whether the self-governing, unified Kosova heading toward EU membership is or is not an independent state (and entities do not have to be independent to join or leave the EU – witness Greenland, which seceded from the European Economic Community in 1985 despite the fact that it was an autonomous part of Denmark, which remained in the EEC).

European leaders may balk at attempting any such 'radical' solution. Yet if they do, they may find themselves faced with a much worse crisis in the near future, one that will really require drastic measures to rectify.

This article was published today on the website of the Henry Jackson Society.

Saturday, 28 February 2009 Posted by *Marko Attila Hoare* | Balkans, Bosnia, Croatia, Former Yugoslavia, Genocide, Kosovo, Serbia | [Leave a comment](#)

THE TRIAL OF RATKO MLADIC WILL NOT MEAN
THAT JUSTICE HAS BEEN SERVED

The start of Ratko Mladic's trial today means that the most important Bosnian Serb war-criminal, alongside Radovan Karadzic, is now facing justice. This trial will be crucially important for two reasons.

Firstly, its proceedings may shed some light on the role of Serbia and its military in the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995. At the time of the massacre, Serbia was in a federal union with Montenegro, and the joint state went by the name of the 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' (Savezna Republika Jugoslavija – SRJ). Its army, the 'Army of Yugoslavia', provided logistical support for the Bosnian Serb army – the 'Army of the Serb Republic' – and its Croatian Serb counterpart, though these were formally independent of it. The minutes of the SRJ's Supreme Defence Council (which comprised the presidents of 'Yugoslavia', Serbia and Montenegro) were recently used by the prosecution of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in its case against former Yugoslav army Chief of Staff Momcilo Perisic. They reveal that Perisic regularly appealed to the Supreme Defence Council to provide such logistical support to the Bosnian Serb military, and that these appeals continued up until the eve of the Srebrenica massacre. Hopefully, the trial of Mladic, alongside that of Perisic, will provide more information on the role of the Army of Yugoslavia during the Srebrenica massacre. Indeed, it is likely that Mladic's ability to provide such information was one of the reasons that Serbia's military shielded him from arrest for so long. This is, however, an optimistic hope, as Mladic is more likely to continue denying responsibility for the massacre and to shield his former protectors than he is to spill the beans.

The second, and more important reason why Mladic's trial is important, is that it provides the best chance yet to prove that genocide occurred not only at Srebrenica in 1995, but in other places and at other times in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well. The judicial record on this question so far is ambiguous. Germany's courts have convicted Bosnian Serb perpetrators for offences relating to

genocide carried out in parts of Bosnia outside of Srebrenica. One of these, the paramilitary leader Nikola Jorgic, was convicted of genocide in the north Bosnian region of Doboj in 1992, but appealed his conviction all the way to the European Court of Human Rights. The latter upheld Jorgic's conviction for genocide, ruling that the German courts' definition of genocide was consistent with the international legal definition. The German and ECHR rulings on Jorgic corroborate the view that genocide occurred across Bosnia from 1992, not merely at Srebrenica in 1995. On the other hand, the International Court of Justice, in the case for genocide brought by Bosnia against Serbia, acquitted Serbia of all genocide-related charges apart from failure to prevent and punish genocide. The ICJ specifically stated that genocide in Bosnia occurred only at Srebrenica in 1992, not in other places or at other times. Mladic, however, stands accused by the ICTY prosecution of systematic genocide across both western and eastern Bosnia from May 1992. If Mladic is found guilty on all charges, the judicial record for a genocide in Bosnia that occurred across the country from 1992 to 1995 will be greatly strengthened.

Be this as it may, the significance of this trial, and of Mladic personally, should not be overstated. News reports have suggested that Mladic was, along with Serbia's wartime president Slobodan Milosevic and the wartime Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic, one of the three principal perpetrators of Serb war-crimes in Bosnia. In fact, the singling out of these three individuals, to the exclusion of all others, betrays a false understanding of the nature of the Great Serbian killing campaign and of how it was organised. In reality, the Serb military aggression against Bosnia and programme of mass killing of its non-Serb inhabitants was planned and organised by the regime in Belgrade; not merely by Milosevic the despot, but by a much wider circle of top political, military and police officials. This war followed on seamlessly from the prior war waged by Serbia against Croatia in 1991-1992.

Mladic, on the other hand, was merely a run-of-the-mill officer in the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) until well after the war in Croatia had begun. He served as chief of the Department for

Instruction of the JNA's 3rd Military District based in Skopje in Macedonia until January 1991, then as assistant to the commander of the Pristina Corps in Kosovo until July 1991, when he was transferred – still as a mere colonel – to Knin, which was the self-proclaimed capital of the Serb rebels in Croatia. He was appointed chief of staff of the 9th (Knin) Corps at the end of July, and played a central role in ethnic cleansing operations against Croatia. In October, after Serbia together with Montenegro had carried out a *coup d'état* to establish exclusive control of the federal organs of rump Yugoslavia, including of the JNA, Mladic was promoted to major-general. From late November or early December 1991, as they were preparing to wind down the war in Croatia and to shift it to Bosnia, the Milosevic regime and the leadership of the JNA set about organising a Bosnian Serb military within the framework of the JNA, something that involved concentrating all Bosnian Serb soldiers and officers in the JNA on Bosnian territory. On 30 December, the rump Yugoslav presidency (i.e. the representatives of Serbia and Montenegro) established a new military district – the '2nd Military District' – based in Sarajevo, that had jurisdiction over Mladic's Knin Corps. At the same time, Mladic was promoted to commander of the Knin Corps.

Thus, when the JNA launched a full-scale war against Bosnia in March and April 1992, Mladic was not even based in Bosnia, but was still in the relatively junior position of commander of the Knin Corps, based in Serb-occupied Croatia. He nevertheless participated in the start of the aggression against Bosnia; his forces captured the town of Kupres in south-west Bosnia from its predominantly Bosnian Croat defenders on 8 April 1992 and helped to organise the future Bosnian Serb army in that region of the country, after which he returned to the Knin region for further operations against the Croatian Army.

On 27 April 1992, Milosevic's regime proclaimed the new 'Yugoslavia' – i.e., the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SRJ), consisting only of Serbia and Montenegro. The Bosnian Serb rebel entity, subsequently known as the 'Republika Srpska', had already proclaimed independence a month before. By establishing

the SRJ and the Bosnian Serb republic as formally separate states, the Milosevic regime aimed to pretend to the world that it was not involved in the war in Bosnia, and that this war was really just a 'civil war'. This necessitated a formally independent Bosnian Serb army, separate from the Yugoslav army, and Mladic was handpicked by Belgrade to be its commander. On 30 April, Milosevic and other top officials of Serbia, Montenegro and the JNA met with the Bosnian Serb leaders under Radovan Karadzic to arrange the formation of a Bosnian Serb army, and it was agreed that Mladic – who had been promoted to lieutenant general only a few days before – would serve as its commander. In early May, JNA Chief of Staff and acting Yugoslav defence minister Blagoje Adzic summoned Mladic to Belgrade to inform him that he was to be promoted to both commander and chief of staff of the JNA's 2nd Military District, based in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. At about the same time, the acting president of the Yugoslav presidency, Branko Kostic, ordered the previous JNA incumbent of the post to surrender his duties to Mladic, whose appointment as commander of the 2nd Military District was reported by Belgrade TV on 9 May.

Mladic subsequently recalled that 'When I took up duty in the 2nd Military District I immediately assigned myself the task of assembling men and forming a command and General Staff, partly from the remnants of the 2nd Military District and partly from the men who had come with me from Knin and from other areas, who were born in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We immediately began the formation of a General Staff of the [Bosnian] Serb Army.' On 12 May, the self-declared Bosnian Serb parliament voted to establish a Bosnian Serb army incorporating all JNA units on Bosnian territory, and to appoint Mladic as its commander. Yet the law was not promulgated by the presidency of the self-declared Bosnian Serb republic until 19 May. Until that time, Mladic was still formally subordinate, along with all Serb forces on Bosnian territory, to the Yugoslav military command and Yugoslav presidency in Belgrade. Only on 19 May did the the JNA formally split into two separate armies: the 'Army of Yugoslavia', made up of troops from Serbia and Montenegro, which formally withdrew from Bosnia on the same date; and the 'Army

of the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina', subsequently simply the 'Army of the Serb Republic', headed by Mladic and now formally independent.

In other words, although Mladic played a prominent and significant role in the Serb military assault on Bosnia that began full-scale in the spring of 1992, he was far from being its chief instigator or organiser. The latter was the political and military leadership of Serbia, Montenegro and the Yugoslav People's Army, which handpicked and groomed Mladic for the role. Attributing excessive importance to Mladic as organiser of the war in Bosnia downplays the party that was actually responsible: the regime of Slobodan Milosevic.

War crimes investigators at the ICTY were aware of how the war and mass killing in Bosnia were organised. According to the amended indictment of Milosevic for war crimes in Bosnia:

'Slobodan MILOSEVIC participated in the joint criminal enterprise as set out below. The purpose of this joint criminal enterprise was the forcible and permanent removal of the majority of non-Serbs, principally Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, from large areas of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter referred to as "Bosnia and Herzegovina"), through the commission of crimes which are in violation of Articles 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Statute of the Tribunal. The joint criminal enterprise was in existence by 1 August 1991 and continued until at least 31 December 1995. The individuals participating in this joint criminal enterprise included Slobodan MILOSEVIC, Radovan KARADZIC, Momcilo KRAJISNIK, Biljana PLAVSIC, General Ratko MLADIC, Borisav JOVIC, Branko KOSTIC, Veljko KADIJEVIC, Blagoje ADZIC, Milan MARTIC, Jovica STANISIC, Franko SIMATOVIC, also known as "Frenki," Radovan STOJICIC, also known as "Badza," Vojislav SESELJ, Zeljko RAZNATOVIC, also known as "Arkan," and other known and unknown participants.'

However, at the time of writing, *not a single official* of Serbia, Montenegro or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – i.e. of the

regime that organised the war – nor any officer of the JNA (excluding officers of the Bosnian Serb army who had previously served in the JNA) has been convicted by the ICTY of war crimes in Bosnia. The weight of ICTY punishment has, so far, fallen exclusively on the Bosnian Serbs, while the regime of Milosevic in Belgrade and the leadership of the JNA have been mostly let off the hook. Only six such officials were ever indicted: Milosevic, Stanisic, Simatovic, Perisic, Arkan and Seselj. Arkan was assassinated before he could be arrested, while Milosevic died while his trial was in progress. This leaves a maximum of four representatives of the regime who could, if the prosecution is wholly successful, receive punishment for organising the worst case of aggression and mass killing in Europe since World War II. None of these belonged to the top rank of officials responsible for organising the war in Bosnia, with the exception of Stanisic, who was head of Serbia's State Security Service.

Of the other representatives of the 'joint criminal enterprise' from Serbia, Montenegro and the JNA high command who were listed in the Milosevic indictment, Stojicic was assassinated in Belgrade before the indictment was issued. Adzic and Kadijevic, the two top figures in the JNA during the war in Croatia and (in Adzic's case) during the first stage of the war in Bosnia, were never indicted. Neither were Jovic and Kostic, the Yugoslav presidency members for Serbia and Montenegro respectively, and therefore (along with their counterparts for Vojvodina and Kosovo) the individuals in ultimate formal command of all Serb forces in Croatia and Bosnia up until 19 May 1992. Other top officials of Serbia, Montenegro and the JNA also escaped indictment over Bosnia or Croatia – such as Montenegro's wartime president Momir Bulatovic, and acting Yugoslav army chief of staff Zivota Panic (who died in 2003).

Some relatively minor JNA figures were indicted for war-crimes in Croatia, in relation to Vukovar and Dubrovnik, but over Croatia, as over Bosnia, the weight of the ICTY's punishment has fallen on the Croatian Serb agents of Belgrade – such as Milan Martic and Milan Babic (and potentially also the still unarrested Goran Hadzic) – while the officials of the former Milosevic regime have escaped extremely lightly.

This extraordinary failure of international justice over Bosnia – the failure of the ICTY to indict more than a handful of the officials of the regime and army responsible for the planning and launching the war, and so far to convict a single one of them – reflects both the inability of its prosecutors to understand the war properly, as well as their poor strategy in issuing indictments. As I have indicated elsewhere, a preliminary draft of a war-crimes indictment for the leadership of the SRJ (Serbia and Montenegro) drawn up in 2001 by investigators – including the present author – aimed to indict Milosevic and other members of his regime together, including Jovic, Kostic and Adzic. But by a decision of Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, the policy was then dropped in favour of an indictment of Milosevic alone. Apart from allowing his chief collaborators to escape justice, this had the unfortunate effect – as Geoffrey Nice, who led the prosecution of Milosevic, himself noted – that when Milosevic died in 2006, his trial came to an end, and with it, the trial of his regime. This contrasts with the sensible indictment strategy pursued over Serbian war-crimes in Kosovo by del Ponte's predecessor, Louise Arbour, who indicted five top members of the regime together, including Milosevic.

In her published memoirs, del Ponte's failure to understand the planning and organising of the war in Bosnia is apparent; it is a failure that found expression in her misguided indictment strategy. She describes Milosevic and Croatia's Franjo Tudjman as the two figures primarily responsible for the break up of Yugoslavia – as if their respective roles in the process were equal, and as if none of the other leading members of Milosevic's Belgrade regime was of similar importance. But this is false.

The break up of Yugoslavia and the wars in Croatia and Bosnia all formed part of a single process, planned by the regime in Belgrade under Milosevic's leadership from at least the spring of 1990, with the goal of creating a Great Serbia (masquerading as a 'new Yugoslavia'). So far as Bosnia was concerned, this 'joint criminal enterprise' aimed to destroy the country and kill or expel most of the Muslim or Bosniak population. Most of Bosnia, as well as large parts of Croatia, were to be annexed by Serbia,

and rump Croatia was to receive some Bosnian territory as well, with the Muslims or Bosniaks, at best, being confined to an Indian reservation in between. Tudjman was an eager collaborator in this programme of genocide and aggression, whose other leading members were, in particular, the aforementioned Jovic, Kostic, Kadujevic, Adzic, Stanisic, Panic and Bulatovic. None of these has yet been punished, and most of them certainly never will be.

As for Mladic, he was merely a middle-ranking agent in the planning and launching of this enterprise – more than a pawn, but not more than a knight or a bishop. So while his arrest and trial should be celebrated, and while we have much to expect from it, let us not pretend that justice is being served.

WHY HAS RATKO MLADIC EVADED CAPTURE?

Florence Hartmann, former spokeswoman for Carla del Ponte, chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal (ICTY) for the former Yugoslavia, has responded to my last post. You can read her response [here](#), and my response to her response [here](#).

Since working under del Ponte as a Research Officer at the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICTY back in 2001, I have come to be extremely critical of her policies as chief prosecutor. I blame her in particular for the ICTY's failure to indict the principal Serbian and Montenegrin war-criminals. I explain this [here](#) and [here](#). However, it would be a mistake to blame the ICTY's failures on a single individual; ultimately, the institution has not worked very well because of its deep structural flaws and because of obstruction and manipulation by outside forces. And there are undoubtedly other senior officials at the ICTY, in addition to del Ponte, who are responsible for the disastrous policies of the Office of the Prosecutor.

Florence Hartmann, who worked at the ICTY much longer than I did, has written a book, *Paix et châtimeant. Les guerres secrètes de la politique et de la justice* (Flammarion, 2007) that seeks to explain the reasons for the ICTY's failures and to name the senior officials responsible. In particular, she apparently points the

finger at Geoffrey Nice, lead prosecutor in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic, and Graham Blewitt, deputy chief prosecutor under del Ponte. Both Nice and Blewitt have, since quitting their jobs at the ICTY, publicly criticised del Ponte's handling of the role of chief prosecutor. 'Paix et chatiment' is no. 1 on my reading list of books that I plan to read now that term is coming to an end and I no longer have teaching commitments; given the importance of its subject matter (not to mention the fact that my French is rather rusty), it will require the devotion of quality time, after which I shall be able to evaluate it properly. But I think it safe to say that this book will be required reading for anyone wishing to understand the failures of the ICTY.

Hartmann argues that Mladic has evaded capture not just because of Serbia's unwillingness to arrest him, but also because certain Western governments have deemed it not in their interest that he be arrested – she explains this in more detail here than she did in her response to me. In principle, I find this entirely plausible. The genocidal massacre at Srebrenica, for which Mladic is responsible, occurred because Western governments and the UN were willing to allow Serb forces to conquer the 'safe area'. The extent of Western and UN complicity in the Srebrenica massacre runs very deep, and it is entirely possible that Mladic could greatly embarrass Western governments with everything he could say, and that this may be a reason why he has not been arrested. However, as I explain in my response to Hartmann, one cannot draw such a conclusion without firm evidence. Furthermore, it would need to be explained why the international community was prepared to countenance Milosevic's deportation to the Hague but not Mladic's; Milosevic presumably possessed the most embarrassing material on Western complicity with the genocide in Bosnia, had he chosen to reveal it (I find Hartmann's attempt to resolve this paradox unconvincing). Finally, Western complicity in Mladic's evasion of arrest cannot have been consistent, given the very real pressure on Serbia to apprehend him. This does not mean that there was no such complicity; the left hand may not know what the right hand is doing. But this requires a complex and nuanced explanation.

The Western powers and the UN were undoubtedly complicit in the genocide in Bosnia, and nothing that they have done since 1995 has delivered justice to the victims. We do not yet know the full extent of this complicity, but more evidence will surface as time goes by. This is one more reason why we should hope that Mladic is eventually arrested, and, if Hartmann is right, one reason why he may never be.

Tuesday, 11 December 2007 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

WHY WAS MOMCILO PERISIC ACQUITTED?

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has acquitted on appeal Momcilo Perisic, former Chief of Staff of the Army of Yugoslavia (VJ), who had previously been sentenced to 27 years in prison for war-crimes in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was one of only six officials from Serbia-Montenegro ever indicted by the ICTY for war-crimes in Bosnia. He was the only member of the high command of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) or VJ ever indicted for war-crimes in Croatia or Bosnia, and the only former JNA officer from Serbia or Montenegro of any rank ever indicted over Bosnia. His acquittal means that, to date, no official or army officer of Serbia-Montenegro and no member of the JNA or VJ high command has been convicted by the ICTY for war-crimes in Bosnia. By any standards, this represents a monumental failure on the part of the Tribunal. Precisely what kind of failure, and whether it is a failure of the Prosecution or the judges or both, is open to debate.

Perisic's acquittal follows the ICTY's recent acquittals of Croatia's Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac, and of Kosovo's Ramush Haradinaj. Those previous acquittals had provoked a veritable paroxysm of fury from Serbia's politicians such as President Tomislav Nikolic, Prime Minister Ivica Dacic and UN General Assembly president Vuk Jeremic, who condemned them as proving that the ICTY was an anti-Serb and/or a political court. Commentators in the West widely agreed; an ill-informed rant by David Harland, former head of UN Civil

Affairs in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993-1995, upholding all the old Serb-nationalist stereotypes of the ICTY's and West's supposed anti-Serb bias, was published in the *New York Times* and received wide publicity even from reputable sources. People who had apparently been fairly satisfied with the ICTY's not entirely glorious performance over the past two decades now emerged from the woodwork to denounce it in bitter terms.

The acquittal of such a high-ranking Serbian official, following the acquittal of two high-ranking Croats and one high-ranking Kosovo Albanian, provides further proof – if any were needed – that the ICTY is not 'anti-Serb'. Perisic is, in fact, neither the first nor the most high-ranking senior Serbian official to be acquitted by the Tribunal; former Serbian President Milan Milutinovic was acquitted back in 2009 of war crimes against Kosovo Albanians.

Consequently, the Serbian government has now made a rapid U-turn in its view of the Tribunal. Prime Minister Dacic (also leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia founded by Slobodan Milosevic) had responded to the Gotovina and Markac acquittals by stating 'This confirms the claims of those who say that the Hague Tribunal is not a court and that it completes political tasks that were set in advance'. Yet his reaction to the Perisic acquittal is that it 'negates accusations about the alleged aggression of the Army of Yugoslavia against Bosnia and Croatia'. The latter conclusion is echoed by the Sense News Agency, which provides detailed coverage of the activities of the ICTY and which claims that 'Momcilo Perisic was the only senior official from Serbia and FR Yugoslavia convicted by the Tribunal and sentenced for crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Slobodan Milosevic was charged with the same crimes, and the judgment can be considered as Milosevic's posthumous acquittal for Sarajevo and Srebrenica.'

In these circumstances, there is naturally a temptation for those on the other side of the front-lines from the Serb nationalists – those who wanted to see the Serbian perpetrators of war-crimes in Croatia and Bosnia punished, and the victims receive justice – to cry foul, and to carry out a Dacic-style U-turn of their own. A temptation, that is, to say that the supporters of

Milosevic, Seselj and Tudjman were right after all, and the ICTY is really just a kangaroo court whose verdicts are political. But this temptation should be resisted, both for pragmatic reasons and, more importantly, for reasons of principle.

Pragmatically, conceding that the ICTY is a kangaroo court whose verdicts are political means handing an enormous victory to those extremists – Serb and Croat, right-wing and left-wing – who supported the elements that carried out the war-crimes and that have always resisted the efforts of the ICTY to punish them. It is not for nothing that – both in the former Yugoslavia and in the West – ethnic cleansers, fascists and extremists have consistently opposed the Tribunal, whereas liberals, democrats and progressives have supported it. To reject the legitimacy of the ICTY and its verdicts means negating not only those verdicts we don't like, but all the good that has been achieved by precisely this Tribunal, despite its undeniable numerous failures. The ICTY was the first international court to establish that the Srebrenica massacre was an act of genocide, paving the way for the confirmation of this fact by the International Court of Justice.

Immediately following the acquittals of Gotovina, Markac and Haradinaj, the ICTY in December of last year convicted Zdravko Tolimir, Assistant Commander of Intelligence and Security of the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS), for genocide, and in the process established that the group targeted for genocide by the VRS was the Muslim population of East Bosnia as a whole – not just of Srebrenica – and that the genocidal act extended to Zepa as well as Srebrenica. It is a tremendous breakthrough for the legal recognition of the Bosnian genocide beyond Srebrenica. If the Perisic acquittal is to be dismissed as a political verdict, it undermines the Tolimir verdict as well. You cannot have it both ways, and cheer the verdicts with which you agree while denouncing those you don't like. Either the ICTY is a legitimate court or it is not.

Which brings us to the matter of principle: a genuine, legitimate court must have the right and ability to acquit, as well as to convict. If the ICTY were really a kangaroo court, all those

accused would be convicted. Instead of which, we have proof of genuine pluralism, with panels of judges dividing 2-1 and 3-2 over major cases, and the Appeals Chamber reversing the decision of the Trial Chambers. Whatever his political views or personal inclinations, Judge Theodor Meron, presiding judge at both the Appeals Chamber that acquitted Gotovina and Markac and the one that acquitted Perisic, and currently under attack from critics for the acquittals, was in each case only one judge in a panel of five who came from different countries. He was the only judge who acquitted both Gotovina and Markac on the one hand and Perisic on the other, and was not even a member of the Trial Chamber that acquitted Haradinaj. The only other judge who was a member of the Appeals Chamber both for Gotovina-Markac and for Perisic was Carmel Agius, and he strongly opposed the acquittal of Gotovina and Markac but supported that of Perisic. Judge Bakone Justice Moloto was presiding judge both in the Trial Chamber that convicted Perisic and in the Trial Chamber that acquitted Haradinaj. In the first case, he dissented from the majority opinion but was outvoted – something that took place in September 2011, a mere year and a half ago. Hence, I must respectfully disagree with my colleague Eric Gordy, who argues that the acquittals all form part of a consistent policy on the part of the judges in this period.

The conspiracy theorists (among whom I do not include Eric) would either have us believe that the initial indictments of Gotovina/Perisic and their initial convictions were simply elaborate deceptions paving the way for the final, pre-determined acquittals. Or they would have us believe that whenever the ICTY convicts it is acting legitimately and whenever it acquits it is acting politically. But a court that only convicts and never acquits is not a genuine court. Even at the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg that tried the leaders of Nazi Germany after World War II, three of the twenty-four defendants – i.e. one in eight of the high-ranking officials of Nazi Germany who were prosecuted – were acquitted. The whole point of a fair trial is that guilt is not assumed and defendants are assumed to be innocent until proven guilty.

The present author has, in the past, condemned the ICTY for retreating in the face of Serbian obstruction of its activities, citing such instances as the failure to indict most of the leading members of the Joint Criminal Enterprise from Serbia and Montenegro; the acquittal of Radovan Karadzic on one count of genocide; and the censoring of the minutes of the Supreme Defence Council. However, the acquittal of Perisic is not part of this pattern; he had already been arrested and convicted, so any Serbian resistance in his case had already been overcome.

It is one thing to accuse the Tribunal of shabby or unprincipled compromises and retreats, but quite another to accuse it of actually falsifying the guilt or innocence of suspects. Karadzic's acquittal aside, the present author has never accused the Tribunal either of acquitting anyone guilty or of convicting anyone innocent. I did not, for example, condemn its initial conviction of Gotovina and Markac. Nor did I condemn its acquittal of Milutinovic or of Miroslav Radic (one of the three JNA officers indicted over the Vukovar hospital massacre). I am somewhat amazed that so many people, of all national backgrounds and political persuasions, have so little respect for the principle that it is ultimately for the court to decide who is innocent and who is guilty. Of course, it is entirely possible for a court to get things wrong and for a miscarriage of justice to occur. But a miscarriage of justice needs careful explaining as to how it was arrived at, not mere petulant denunciation.

In the case of Perisic, the essence of the disagreement between the Trial Chamber majority and the Appeals Chamber majority was that the first considered that 'under the VRS's strategy there was no clear distinction between military warfare against BiH forces and crimes against civilians/and or persons not taking active part in hostilities', while the latter argued that 'the VRS was not an organisation whose actions were criminal per se; instead, it was an army fighting a war', albeit one that also engaged in criminal activities. Thus, the Trial Chamber considered that there was no clear distinction between the VRS's lawful and its criminal actions, while the Appeals Chamber considered that there was.

Furthermore, the Trial Chamber ruled that though it could not be proven that the military assistance provided by Perisic to the VRS was specifically intended by him to support its criminal as opposed to its legal activities, nevertheless, since he clearly knew that his assistance would be used for criminal activities at Sarajevo and Srebrenica, as well as for legal military purposes, he was therefore guilty of aiding and abetting its criminal activities. The Appeals Chamber, by contrast, ruled that since it could not be proven that that he intended his military assistance to be used for criminal as opposed to legal military purposes, he could not be held to have criminal intent and therefore be held culpable for aiding and abetting the VRS's crimes.

In other words, there is little disagreement between the two Chambers regarding facts of the case (so far as the Bosnian part of it is concerned) but principally over what conclusion should be drawn from them. The disagreement is not equivalent to that between the Trial Chamber and Appeals Chamber in the case of Gotovina and Markac, when the two chambers fundamentally disagreed over what the facts were; i.e. over whether the Croatian Army had deliberately shelled civilian targets with the intent of bringing about the removal of the Serb population from the so-called Krajina region. In the case of Perisic, the Appeals Chamber was not throwing out an unsafe conviction based upon a highly spurious interpretation of events, as was the case with the acquittal of Gotovina and Markac. Rather, it was expressing a different judgement on the nature of culpability to that of the Trial Chamber.

In this disagreement, my own sympathies are entirely with the Trial Chamber, and I applaud the dissent from the Appeals Chamber majority opinion of Judge Liu Daqun, who argued that by acquitting Perisic, the Appeals Chamber was setting the bar too high for convictions on grounds of aiding and abetting. However, personal sympathies aside and on the understanding that judges are supposed to be wholly impartial, the conclusions of either Chamber could legitimately be drawn from the facts. Unfortunately, the more conservative type of conclusion of the Appeals Chamber is the one I would have predicted judges at the

ICTY usually to reach. My colleague Florian Bieber has made the reasonable point that ‘arguing that not all [the VRSs] activities were criminal is about as convincing as stating that the Mafia is not only involved in criminal activities and thus supporting it does not mean that one is “aiding and abetting” criminal activities.’ Following that analogy, Perisic could be compared to a powerful businessman who donates money, vehicles and properties to a charity known to be acting as a front for Mafia activities. Even if he clearly knew the charity’s true purpose, convicting him might not be so easy for the courts. Al Capone was, after all, only convicted for tax evasion.

This brings us to the ultimate reason for Perisic’s acquittal: the Prosecution’s case against him, resting as it did on a model of culpability that was judicially controversial, was not a strong one. The Prosecution was unable to prove his intent to commit crime, or that the assistance he provided to the VRS was intended to further its crimes. It was unable to link him directly to any specific crime. It could merely prove that he aided and abetted an army – the VRS – that he knew was engaging in criminal activities, but which was also engaging in lawful military activities.

The second reason why the Prosecution’s case was weak concerns the question of command responsibility. The Trial Chamber ruled that Perisic had no command responsibility over VRS forces, but that he did have such authority over the ‘Serb Army of Krajina’ (SVK – so-called ‘Croatian Serbs’), and in addition to aiding and abetting the VRS forces engaged in criminal acts at Sarajevo and Srebrenica, it convicted him for failing to punish the SVK perpetrators who shelled Zagreb in May 1995, killing and injuring civilians. But the Trial Chamber recognised that Perisic had ordered the SVK not to shell Zagreb and that it had disregarded his orders, choosing instead to obey the orders of Milan Martić, ‘President of the Republic of Serb Krajina’, to shell the city. This implicit recognition of Perisic’s lack of effective command responsibility over the SVK forces formed the basis for the Appeal Chamber’s overturning of his conviction for the war-crime at Zagreb – and even Judge Liu, who dissented from the majority over Perisic’s acquittal

for Sarajevo and Srebrenica, agreed with the majority on this count. In other words, the Prosecution chose to indict someone who had no command responsibility over the Bosnian Serb forces guilty of crimes in Bosnia (Sarajevo and Srebrenica) and only ambiguous command responsibility over the Croatian Serb forces guilty of crimes in Croatia (Zagreb).

Having myself worked as a war-crimes investigator at the ICTY, I am not at all surprised that four out of the five judges (and one out of three in the original Trial Chamber) were not convinced by the Prosecution's case. Generally speaking, cases involving high-ranking perpetrators far removed from the crime base are complicated to build unless their command responsibility is clear and unambiguous. Thus, it was relatively straightforward to build a case against Milosevic for war-crimes in Kosovo, where his command responsibility (as President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was clear. But more complicated to do so over Bosnia, where (as President of Serbia) it was not. In such cases where evidence of *de jure* responsibility is lacking, prosecutors need strong evidence of *de facto* responsibility.

But Perisic was not a Milosevic, Karadzic or Mladic. He was not a member of the top Serbian-Montenegrin-JNA leadership that planned and instigated the wars against Croatia and Bosnia, and his name is not listed among the principal members of the Joint Criminal Enterprise as laid down in the Milosevic indictments. He was commander of the Artillery School Centre in Zadar in Croatia, and in January 1992 became commander of the JNA's 13th Corps, based in Bileca in Hercegovina. In these roles of less than primary importance, he participated directly in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Had the Prosecution chosen to indict him for war-crimes committed by his forces in this period, he would in all likelihood have been convicted. However, it did not.

The three principal phases of mass killing by Serb forces in the Bosnian war were the initial Serbian blitzkrieg of spring, summer and autumn 1992, resulting in the Serbian conquest of about 70% of Bosnian territory; the siege of Sarajevo, lasting from spring 1992 until autumn 1995; and the Srebrenica massacre of

July 1995. The first of these claimed by far the largest number of victims; according to the figures provided by Mirsad Tokaca's Research and Documentation Centre, more Bosniaks were killed in the Podrinje region (East Bosnia) in 1992 than in 1995, the year of the Srebrenica massacre. Moreover, the regular Serb army forces that undertook the initial blitzkrieg, until 19 May 1992, were formally part of the JNA and not only *de facto* but also *de jure* under the command and control of Serbia-Montenegro, in the form of the rump Yugoslav Federal presidency made up of members from Serbia and Montenegro, and of the high command of the JNA/VJ.

Had the ICTY Prosecution indicted the top JNA commanders and Yugoslav Presidency members (from Serbia and Montenegro) who commanded these Serb forces during the blitzkrieg, and prior to that the earlier assault on Croatia, they would no doubt have been successful and Serbia's direct responsibility for the war in Bosnia would have been judicially established. A successful outcome would have been particularly likely, given that a couple of these war-criminals have been obliging enough to publish their memoirs or diaries in which they admit their planning of the war.

On 19 May 1992, however, the newly proclaimed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), comprising Serbia and Montenegro, formally withdrew its forces from Bosnia, and a Bosnia Serb army – the VRS – formally came into being. Serbia's political and military leadership thereby ceased to have *de jure* command and control over the Bosnian Serb forces. Furthermore, the Trial Chamber that convicted Perisic ruled that, in fact, the Serbian leadership in this period did not have even *de facto* control over the Bosnian Serb forces either – as did the International Court of Justice, in its own 2007 verdict in the case of *Bosnia vs Serbia*. The arrangement whereby the Bosnian Serb war-effort would be formally independent of Belgrade was put in place with the deliberate intention by Serbia's leadership of avoiding accusations of aggression and involvement in the Bosnian war. Of course, Serbia continued to provide extensive financial and military support to the Bosnian Serb forces. But it should have been clear to

any war-crimes investigator worth their salt that convicting FRY military commanders of war-crimes in Bosnia after 19 May 1992 would be a much more difficult task.

Momcilo Perisic became Chief of Staff of FRY's army, the VJ, only in August 1993, and his indictment by the ICTY only covers his activities from this period. The policy of supporting the VRS had been put in place under his predecessors, and though he was a strong supporter of the policy and apparently institutionalised it, he was scarcely its architect. Even as regards the siege of Sarajevo – one of the two crimes in Bosnia for which Perisic was indicted – the Serb killings of civilians peaked in the spring and summer of 1992 and dropped considerably thereafter, dropping particularly from around the time that Perisic took over (according to Tokaca's figures). Chief of Staff Perisic was therefore a singularly bad choice of individual to indict for war-crimes in the period from August 1993: though he was not a simple figurehead equivalent to President Milutinovic, and enjoyed real authority in a post of considerable importance, he was ultimately just one of Milosevic's interchangeable officers; little more than a cog, albeit a large one, in the military machine, and moreover in a part of the machine whose culpability for actual war-crimes was secondary at the time, since the Milosevic regime had devolved most of the killing to a different part – the VRS.

Had the ICTY prosecutors ever really understood the chronology and organisation of the Serb aggression against Bosnia, they could have avoided such a poor decision. But it is clear from reading Carla del Ponte's memoirs that she, at least, never had more than a muddled understanding of it. She nebulously attributes primary and equal responsibility to the war as a whole to two individuals, Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman, but is unable to explain how that responsibility translated into the form that the war took. Although she deserves credit for eschewing a narrowly legalistic and lawyerly approach to war-crimes prosecutions and for attempting to view the big picture of the war – and therefore for insisting on genocide indictments in the face of conservative resistance from some of her colleagues – the big picture that she viewed was an erroneous one. Her starting

point was not a global systemic analysis of the aggression, but apparently the big crimes with which she herself, as a non-expert on the war, was familiar – the siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica massacre.

In her own memoirs, del Ponte's former spokeswoman Florence Hartmann recalls that del Ponte insisted, among other things, that Milosevic himself be indicted for Srebrenica and Sarajevo, in the face of resistance from Geoffrey Nice and others, who feared that they would not be able to convince the judges of the validity of the charge. Del Ponte was thus motivated by the commendable desire to ensure that Serbia's leadership would not escape responsibility for the killing in Bosnia, but her analytical confusion ensured her plan would not go well. In light of Perisic's acquittal, Nice's caution, as recalled by Hartmann, appears entirely vindicated. That said, it is worth restating that Perisic's indictment covered only the period from August 1993, when he was Chief of Staff, not the period when the Serbian aggression was actually launched and the largest part of the killings occurred. Thus, the claims made by Dacic and by the Sense News Agency, that the verdict exonerates Milosevic and Serbia of aggression against Bosnia and Croatia and of culpability in the siege of Sarajevo, are unfounded. Furthermore, as noted above, the Appeals Chamber has not actually changed the facts as established by the Trial Chamber: that the VRS was engaged in criminal activity, at Sarajevo and Srebrenica, and that Serbia's army was aiding and abetting it while it was doing so.

On Twitter, Luka Miletic, the lawyer who successfully represented Gotovina, has succinctly referred to 'Carla Del Ponte's dark legacy: Perisic, Haradinaj, Oric, Gotovina, Cermak, Markac, Boskoski, Halilovic all indicted by CDP, all acquitted.' The failure at the ICTY is that of a Prosecution that has repeatedly failed to secure the convictions of those it has indicted, not of the judges who were unconvinced by its cases.

A TALE OF TWO GENERALS

Army general Veljko Kadijevic (pictured), former Secretary for People's Defence in the government of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, therefore the top Yugoslav military commander at the time of the 1991 war in Croatia, has been awarded Russian citizenship. Kadijevic was, after Slobodan Milosevic, probably the single individual most responsible for launching Serbia's war of aggression against its neighbours in the early 1990s. Thanks to him and to his deputy, Chief of Staff Blagoje Adzic, Milosevic's regime in Serbia was able to employ the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) to wage its war of conquest in Croatia, and subsequently in Bosnia. Without this army, Serbia would have lacked the military superiority over Croatia and Bosnia that made this war of conquest feasible.

Kadijevic was a traitor to Yugoslavia. In his memoirs, published in Belgrade in the 1990s, he admits that his policy from the spring of 1990, when non-Communist regimes came to power in Slovenia and Croatia, was to bring about the 'peaceful' exit of these republics from the Yugoslav federation – with appropriate territorial concessions on Croatia's part, of course. This policy has been confirmed in the published diary of his ally, Borisav Jovic, the former Yugoslav president, Serbian representative on the federal presidency and president of Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia, who admits that he and Kadijevic planned 'forcibly to expel' Slovenia and a dismembered Croatia from Yugoslavia. So Kadijevic's war in Croatia had nothing to do with preserving Yugoslav unity. Nor was he motivated by loyalty to the Yugoslav constitutional order. In 1991, he travelled to Moscow to seek the support of his Soviet counterpart, Dmitry Yazov, for a projected military coup in Yugoslavia (Yazov was, it will be remembered, an equally treacherous conspirator involved in the coup against Mikhail Gorbachev later that year).

Thus, Kadijevic saw his job as 'defence minister' as defending 'Yugoslavia' from its own government and presidency. Although he vacillated between support for military dictatorship to keep Yugoslavia united, and support for the break-up of Yugoslavia

and establishment of a Great Serbia, it was the latter policy for which he eventually opted. Yet Kadijevic was, at all times, a close ally of Milosevic's regime in Serbia and enemy of the other Yugoslav republics (except for Serbia's satellite Montenegro), ready to violate his duties toward the Yugoslav presidency, which was constitutionally his supreme commander, in the interests of this alliance. Before Franjo Tudjman's Croatian nationalists had even had a chance to take over the reigns of power in Croatia, in the interval in 1990 following their electoral victory over the former Croatian Communists and during the handover of power, Kadijevic carried out the disarmament of Croatia's Territorial Defence, in close consultation with Jovic, who was then Yugoslav president. Thus did Kadijevic begin the Serbian war of aggression against Croatia, before Tudjman's regime had even had a chance to be guilty of anything whatsoever. Yet subsequently, when Croatia's Stjepan Mesic became Yugoslav President, Kadijevic simply ignored Mesic's instructions to the Yugoslav army, as he gloatingly recalls in his memoirs. In other words, his 'obedience' to his supreme commander, the Yugoslav presidency, was entirely dependent on whether the latter was pursuing Serbia's policy or not. The war Kadijevic and the Yugoslav army waged against Croatia was totally illegal and unconstitutional; it was not authorised by the Yugoslav presidency (partly because there was no functioning presidency – Serbia having blocked the election of a Yugoslav president in May 1991, effectively leaving the country without an executive).

Kadijevic's enmity was not, however, limited to Yugoslav politicians such as Mesic who supported Croatian independence; he was a sworn enemy also of Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic, a man who – unlike Milosevic, Jovic and Kadijevic himself – actually supported a united Yugoslavia. And although Kadijevic was sacked by the Belgrade regime before full-scale war in Bosnia was launched, he was instrumental in preparing the ground for the destruction of Bosnia – the one Yugoslav republic aside from Macedonia that actually wanted to keep Yugoslavia together (Milosevic's Serbia declared its independence from Yugoslavia back in September 1990 – before Alija Izetbegovic was even elected to power in Bosnia – then formally announced its

secession for the second time in March 1991, when Milosevic stated that Serbia would no longer be bound by the authority of the Yugoslav presidency).

Kadijevic is himself a native of Croatia, from near the town of Imotski, and despite his support for the Great Serbian war-drive in 1990-91, is of ethnically mixed background, with a Serb father and a Croat mother. He was, nevertheless, the man responsible for destroying the Croatian town of Vukovar in 1991; in his published diary, Jovic describes Kadijevic's policy in Croatia as one of 'destroying cities'. Not surprisingly, therefore, Croatia issued an Interpol warrant for Kadijevic's arrest. Now, however, Russia's award of citizenship to Kadijevic definitely stymies any possibility for Kadijevic's extradition, as Russian law forbids the extradition of Russian citizens.

Russia's sheltering of this Yugoslav traitor and mass murderer is, of course, what one would expect from the regime of Vladimir Putin, a man who is, in many ways, a kindred spirit of Kadijevic's. One would, indeed, have been stunned if Moscow had respected Kadijevic's international arrest warrant; Putin's regime has not exactly been notable for its respect for international law. Yet Moscow might not, at least, have been able to get away with this quite so easily had the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague itself indicted Kadijevic.

The sad truth is, however, that neither Kadijevic nor his former deputy Adzic has been indicted by the Hague tribunal. The two top military officers of the army that was formally Yugoslav but de facto Serbian, who presided over the planning and launching of the wars against Croatia and Bosnia, were ultimately not considered worthy of prosecution by the ICTY's prosecutors.

The same cannot be said for the two top military officers of the army that defended Bosnia. Sefer Halilovic and Rasim Delic, chief of staff and commander of the Bosnian army respectively, were both indicted by the Hague tribunal, despite the cases against them being extremely weak. While Halilovic was wholly acquitted by the judges, Rasim Delic was last month acquitted of most of the charges against him, including murder, but

found guilty only of 'cruel treatment' of prisoners at the village of Livade and the Kamenica camp in the period July-August 1995. He was sentenced to three years in prison which, given that he has already spent nearly half that time in custody, means that he will be out soon.

Delic was, unlike Kadrijevic, a professional officer who played no role in politics until full-scale war in Bosnia broke out in the spring of 1992. Up till that time, he had been simply a loyal soldier of the Yugoslav army, but he then joined Bosnia's defenders. Given his lack of political ambition and his readiness to serve President Izetbegovic unquestioningly, he was promoted to the top post in the Bosnian army in 1993 in place of the self-willed Halilovic. During the last two years of the Bosnian war, 1993-95, he quietly allowed the Izetbegovic regime and the ruling Party of Democratic Action to assume full control over the Bosnian army, turning it into a politicised instrument of their own rule.

For all that, it is remarkable – given the degree of the brutality to which Bosnia and its population were subjected by the forces of Milosevic's Serbia and Radovan Karadzic's Bosnian Serb rebels – just how small-scale were the war-crimes carried out by the Bosnian army. Despite being Bosnia's top commander for over two years, Delic was convicted only of failing to prevent or punish the cruel treatment of twelve captured Serb soldiers in a single village and camp in July and August 1995. The troops responsible for these abuses, furthermore, were not regular Bosnian soldiers, but foreign mujahedin, whose agenda was not that of the Bosnian army as a whole and over whom Delic's authority was uncertain. Although two of the members of the ICTY's three-judge panel felt that Delic could have punished the mujahedin for the abuses in Kamenica, presiding judge Bacone Moloto argued in a dissenting opinion that Delic 'did not have effective control over the EMD at any time from the time of his assumption of duties as the Commander of the Main Staff of the ABiH...until the EMD was disbanded' (the 'EMD' or 'El Mujahed Detachment' being the Bosnian army's unit of foreign mujahedin). Be this as it may, there is no suggestion that Delic ordered the abuses. His crime may be compared in scale to the largest crime carried out

by Serb forces in the same period, under the direction of Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic himself: the genocidal massacre of 8,000 Bosniak men and boys at Srebrenica.

So there we have it: the contrasting fates of generals Kadijevic and Delic. The first was an orchestrator of the war and of the destruction of Yugoslavia, who ordered the conquest of Croatia, presided over the destruction of Vukovar and siege of Dubrovnik, and laid the ground for the attack on Bosnia. The second was a professional officer who avoided politics until his country was attacked, and then led a military campaign notable for abuses that were small and few enough that the prosecution had difficulty pinning anything at all on him. The second was indicted by the ICTY; the first was not. This is the work of what some would have us believe is an 'anti-Serb tribunal'.

While we are on the subject of the 'anti-Serb bias' of the ICTY – all part of the global German-American-Vatican-Comintern-Zionist-Islamist conspiracy to frame Milosevic, Karadzic and their lovely, merry men as bad people – it is worth comparing the treatment of the crimes at Livade and Kamenica with those at Vukovar. The top Bosnian commander was indicted for crimes carried out by irregular forces in a particular locality, while for the much larger-scale crime carried out at Ovchara following the capture of Vukovar, only middle-ranking Yugoslav officers were indicted. For the murder, torture and cruel treatment of 194 patients taken from the Vukovar hospital following its capture by the Serbs, Mile Mrksic was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. Veselin Sljivancanin received five years imprisonment for aiding and abetting the torture of the victims, while Miroslav Radic was acquitted of all charges.

Yes, that's right – the 'anti-Serb tribunal' at which Naser Oric and Sefer Halilovic were acquitted, and at which Rasim Delic received only a three-year sentence, also acquitted one of the three Yugoslav officers accused over the massacre of Vukovar hospital patients at Ovchara, and sentenced one of the others to only five years.

And if that's evidence of 'anti-Serb bias', then I'm Sarah Palin.

In fairness, the ICTY's shocking, disgraceful record in prosecuting the top military leaders of the Bosnian people's struggle against genocide while failing to prosecute the top military leaders of the side carrying out the genocide should be seen in context. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) last year found Serbia guilty of failing to prevent and punish genocide at Srebrenica, but acquitted it of graver genocide-related charges that might have involved financial compensation for the plaintiff. Despite its indisputable role in organising, arming and financing the Bosnian Serb army responsible for Srebrenica, Serbia got away scot free. Likewise, Dutch courts recently ruled that neither the United Nations nor the Dutch state could be held responsible for the failure to prevent the Srebrenica massacre; the Dutch because their soldiers ('peacekeepers') who failed to defend the enclave were under UN command; the UN because it enjoys immunity. So the ICTY's record, poor though it is, is probably no worse than the record of international justice and the courts in general.

Justice for genocide victims? Just ask General Kadijevic...

I apologise to my readers for the absence of posts recently. I have been on holiday, and am currently attending a conference abroad. Normal blogging activity will hopefully resume after I return home on Sunday.

Wednesday, 1 October 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

DAVID HARLAND'S ATTACK ON THE ICTY

David Harland, Executive Director of the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue and head of UN Civil Affairs in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993-1995, recently published, in the *New York Times*, a polemic against the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Responding to the recent acquittals of Croatia's Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac and Kosovo's Ramush Haradinaj, he accused the Tribunal of 'selective justice' on the grounds that it has essentially only convicted Serb perpetrators, acquitted non-Serb perpetrators and failed to punish

crimes against Serbs. This is, of course, the claim that hardline Serb nationalists and supporters of Slobodan Milosevic have been making for about the last two decades. Instead of carrying out any research into the actual record of the ICTY in order to support his thesis, Harland simply repeats a string of clichés of the kind that frequently appear in anti-Hague diatribes by Serb nationalists.

- 1) Harland writes: ‘More Serbs were displaced — ethnically cleansed — by the wars in the Balkans than any other community. And more Serbs remain ethnically displaced to this day.’

Harland doesn’t provide any statistical evidence to support this claim, but he appears to be conflating being ‘displaced’ with being ‘ethnically cleansed’, and to count all Serbs displaced by all the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo as having been ‘ethnically cleansed’ – as opposed to being evacuated by the Serb authorities themselves, for example, or fleeing Sarajevo to escape the siege. The Appeals Chamber of the ICTY, in acquitting Gotovina, Markac and Haradinaj, rejected the prosecution’s claims that a Joint Criminal Enterprise (JCE) existed, on the part of either the Croatian or the Kosovar Albanian perpetrators, to bring about the removal of the Serb population from either ‘Krajina’ or Kosovo. Harland has not attempted to address the Appeals Chamber’s conclusions. He has simply re-stated a falsehood after two panels of judges carefully explained why the claims on which it was based are false.

- 2) Harland writes ‘Almost no one has been held to account [for these crimes against Serbs], and it appears that no one will be... Convicting only Serbs simply doesn’t make sense in terms of justice, in terms of reality, or in terms of politics.’

It is untrue that nobody has been convicted by the ICTY for crimes against Serbs, or that no non-Serbs have been convicted. Bosniaks, Croats and Albanians convicted of crimes against Serbs include Rasim Delic, the top Bosnian army commander in 1993-1995; Enver Hadzihasanovic, former commander of the Bosnian army’s 3rd Corps; Amir Kubura,

former commander of the 7th Muslim Mountain Brigade; Zdravko Mucic, Hazim Delic and Esad Landzo, former commanders and guard for the Celebici prison-camp; and Kosova Liberation Army camp guard Haradin Bala. Former Croatian Army major-general Mirko Norac was indicted by the ICTY for crimes against Serb civilians in the Medak Pocket in September 1993; his case was transferred to the Zagreb District Court, which convicted him.

- 3) Harland writes: 'Altogether, almost all of the West's friends have been acquitted; almost all of the Serbs have been found guilty.'

Harland appears here to be following the example of the extreme Serb nationalists who divide all former Yugoslavs into 'Serbs' on the one hand and 'friends of the West' on the other, and who claim that the ICTY 'persecutes' Serbs because they are independent of the West. Yet two of the most senior Serb officials to be convicted by the ICTY, former Republika Srpska president Biljana Plavsic and former Yugoslav Army chief of staff Momcilo Perisic, had pursued friendly relations with the West in the second half of the 1990s. On the other hand, being unfriendly to the West is scarcely something of which other prominent Serb indictees can be accused, since Western and Serb officials spent the best part of the 1990s collaborating with one another.

- 4) Harland writes: 'Convicting only Serbs simply doesn't make sense in terms of justice, in terms of reality, or in terms of politics. The Croatian leaders connived in the carve-up of Yugoslavia, and contributed mightily to the horrors on Bosnia and Herzegovina. I witnessed for myself the indiscriminate fury of the Croatian assault on the beautiful city of Mostar.'

Harland either does not know, or chooses not to mention, that the ICTY is currently prosecuting a group of prominent Bosnian Croat perpetrators for crimes carried out in Bosnia: Milivoj Petkovic, Jadranko Prlic, Slobodan Praljak, Bruno Stojic, Valentic Coric and Berislav Pusic. They are specifically being tried over the Croatian attack on Mostar. The ICTY has already convicted a large number of Croat perpetrators,

including Dario Kordic, wartime leader of the Croatian Democratic Union in Bosnia and vice-president of the Croat Community of Herceg-Bosna, and Tihomir Blaskic, former commander of the (Bosnian) Croat Council of Defence (hence equal in rank to the Bosnian Serbs' Ratko Mladic) and inspector in the General Inspectorate of the Croatian Army. NB Blaskic spent longer in prison than any Yugoslav army officer sentenced over the 1991-1992 Croatian war, except Mile Mrksic.

- 5) Harland continues: 'The Bosnian Muslim leadership had deeply compromising links to the international jihahist movement, and hosted at least three people who went on to play key roles in the 9/11 attacks on the United States. I witnessed attacks by foreign mujahedeen elements against Croat civilians in the Lasva Valley.'

The accusation regarding the Bosnian government's supposed links to the international jihadist movement and 9/11 attackers is sheer Islamophobic defamation. As regards the mujahedin, Harland either does not know, or chooses not to mention, that Rasim Delic, commander of the Bosnian army from June 1993 until the end of the war, was convicted by the ICTY over crimes carried out by the mujahedin against Serb civilians. On the other hand, the ICTY Appeals Chamber found in the case of Bosnian army 3rd Corps commander Enver Hadzihasanovic that he could not be held culpable for the crimes of the mujahedin, since 'the relationship between the El Mujahedin detachment and the 3rd Corps was not one of subordination. It was quite close to overt hostility since the only way to control the El Mujahedin detachment was to attack them as if they were a distinct enemy force.'

As with the Croatian attack on Mostar, so with the Bosnian government and the mujahedin, Harland's portrayal of the ICTY as simply having ignored the crimes in question reflects either an extraordinary degree of ignorance regarding the ICTY's record, or is deliberately deceptive of his readers.

- 6) Harland continues: 'And the Kosovar Albanian authorities deserve a special mention, having taken ethnic cleansing to its most extreme form — ridding themselves almost entirely

of the Serb and Roma populations. Kosovo's ancient Christian Orthodox monasteries are now almost the only reminder of a once-flourishing non-Albanian population... Haradinaj has been cleared of the charges brought against him, but the fact remains that hundreds of thousands of Serbs — mostly the elderly, women and children — were ethnically cleansed from Kosovo by the Kosovar Albanians.'

Again, Harland does not attempt to address the ICTY judges' refutation of the claim that Kosovar Albanians had engaged in a 'Joint Criminal Enterprise' to remove the Serb and other non-Albanian population from Kosovo. His claims that the Kosovar Albanian authorities have succeeded in 'ridding themselves almost entirely of the Serb and Roma populations' and that 'hundreds of thousands of Serbs — mostly the elderly, women and children — were ethnically cleansed from Kosovo by the Kosovar Albanians' are further falsehoods: of the roughly 200,000 Serbs living in Kosovo before 1999, roughly half are still there.

- 7) Harland concludes: 'What has happened at the tribunal is far from justice, and will be interpreted by observers in the Balkans and beyond as the continuation of war by legal means — with the United States, Germany and other Western powers on one side, and the Serbs on the other.'

To which one can reply: only by anti-Western Serb-nationalist politicians and ideologues and their fellow travellers.

Perhaps the most disgraceful statement in Harland's tissue of falsehoods is his claim that 'I lived through the siege of Sarajevo.' In fact, as the UN's head of Civil Affairs in Bosnia from June 1993 until the end of the war, Harland was scarcely a victim of the siege. Following the Markale massacre in Sarajevo of 28 August 1995, when Serb shelling killed 37 civilians, Harland engendered the myth that the Bosnians themselves might have been responsible; as he testified, 'I advised [UN commander] General Smith on that one occasion to be a little unclear about what we knew about the point of origin of the mortar shell that landed on the Markale market-place in order to give us time, give UNPROFOR

time, to get UNPROFOR and UN people off Serb territory so they couldn't be harmed or captured when General Smith turned the key to authorise air-strikes against the Serbs. That is true. That was less than fully honest.'

Indeed, the UN in Bosnia collaborated with the Serb besiegers of Sarajevo and helped to maintain the siege. It obstructed any possibility of outside military intervention to halt the genocide. It maintained an arms embargo that prevented the victims of the genocide from defending themselves properly. It was complicit in the murder of Bosnian deputy prime-minister Hakija Turajlic by Serb forces in January 1993. It abandoned the 'safe areas' of Srebrenica and Zepa to Mladic's genocidal operations. Romeo Dallaire said of the UN, 'Ultimately, led by the United States, France and the United Kingdom, this world body aided and abetted genocide in Rwanda. No amount of its cash and aid will ever wash its hands clean of Rwandan blood.' The same could be said of the UN with regard to Bosnia and Bosnian blood. Yet no former UN or other international official has been prosecuted by the ICTY or any other court for complicity in genocide or war-crimes. That is a real scandal of selective justice about which Harland has nothing to say.

WHAT DO THE FIGURES FOR THE BOSNIAN WAR-DEAD TELL US?

Earlier this year, the Research and Documentation Centre (RDC) headed by Mirsad Tokaca in Sarajevo released the semi-final results of its extensive investigation into the death-toll of the Bosnian war. The investigation, the most well documented to date, gives a body count of 97,207 war-dead in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the period 1991-95. This number is then broken down into different categories and combinations thereof: year, month, region, municipality, nationality, gender, age and status (i.e. civilian or military), with a more detailed treatment of the Srebrenica municipality. The figures tell us much about the character of the Bosnian war.

1) *Do the RDC's figures vindicate the genocide deniers?*

Since the figure of 97,207 is about half of the figure of 200,000 Bosnian war-deaths that has been commonly accepted since the Bosnian war, and since it has been clear for a couple of years that the RDC's research would produce roughly such a figure, its work has for some time now been eagerly seized upon by Bosnia genocide deniers and apologists such as Ed Herman, David Peterson and Nebojsa Malic as supposed 'vindication' for their position. This being the case, and since the RDC's findings are broadly supported by those of a second scientific investigation, carried out by Ewa Tabeau and Jakub Bijak of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, we hope that they can now be taken by all sides in the debate as an essentially reliable basis from which to draw conclusions about the Bosnian war.

For reasons that should not require too much explanation, a body count will almost always give a lower death-toll than a scholarly estimate of total deaths. This is because a body count only takes into account documented deaths, rather than all the deaths that are likely to have occurred but for which documentary proof is lacking. In the words of Philip Verwimp, an expert who has evaluated the RDC's figures: 'Many consider the number of 97,207 as the overall total of victims of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia, which is not correct. For several reasons, this number should be seen as an approximation of a minimum and not as a complete total.' In the case of the RDC's study, the discrepancy is not likely to be so great, because years of research have eliminated most of the 'unknowns'. Tokaca has stated that the final figure for the Bosnian death-toll may rise by up to 10,000 as research continues. Still, for purposes of comparison, the figure of 97,207 falls into the same category as the figure for Iraqi dead provided by the Iraq Body Count website (approximately 80-87,000 civilian dead at the time of writing) rather than the figure of over 600,000 Iraqi dead in the study appearing in the *Lancet* last year (NB my purpose here is not to compare death tolls, but to compare methods of their evaluation).

The RDC's figure of 97,207 includes only those definitely documented victims defined as direct casualties of war in the strictest sense. It does not include indirect victims of war: e.g. those who died of hunger, exposure or lack of medicine as a result of war conditions; those killed by incompetent use of weapons; military suicides; civilian and military accidental deaths; victims of armed quarrels; etc. The total number of Bosnians who died as a result of the war is therefore substantially higher than the RDC's figure, and the proportion of civilian fatalities greater.

This should be borne in mind when considering the arguments of deniers from the Chomsky-Pilger school, who will happily treat the figure of 97,207 as though it were equivalent to their own favourite estimates for the victims of 'Western imperialist' crimes, e.g. 200,000 East Timorese victims of Indonesia, two million or more Indochinese victims of the US, one million Iraqi dead in the current war, etc. For example, Noam Chomsky's oft-cited figure of 200,000 East Timorese deaths resulting from the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, a figure broadly supported by John Pilger, apparently includes deaths from famine and disease or 'enforced starvation' (to use Pilger's words) – such deaths were not included in the RDC's study of the Bosnian war-dead.

Any evaluation of the death-toll of a genocide should, indeed, take into account those killed by disease, hunger and exposure as a result of conditions deliberately imposed by the perpetrators for that purpose. Thus, for example, the figure of six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust includes those, such as Anne Frank, who died from disease, hunger or exposure as the result of Nazi-imposed conditions in the camps and ghettos. The figure of 97,207 Bosnian war-dead does not therefore include all the civilian victims of the genocide.

I make these observations by way of a preliminary, in response to those who enjoy playing the numbers game with regard to the Bosnian genocide. Whether 100,000 or 200,000 died in the Bosnian war should have no bearing on our recognition that this was a terrible crime, or on whether we consider what happened to have been genocide. But if numbers

cannot be used to confirm or deny a genocide, they can tell us a lot about when, where and how most of the killing occurred, who were the principal perpetrators and who were the principal victims.

2) *What was the national composition of the victims?*

The most striking fact to emerge from the study is that 83.33% of civilian deaths in the Bosnian war were Muslims (Bosniaks). In total, 33,070 Muslim civilians were killed, as against 4,075 Serb civilians, 2,163 Croat civilians and 376 civilians of other nationalities. Muslims were the only one of the three principal Bosnian nationalities who suffered higher civilian than military casualties. Thus, 51.64% of the Muslim dead were civilians, as against 27.77% of the Croat dead and 16.36% of the Serb dead.

The RDC has not compiled data on who carried out the killing. Nevertheless, it is indicative that in both absolute and proportional terms, more Serb civilians were killed in the Sarajevo region than in any of the other six regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina that the study considered. Thus, in the Sarajevo region, 1,091 Serb civilians and 2,927 Serb soldiers were killed. We can compare this to the region of Podrinje, in one part of which Naser Oric, a Bosnian commander frequently singled out as particularly guilty of war-crimes against Serb civilians, was active. In Podrinje, a total of 849 Serb civilians and 4,711 Serb soldiers were killed. Muslim, Serb and Croat civilian casualties in Sarajevo all peaked in the same year – 1992 – and fell in subsequent years. Civilian casualties were highest in Sarajevo in the early stages of the war, the spring and summer of 1992. Due allowance must be taken for the Serb civilians killed by Bosnian Army or Croat soldiers, in particular by rogue commanders such as Musan Topalovic-Caco, but the conclusion is inescapable: the single largest killer of Serb civilians during the war was the Serb siege of Sarajevo.

Taking into account all those Serb civilians killed by Serb forces in Sarajevo and elsewhere (such as in the Tuzla massacre of 25 May 1995), as well as those killed by Croat forces, then the number of Serb civilians killed by Bosnian Muslims during

the whole of the Bosnian war across the whole of Bosnia cannot have been very different from the number of American civilians killed by fundamentalist Muslims on the single day of 11 September 2001. Which should serve as a salutary lesson for those who like to equate the moderate Muslims of Bosnia with the fundamentalists of al-Qa'ida. The relatively low Serb civilian death-toll in the Bosnian war is testimony to the fact that, while the Bosnian Army was sometimes guilty of war crimes, it did not pursue a policy of deliberately targeting Serb or Croat civilians.

3) *Where were the epicentres of the mass killings?*

The RDC's figures confirm that the most intense phase of the mass killings was the spring and summer of 1992, and that the epicentres of these mass killings were the Podrinje region – broadly speaking East Bosnia – and the Prijedor municipality in north-west Bosnia (we are leaving aside, for the moment, the special cases of the Srebrenica massacre and the siege of Sarajevo). Podrinje accounted for nearly thirty per cent of all Bosnian fatalities, followed by the Sarajevo region, with just over fifteen per cent. In Podrinje, 94.83% of civilian casualties were Muslims. The killings here peaked in the period April-September and particularly May-June 1992. Podrinje was the region adjacent to Serbia; not only were all Bosnian Serb forces formally under 'Yugoslav' (i.e. Belgrade's) military command until 19 May 1992, but units from Serbia were centrally involved in the killing in this region: notably, the Uzice Corps of the Yugoslav People's Army, based in Serbia's city of Uzice, and the paramilitary forces of Zeljko Raznatovic-Arkan and Vojislav Seselj. The RDC's figures therefore corroborate the fact that Milosevic's Serbia spearheaded the programme of mass killings in Bosnia.

Further to the west, 5,209 residents of the Prijedor municipality were killed in the war – more than three times the number of any other municipality in the Pounje region. Prijedor municipality was serviced by the notorious concentration camps of Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje, whose exposure by Western reporters in the summer of 1992 was a

decisive moment for international perception of the Bosnian war. Deniers, such as Thomas Deichmann and Mick Hume of *Living Marxism* magazine, have for long concentrated their efforts on attempting to exonerate these camps. Although their attempts have been totally discredited by ITN's victory over *Living Marxism* in the libel trial of 2000, they are still endorsed by Noam Chomsky, among others.

4) *What do the RDC's figures tell us about Srebrenica?*

The RDC's figures broadly vindicate the particular attention that observers and scholars of the Bosnian war have given to the siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica massacre. We have already noted that the Sarajevo region accounted for over 15% of the total Bosnian death-toll (a figure that includes not only the victims of the siege, but also the dead, of all nationalities, in Serb-held municipalities such as Pale and Trnovo). The RDC gives a figure of 6,886 for deaths in the Srebrenica municipality in the month of July 1995 when the massacre occurred – which can be compared to a mere thirteen deaths in the municipality in June and twenty-three in August of the same year (NB some who initially survived the massacre were hunted down and killed in subsequent months). Since the Srebrenica massacre was carried out in multiple locations on the territory of several municipalities, the figure of 6,886 deaths should not be seen as encompassing all the deaths in the massacre, but merely those who were killed on the territory of the Srebrenica municipality itself.

The RDC classified some of the Srebrenica victims as soldiers rather than as civilians. Tokaca admitted that difficulties had been created for the RDC's system of classification by the fact that some of the victims' families had chosen to classify them as soldiers, even when they had been civilians, in order to improve the families' access to social support. Nevertheless, the perpetrators massacred captured soldiers and civilians alike. In genocide, as I have noted elsewhere, the civilian vs soldier/combatant distinction is frequently an artificial one; one need only think of the Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; or the millions of Soviet POWs deliberately starved

to death, killed through exposure or otherwise murdered by the Nazis – the most infamous Nazi death-camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, was originally built to house Soviet POWs, and these were the first to be gassed to death there.

The RDC's figures suggest that approximately 4,800-5,000 civilians and 1,500-1,700 soldiers were killed in the Srebrenica municipality in July 1995. These were almost all Muslims: only 22 Serbs and 1 Croat were killed in the Srebrenica municipality in the whole of 1995.

The RDC divides the 'military' deaths into those defined as killed in combat, those killed outside of combat and those killed as POWs. This division simply reflects the victims' status according to the military registers and other sources upon which the RDC based its figures; it does not represent any kind of evaluation as to whether the victims in question really were killed in or out of combat, or as POWs. As has been made clear, 'It is important to emphasise that "status in war" does not provide correct insights in relation to victims of combat versus non-combat situations, neither does it inform about legitimate victims of violations of the International Humanitarian Law, IHL.' Thus, the RDC's figures for Muslim soldiers killed 'in combat' in Srebrenica includes both genuine battlefied deaths and the much more numerous victims of the massacre who did not receive POW status.

These figures can be compared with those for other regions where heavy fighting took place (unfortunately, the RDC's website does not provide such detailed information for individual municipalities other than Srebrenica). In the region of Posavina, the town of Bosanski Brod was captured by the Serbs in October 1992; civilian and military deaths on all sides across the whole of Posavina in October 1992 were 593. In the region of Vrbas, the town of Jajce was captured by the Serbs in October 1992; civilian and military deaths on all sides across the whole of Vrbas in October 1992 were 291. In the autumn of 1994, there was heavy fighting around the 'safe area' of Bi-hac in the Pounje region, with the Serbs appearing poised to take the town and NATO launching unsuccessful air-strikes; the highest combined civilian and military death toll for all

sides across the whole of the wider Pounje region in any one month in 1994 was 554 in November followed by 386 in December. The Bosnian Army waged a bloody and unsuccessful offensive to break the siege of Sarajevo in June and July 1995; the combined civilian and military death toll for all sides in the Sarajevo region for these two months together was 533.

In other words, Muslim losses in Srebrenica, both civilian and those classified as 'military', were massively out of proportion to those in other municipalities where heavy fighting took place, far beyond anything that can be explained away as simply the result of combat. By the RDC's figures, the destruction of approximately 6,886 Muslim lives in July 1995 cost the Serb forces something between 0 and 22 casualties.

As we noted above, these figures encompass only the deaths in the Srebrenica municipality, not all the victims of the massacre who perished in other municipalities of the region. The RDC's figures show that 10,333 people from the Podrinje region were killed during 1995; that over 93% of these were Muslims; and that 9,328 out of the 10,333 were killed during the single month of July, compared with 225 in June and 171 in August. These figures do not include people from other regions of Bosnia killed in Podrinje, and do include people from Podrinje killed in other regions, but this only very slightly distorts the figures as in both cases the numbers involved are very small. The deaths of people from the Podrinje region in the month of July number over 9,000 more than in any other month of the year; this works out as an 'excess' Muslim death toll of over 8,000 in the month of the Srebrenica massacre. The RDC's figures thus confirm the already established figure of over 8,000 victims of the Srebrenica massacre.

5) *Was Bosnia a 'three-sided war'?*

The Bosnian war is often presented as having been a three-sided war, between Serb forces, Croat forces and the predominantly Muslim Bosnian Army, but the RDC's figures remind us that this is somewhat misleading, and that the so-called 'Muslim-Croat war' of 1992-94 – i.e. the war fought between the Bosnian Army on the one hand and the Croat Council of

Defence (HVO) and regular Croatian Army on the other – was, in scale and bloodshed, very minor in comparison to the war involving the Serb forces.

The Muslim-Croat war was essentially waged in only two of the seven regions of Bosnia as defined by the RDC: Central Bosnia and Neretva. Muslim and Croat civilian casualties in the whole of these two regions throughout the entire period 1991-95 were 2,908 and 786 respectively. These figures include those Muslim and Croat civilians killed by Serb forces, which must have comprised a substantial proportion of the total: nearly half of all deaths in these regions occurred either before the first serious clash of the Croat-Muslim war (the HVO's seizure of the town of Prozor from the Bosnian Army in October 1992) or after the war ended in March 1994. Neretva, for example, experienced by far its highest monthly death-toll in June 1992, when Bosnian and Croat forces were still fighting together against the Serbs. Some municipalities in both regions were not even encompassed by the Muslim-Croat conflict – in these all Muslim and Croat casualties must have been the work of the Serb forces.

When all this is taken into consideration, the Muslim-Croat war cannot have claimed more than 2,000 civilian lives at the most generous estimate, or about 5% of the total civilian casualties of the Bosnian war as a whole. If this is added to the 3-3,500 Serb civilians killed by Croat or Muslim forces, then we have a total civilian death-toll at the hands of the Croat and Muslim forces combined of 5,500 maximum. This amounts to just under 14% of the total civilian death-toll. At least 86% of civilian deaths in the Bosnian war were the work of the Serb forces. They include the overwhelming majority of Croat as well as Muslim civilian victims. This is worth pointing out to those who like to claim that 'all sides were equally guilty'.

To describe the Bosnian war as a 'three-sided war' is therefore something of an exaggeration; it was essentially a two-sided war within which there were some smaller-scale conflicts among the ranks of one of the two sides. The Bosnian Croat military (HVO) remained throughout the war, formally, a constituent part of the Armed Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In some areas such as Tuzla, Bihac, Tesanj and Olovo, the HVO remained loyal to Sarajevo throughout the war; and in some areas, rogue Muslim military forces also waged armed rebellions or clashed with Bosnian regular forces – these included Fikret Abdic's forces in Velika Kladusa and the forces of Musan Topalovic-Caco and Ramiz Delalic-Celo in Sarajevo. Some of these rebel forces, including the rebellious portions of the HVO and Abdic's forces, collaborated with the Serb forces. There were only ever two sides, but some Croat and Muslim units switched sides at least once (In the Spanish Civil War, too, there were armed conflicts between different factions of the Republicans, though to the best of my knowledge none of these actually fought alongside the Nationalists against other Republicans).

6) *Who were the victims?*

The Bosnian war was not a war between Muslims, Serbs and Croats, but a war fought between the defenders and the destroyers of a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina. 381 Serbs, 436 Croats and 69 other non-Muslims/Bosniaks died as Bosnian Army soldiers – nearly 3% of overall Bosnian Army losses (the figures do not include foreign volunteers from outside of Bosnia, such as the foreign mujahedin). The role of Serb and Croat soldiers in the Bosnian Army was more significant than the role of the foreign mujahedin, though this is not often admitted by those who like to highlight the role of the latter. 478 Muslims, 73 Serbs and 17 other non-Croats died as HVO soldiers – nearly 10% of total HVO casualties – most of them, presumably, in the period before the outbreak of the Muslim-Croat war, when the HVO was itself a multinational force resisting the Serb attack. The Serb forces – the Yugoslav People's Army and Army of the Serb Republic – were the least multinational in terms of their losses: 252 non-Serbs – mostly Muslims – died fighting for them, amounting to just over 1% of the losses of the Serb armed forces.

The Bosnian war involved an attack upon Bosnia-Herzegovina by an aggressor, and the aggressor's strategy involved getting Bosnians to kill each other so as to further the partition

of their country into three ethnically homogenous portions. Those Muslims who slaughtered Serb civilians were, therefore, aiding the aggressor, and there is reason to believe that some of these may have been doing this deliberately. In my book, *How Bosnia armed*, I discussed the possibility that high-ranking Muslim and Croat officers of the Bosnian Army and HVO may have been consciously working, as agents or allies of Belgrade, to destroy inter-ethnic relations and partition the country. All 97,207 Bosnian war-dead, as well as all those other Bosnians who died as a result of the war, were victims of the aggression waged by the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, supported by the regime of Franjo Tudjman in Croatia and aided and abetted by the Western alliance and the UN. The war came to an end when the Serb side started losing, and when the Bosnian side abandoned resistance to partition. The victims of the war were Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Bosnian people.

Friday, 4 January 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

VICTORS' JUSTICE IS THE ONLY KIND

Ever since the war in Bosnia, the phenomenon of international tribunals to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity has been growing. The creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 has been followed by the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia; the Special Court for Sierra Leone; and, above all, the International Criminal Court. The last of these has gained particular prominence with its indictment this summer of Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Yet for all the significance of its role as pioneer of international justice, the ICTY has been plagued with controversy since its creation and has been heavily criticised over its performance, not only by its opponents but also by its supporters. Most spectacularly, one of its most vocal champions, Florence Hartmann, former spokeswoman for Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, has herself been indicted by the tribunal

for contempt of court, for allegedly revealing classified information; Hartmann was trying to expose the ICTY's internal politics and machinations that have compromised its pursuit of justice, above all in the case against Slobodan Milosevic. The Hartmann indictment symbolises the way in which this institution, through its failings, has now become the target of the very people who once believed in it most strongly.

To explain the failings of the ICTY it is worth comparing it with the tribunals that conducted the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war-criminals after World War II, in particular with the International Military Tribunal (IMT), that tried twenty-one of the most senior Nazi German leaders. The difference in aim and organisation between the IMT on the one hand and the ICTY on the other go a long way to explaining the difference in results.

The Nuremberg trials have been condemned by critics as a case of 'victors' justice'. Yet in fact, they represented the moderate option for the Allied powers, that had been victims of Nazi aggression or assault and that were determined that the German leaders be punished. Britain's Winston Churchill and the US's Franklin D. Roosevelt both initially favoured the idea of summarily executing hundreds or even thousands of leading Germans without trial, something to which the Allied publics would not have been averse. Yet in the end, it was the proposal of the US secretary of war, Henry Stimson, that the Nazi leaders be given fair trials, that was adopted. Thus, the Nuremberg trials were a case of victors' justice rather than of victors' injustice. Indeed, the contrasting experiences of the Nuremberg trials and of the ICTY suggest that victors' justice may be the only effective kind.

The Nuremberg trials were organised and carried out by Allied powers that had absolutely no intention of allowing the German leadership to go unpunished. The trials followed on from a war of unparalleled brutality in which the Allied armies, despite enormous losses, had totally crushed and occupied Nazi Germany. There was therefore no problem, as was the case with other such trials before and since, of risking Allied soldiers' lives to apprehend war-criminals; the sacrifice had already been made

to defeat the Nazis, and the Allies were in a position to arrest war-criminals without incurring further losses of troops. Nor was there any question, of course, about trying Allied leaders for any war-crimes they might have committed against German or other civilians; the Nuremberg trials proceeded from the premise that Germany had begun the war and that it was wholly to blame for it, and this would determine which side would do the prosecuting and which side's leaders would be tried. The trials were about punishing the aggressor, not about justice for all, and certainly had nothing to do with the idea of 'reconciliation'. The entire weight of political pressure pushed the Allies toward harshness, not toward leniency.

The rights and wrongs of the war, rather than the crimes committed in the course of the war, were foremost in the minds of the Allied leaderships that established the IMT; German leaders were tried for conspiracy to commit crime against peace and for planning, initiating and waging a war of aggression, with crimes against humanity – including even the Holocaust – receiving secondary prominence. The IMT has been described as being a 'multinational tribunal' rather than an 'international tribunal': it was organised by the Allied powers directly, rather than by an international body such as the UN; the Allies had 'done together what any one of them might have done singly'. The IMT pursued and tried the leading war criminals, including such senior figures as Hitler's successor as Fuehrer, Karl Doenitz; Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick; air-force chief Hermann Goering; former deputy Fuehrer Rudolf Hess; High Command Chief of Operations Alfred Jodl; Chief of Staff Wilhelm Keitel; Commander-in-Chief of the Navy Erich Raeder; and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. It was these big fish whom the Allied leaders had considered shooting without trial, and who were then the focus of the IMT, while lower-ranking offenders were dealt with subsequently by national tribunals organised by the Americans, Germans, Poles and others. Of the twenty-one prisoners sentenced by the IMT, eighteen were convicted of which eleven were sentenced to death, while the rest received sentences ranging from ten years to life.

The ICTY was different from the Nuremberg tribunals on almost every count. It did not follow a victorious war and was not imposed by the victims upon the vanquished, nor was it driven by massive pressure from the public and political classes for harsh action. On the contrary, the ICTY was conceived as a substitute for genuine action against the Serbian organisers of the war. The first steps leading to the establishment of the tribunal were taken by the outgoing administration of George Bush Snr in 1992, an administration which otherwise had taken virtually no action to halt Serbia's aggression or punish its leaders. The ICTY was a sop to that section of political opinion in the West – at the time still the minority opinion – that was genuinely outraged by what was happening in Bosnia and demanded action. The ICTY was established by a UN Security Council resolution in 1993, while Western appeasement of Serbia was at its height, and should rightly be viewed as a fig-leaf concealing the sheer extent of this appeasement. It was only in the late summer of 1995 that Bill Clinton's US administration was pushed, kicking and screaming, by Congressional opposition into taking serious military action against Bosnian Serb forces; even so, the peace imposed by the Clinton Administration on Bosnia, in the form of the Dayton Accord, snatched a Serb victory from the jaws of defeat, halting a victorious Croatian and Bosnian military advance and awarding 49% of Bosnia to the Serb rebels.

Instrumental in collaborating with Clinton's envoy Richard Holbrooke to impose peace on the Bosnians was the principal architect of the war himself: Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic was ready to sign the Dayton Accord, despite the fact that it pledged all the Bosnian authorities, including the Bosnian Serbs, to cooperate with the ICTY. At this stage, the tribunal had indicted the Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic – Milosevic's rebellions proxies, who had defied him during the war – but not any senior official of Serbia itself. Like Milosevic, Clinton and Holbrooke were ready to sacrifice Karadzic and Mladic, but they continued to view Milošević himself as a necessary collaborator and pillar of the peace.

We can imagine what the Nuremberg trials would have looked like if they had followed on from a war that ended with the Nazis being awarded 49% of Poland, and from a peace agreement between the Allies and Hitler in which Hitler was looked upon as a crucial partner. An IMT organised in these conditions, naturally, would not have tried and executed Hitler's interior minister, foreign minister and chief of staff. So it was with the ICTY, which was the product of concession, compromise and collaboration, not of victory and the desire for retribution. The ICTY was not imposed by the victims over the vanquished, but by outside powers over the victims and aggressors alike. It made no presumption as to the rights or the wrongs of the war as a whole, indeed it was not authorised to try crimes against the peace or of aggression. Rather, it was mandated to try only individual war-crimeinals from all sides. Even on this limited basis, it was really only the US, of the major Western powers most involved in the war, that showed any interest in the project; the tribunal suffered, in its early years, from the almost complete lack of support, even obstruction, from Britain and France.

The IMT had been set up by the Allied powers themselves; it proceeded briskly and efficiently, with the executions carried out a mere year after the trials had begun, and a year and a half after the war ended. By contrast, the ICTY was a body of the UN – an organisation with which inefficiency, bureaucratism, corruption and nepotism are synonymous. Fifteen years after the tribunal's establishment, and thirteen years after the war's end, the trials are still plodding along; some have not yet even begun. Milosevic's trial lasted four years and ended, incomplete, with his death in custody by natural causes. This has had the inevitable effect of reducing public interest in the trials, above all in the world outside the former Yugoslavia. The powerful body of Western, above all US public opinion that, outraged by what was happening in Bosnia, provided the decisive catalyst for the tribunal's emergence, has largely faded away over the years; what has remained has been a tribunal bureaucracy subject to its own momentum. As an autonomous body in world affairs, it has not enjoyed the support that the IMT received from the victorious

allies; as Hartmann recounts in her published memoirs, Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte had to struggle for attention and support from the Western powers.

With no driving idea of which side was to blame, which of its leaders had orchestrated the mass murder and who should therefore be punished, the ICTY prosecution has proceeded to indict individual suspects on a piecemeal, haphazard basis, beginning with small-fry like the concentration camp guard Dusan Tadic, and largely leaving the top leadership of Serbia untouched. Although the Office of the Prosecutor entered a more ambitious phase in 1999, during the Kosovo War, when Milosevic, as President of Yugoslavia, was indicted along with the Serbian president, Yugoslav deputy prime-minister, Serbian interior minister and Yugoslav chief-of-staff, for war-crimes against Kosovo Albanians, this proved the exception rather than the rule. Not only has the ICTY had no mandate to try crimes of aggression, but the prosecutions have overwhelmingly been for crimes carried out by the perpetrators within their own state, rather than against the inhabitants of neighbouring states. Thus, the aforementioned top Serbian leaders were indicted for war-crimes against the Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo, then a Serbian province. Bosnians have been indicted for crimes against other Bosnians; Croatians for crimes against Croatian Serbs and vice versa. But very few officials from Serbia have been indicted for war-crimes against the people of the neighbouring republics of Croatia and Bosnia.

Thus, over Bosnia, where the greatest part of the mass killing occurred – organised, initiated and executed by the Milošević regime in conjunction with the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) – *only six* officials from Serbia were ever indicted: Slobodan Milosevic, Zeljko Raznatovic-Arkan, Jovica Stanisic, Franko Simatovic, Vojislav Seselj and Momcilo Perisic. Other than Milosevic himself, they were all officials of secondary importance or lower at the time the crimes were committed. The most senior of these was probably Stanisic, who was Serbian interior minister during the Bosnian war, while Perisic became Yugoslav chief of staff only in 1993, after the crimes directly executed by Serbia in Bosnia had already been carried out and Serbia's direct participation

in the war in Bosnia ended. None of the six has yet been convicted. With Milosevic and Arkan dead, the maximum number of officials from Serbia who might be convicted of war-crimes against Bosnians is four. In addition to these, a further seven officers of the JNA, all relatively minor figures, were indicted for war-crimes in Croatia, only one of whom has received a sentence of more than a few years. The total number of officials from Serbia who have been indicted, at twenty-one, is smaller than the number of indicted Bosnian Croats, at twenty-six. The number of officials from Serbia indicted for war-crimes in Bosnia, at six, is smaller than the number of indicted Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina officials, at ten.

The most senior officials of Serbia, Montenegro and the JNA who planned and carried out the aggression against Croatia and Bosnia were, however, never indicted. They include Yugoslav Presidency members for Serbia and Montenegro, Borisav Jovic, Jugoslav Kostic and Branko Kostic; the most senior JNA officers, Yugoslav defence secretary Veljko Kadijevic and Chief of Staff Blagoje Adzic; their deputies Stane Brovet and Zivota Panic; Montenegrin president Momir Bulatovic; and JNA intelligence chief Aleksandar Vasiljevic. Four of these – Jovic, Branko Kostic, Kadijevic and Adzic – escaped indictment despite having been named as members of the ‘Joint Criminal Enterprise’ in Milosevic’s indictment for war-crimes in Bosnia and Croatia. By any standards, Serbia has got off extremely lightly – virtually unpunished – for the wars in Croatia and, in particular, Bosnia.

The indictments policy of the ICTY prosecution requires some explaining. At Nuremberg, the Allies knew who was guilty, wanted to get them and set out to do so. By contrast, the ICTY was set up more for the sake of appearances than for the sake of results, and the choice of indictees was made by prosecutors according to their own agendas, which had little to do with actually punishing those principally responsible for the war. One of the factors that influenced the prosecutors’ policies was the fact that Serbia, unlike Germany, was a defeated but not a crushed and occupied country. The Hague prosecutors could not simply rely on occupation forces to arrest suspects and seize documents,

but had to negotiate their handover with the Serbian authorities themselves. The latter have, of course, not only been far from forthcoming – to the point where Serbia was convicted last year by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of failure to punish genocide – but have repeatedly accused the tribunal of anti-Serb bias. Meanwhile, the Western powers have been uneven in their readiness to apply pressure on Serbia to surrender suspects and documents. Even with regard to ‘Republika Srpska’, where there were international troops on the ground, the Western powers have been wary about offending the Bosnian Serb leaders or risking the lives of their troops to apprehend war-crimes suspects. They may even have entered into secret arrangements that allowed leading war-criminals, such as Radovan Karadzic, to evade capture for many years.

The need to negotiate and compromise with the Serbian authorities, and to counter accusations of ‘anti-Serb bias’, appears to have politicised and skewed the prosecution’s indictments policy. Contrary to myth, in terms of numbers indicted, Serb war-crimes suspects have been under-represented in proportion to their share of the crimes. By any reckoning, Serb forces were responsible for well over 80% of the civilian casualties in the wars of the former Yugoslavia combined, and non-Serb forces (Croatian, Bosnian/Muslim, Kosovo Albanian, Macedonian and NATO) for less than 20%. Yet of 159 indictees, only 108 or 68% were Serb officials (including non-Serbs who fought on the Serb side, like Drazen Erdemovic and Franko Simatovic) and 51 or 32% were Croatian, Bosnian, Kosovo Albanian or Macedonian officials. The percentage reflects not the respective proportions of killing carried out by Serbs and by non-Serbs, but the respective resources devoted by the prosecution to investigating Serb crimes and non-Serb crimes. Thus, when I was working as a Research Officer at the Office of the Prosecutor in 2001, out of eleven investigative teams, only seven – less than two-thirds – were devoted to investigating Serb war-crimes, and four to investigating non-Serb war-crimes.

Thus, the ICTY prosecutors distributed their human resources so as to guarantee that Serb war-criminals – responsible for

over four-fifths of the killing of civilians – would comprise only two-thirds of indictees. And of the 108 Serb indictees, only 21 were from Serbia itself; the remainder were mostly Bosnian Serbs (83) and a few Croatian Serbs (4). Even with regard to the Serb share of indictments, Serbia itself has been largely spared while its local collaborators in the countries it attacked – above all Bosnians – have borne the brunt. And while the top Serbian/JNA commanders who planned and executed the Serbian aggression against Bosnia and Croatia have escaped indictment, the top Croatian and Bosnian commanders who led the defence of their countries – Janko Bobetko, Sefer Halilovic and Rasim Delic – have been indicted for crimes much smaller in scale, or for which they were not directly responsible. Thus, Kadijevic and Adzic escaped indictment for Vukovar or for what happened in Bosnia up to 19 May 1992, which was when the Yugoslav Army officially withdrew from Bosnia. But Bobetko was indicted over Croatian Army crimes committed at the Medak pocket in 1993, and Delic for crimes carried out by the foreign mujahedin.

It is not only over indictments policy, but also over evidence collection, that the ICTY has allowed political or tactical considerations to sway its pursuit of justice. Serbia was required to submit to the ICTY judges in the Milosevic case the minutes of the Supreme Defence Council of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – the body made up of the presidents of Serbia, Montenegro and Yugoslavia – i.e. of Milosevic and two of his allies. This body initially had command over all Bosnian Serb forces, up until 19 May 1992, and subsequently remained in command of the Yugoslav Army up to and after the time of the Srebrenica massacre, during which it collaborated with the Bosnian Serb forces. The judges at the ICTY, however, allowed Serbia to withhold certain passages from this set of documents in the version seen by the public and by the ICJ. Bosnia could not therefore use these crucial documents for its case against Serbia for genocide at the ICJ. This, combined with the ICJ's own concessions to Serbia, helped ensure Serbia's acquittal. Phon van den Biesen, a member of the Bosnian team, has gone on record to say that the full documents would probably have demonstrated that the Bosnian

Serb forces were under Serbia's control during the Srebrenica massacre, which has been legally established to have been an act of genocide by both the ICTY and the ICJ.

This brings us on to the crime of genocide, which has assumed much greater international prominence as a result of the events in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s. With its successful prosecution of the Bosnian Serb officer Radislav Krstic for genocide at Srebrenica, the ICTY is the first of three international courts to determine that Serb forces were guilty of genocide in Bosnia; it has been followed by the ICJ and by the European Court of Human Rights. In this respect, the ICTY has gone further than the Nuremberg trials went, for although the IMT indictment accused the German leaders of 'deliberate and systematic genocide', it did not charge them with this crime, as the term 'genocide' had then only recently been coined, and the concept was only beginning to gain credence. Thus, the German leaders were charged merely with 'crimes against humanity', though it is for the genocide of the Jews, of all their crimes, that they are principally remembered.

Yet despite its importance in determining that genocide occurred in Bosnia, the ICTY has proved, in this regard as in others, to have been a toothless tribunal. It has successfully prosecuted only one individual, the lowly deputy corps commander Krstic, for a genocide-related offence. A second Bosnian Serb officer, Vidoje Blagojevic, was convicted of genocide but subsequently acquitted on appeal of all genocide-related charges, while Momcilo Krajisnik, a member of the Republika Srpska presidency, was acquitted of genocide straight out. Thus, the ICTY has established the occurrence of a genocide for which almost nobody – and nobody senior – has yet been found guilty. The ICTY is not, of course, solely to blame for these meagre results: the international community has so far failed to pressurise Serbia into handing over Ratko Mladic, suspected as the mastermind behind the Srebrenica massacre, to the tribunal.

One final difference separates the IMT from the ICTY: the issue of 'reconciliation'. The UN Security Council resolution establishing the tribunal justified it as something that would 'contribute

to the restoration and maintenance of peace', and its supporters frequently argue that prosecution of individual war-criminals is necessary in order to free the respective former-Yugoslav peoples of the stigma of collective guilt, thereby facilitating reconciliation between them. Paradoxically, however, it was the more overtly retributive IMT and subsequent Nuremberg tribunals, by determining in advance that one side was guilty and efficiently punishing its top surviving leaders, that appear to have been more effective in achieving reconciliation between Germany and the nations it attacked. For Germany has not been allowed to escape condemnation as the side guilty for the war, while those it attacked have witnessed that justice has been done.

By contrast, there is no evidence to suggest that the ICTY – with no prior allocation of guilt to one side in the war, by treating war-crimes on a purely individual basis, and by lumping together war-criminals from all sides – has made any contribution to reconciliation between the former Yugoslavs. On the contrary. Unlike after World War II, the international community has failed to impose a narrative of who was to blame for the War of Yugoslav Succession, and to force each side to accept it. Consequently, each side continues to see itself as the victim in the conflict, and to see the tribunal's record purely in terms of how too many of its own people and/or too few of the other sides' have been indicted, or how the other sides' inditees have been wrongfully acquitted or received too short sentences. According to a recent study by an international team of scholars led by Vojin Dimitrijevic and Julie Mertus: 'The hope that it [the ICTY] might promote reconciliation between the peoples of the region does not appear to have been realised.'

There is a lesson to be learned from the respective experiences of the IMT and ICTY: so far as war-crimes are concerned, there can be no real justice without the real defeat of the perpetrators.

This article was published today on the website of the *Henry Jackson Society*. A Croatian-language version was published earlier this month in the Croatian weekly *Globus*.

Sunday, 28 December 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

ANTI-SEMITISM, RACISM
AND SREBRENICA GENOCIDE DENIAL

The justice or injustice of a cause may in large part be measured by the ethics displayed by those who uphold it. The ongoing campaign to whitewash the former regimes of Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic and to justify their genocidal crimes against the Bosniaks is about as unworthy a cause as it is possible to imagine; consequently, the people who wage it do so in the most dishonest and malicious manner possible. Their campaign is fundamentally an expression of hatred – for Bosniaks, Croats, Albanians, anti-fascist Serbs, Jews and others who opposed the genocide. So their tactics are of the most hateful kind, involving systematic character assassination and racist and anti-Semitic abuse of those who speak about the genocide and the ideology that gave rise to it.

‘The Jews have had a disproportionate impact’

Most recently, a libellous and racist hate-campaign has been waged by the genocide-deniers – above all, Islamophobic far-right elements in North America – against members of the Institute for the Research of Genocide, Canada (IRGC), which among other things, campaigns against Bosnia genocide-denial. This campaign has accelerated following the decision last month of the Canadian authorities to deny entry into Canada of Srdja Trifkovic, a man who regularly engages in hate-speech against Islam and Muslims. Trifkovic had been invited by a Serbian students’ organisation at the University of British Columbia to give a speech at one of their meetings, but was barred from Canada because he had been an official of the wartime regime of ‘Republika Srpska’, hence ‘for being a proscribed senior official in the service of a government that, in the opinion of the minister, engages or has engaged in terrorism, systematic or gross human rights violations, or genocide, a war crime or a crime against humanity within the meaning of subsections 6 (3) to (5) of the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act.’

[I had personally written to Professor Stephen J. Toope, President of UBC, urging him to prevent Trifkovic from giving his talk. While I respect the right of genocide deniers to engage in genocide denial, I draw the line at allowing inciters of hatred against ethnic or religious groups to speak at universities, as I consider this an infringement on the rights of staff and students at the universities in question to work and study free from the fear of persecution or harassment. However, it was the Canadian authorities, not the UBC, that ultimately prevented Trifkovic from speaking.]

Supporters of Trifkovic responded to their setback with a campaign of personal defamation directed against members of the IRGC. The anti-Muslim hate-site 'Gates of Vienna' denounced the IRGC as 'Jew-haters', though without being able to quote a single anti-Semitic statement made by any of its members. This smear was a repeat of one levelled by Trifkovic himself against Professor Emir Ramic, the IRGC's chairman, on the website of an extreme right-wing organisation, 'The Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies', run by former Canadian ambassador James Bissett. Trifkovic accused Ramic of being a 'Jew-hating jihadist' – again, without being able to produce a single piece of evidence that Ramic was either anti-Semitic, or that he supported jihad [since the articles in question are extremely libellous, I'm not going to link to them].

The basis for the accusation was the claim that Ramic was a member of the editorial board of a Bosnian journal called 'Korak', that has published some viciously anti-Israel articles. The articles in question were, indeed, viciously anti-Israel. But Ramic is not a member of the editorial board of the journal in question, so the accusation is totally false. The second basis for the accusation is that Korak's editor, Asaf Dzanic, is a member of the IRGC's board of directors. Yet, as anyone can see from the IRGC's website, its board of directors is very large and diverse, numbering over 120, and includes several eminent Jewish members, including the famous Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. Most of these members, including Dzanic, are in the capacity of an 'International Team of Experts'. The website also carries a powerful defence of the IRGC

from the smears of Trifkovic and the ‘Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies’, written by the Israeli writer Marjan Hajnal – also a member of the IRGC’s board of directors. The smearing of the entire institute as ‘Jew-hating’ and its director as ‘jihadi’ is, therefore, a desperate clutching at straws on the part of the Srebrenica deniers.

The ‘Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies’ has also accused Ramic and the IRGC of ‘Holocaust denial’. Again, not a single piece of evidence was produced to substantiate this very serious charge. In fact, the charge of ‘Holocaust denial’ was made after the IRGC had weeks earlier published, and prominently displayed on its website, an article marking Holocaust Memorial Day and paying tribute to the victims of the Holocaust, which made clear ‘The Holocaust of World War II was the despicable, systematic process of torturing and murdering nearly six million European Jews, by German Nazis. Approximately two-thirds of nine million European Jews were murdered throughout that particular Holocaust.’

The irony of such smears is all the greater in that Trifkovic himself, unlike Ramic, is on record as having made anti-Semitic statements. Trifkovic has stated:

‘To claim that the traditional Right is “anti-Jewish” is to imply that it is gripped by an irrational prejudice. Such accusation is untrue and unfair.

It is true, however, that the traditional Right is inevitably antipathetic to certain modes of thought and feeling, to a peculiar *Weltanschauung* and the resulting forms of public and intra-communal discourse, which are quite properly perceived as specifically Jewish.

Historically, Talmudic Judaism’s insistence on the Jews’ racial uniqueness — emphasized by the ritual and dietary laws of Talmudic Judaism and on its view of Christians as idolaters — has ensured that a Jew steeped in his own tradition could not view traditional European or American conservatism with sympathy. His tradition was a form of elaborate survival mechanism based on the zero-sum view of a world divided into “us” and “them.” The Gentile was “the Other” *ab initio* and for ever.

In addition, since the late 1800's the Jews have had a disproportionate impact on a host of intellectual trends and political movements which have fundamentally altered the civilization of Europe and its overseas offspring in a manner deeply detrimental to the family, nation, culture, racial solidarity, social coherence, tradition, morality and faith. Spontaneously or deliberately, those ideas and movements — Marxism (including neo-conservatism as the bastard child of Trotskyism), Freudianism, Frankfurt School cultural criticism, Boasian anthropology, etc. — have eroded “the West” to the point where its demographic and cultural survival is uncertain. The erosion is continuing, allegedly in the name of propositional principles and universal values, and it is pursued with escalating ferocity.’

‘Even when Jews don’t come out smelling like roses’

The extreme right-wing and viciously racist and Islamophobic American commenter Julia Gorin has apologised for Trifkovic’s anti-Semitism in the following manner:

‘While virgin eyes (mainstream readers and anyone not experienced in sorting out the intricacies and boundaries of what is and isn’t OK to say about Jews) will read the paragraphs as “anti-Semitic,” the views expressed aren’t unlike what I and any number of other Jewish conservatives have written in an effort to tame the Jewish predisposition toward cynicism about, and dismantling of, the traditional values of, yes, white-established societies... It’s not reading that would be palatable to the mainstream, but conservative readers — including Jewish conservatives — are known to have a slightly higher tolerance for truth, even when Jews don’t come out smelling like roses.’

Thus, Trifkovic and Gorin have no problem with anti-Semitism, but do have a problem with those, like Ramic and the IRGC, that oppose Srebrenica genocide denial. Gorin’s apology for Trifkovic’s anti-Semitism was made in the course of an article denying the genocide at Srebrenica. Again, unlike Ramic, Gorin is an unabashed anti-Albanian, anti-Croat and anti-Bosniak racist.

Commenting on a recent obituary of the Croatian journalist Chris Cviic, a long-standing resident of the UK and recipient of the OBE, which stated 'He is survived by his widow, Celia, and a son and a daughter', Gorin commented 'Yayyyy! More little Ustashes running rampant in the West.' In response to a story in the British rag-sheet *The Daily Star* about the alleged activities of Kosovo Albanian immigrants in the UK, entitled 'Kosovan squatters stole my loo', Gorin commented 'Ah, the Albanian specialty: invading someone's home and stripping it bare. (See Kosovo, Serbia.) Then they get to do it again at the UK government's expense. What the hell are they going to do with the toilet? Do they even know what it's for?' Racists like Gorin typify the Srebrenica deniers. Another Srebrenica genocide denier, Nebojsa Malic of *Antiwar.com*, has also made racist statements about Albanians, describing them as 'medieval barbarians'.

Srebrenica denial and anti-Semitism frequently go hand in hand. The anti-Semite, Holocaust denier and associate of Julian Assange who goes by the name of 'Israel Shamir' is a Srebrenica denier and has written 'Many war atrocity stories are just stories – from Srebrenica to Kosovo "killing fields", from Saddam Hussein's WMD to Belgian babies on German bayonets of the WWI, from Kuwait's incubator to anti-communist inventions of the Black Book.' Shamir was one of a group of Srebrenica deniers, including Edward S. Herman and Diana Johnstone, who wrote an open letter to the Serbian parliament calling on them not to recognise the Srebrenica massacre.

'This self-serving Jew'

Srebrenica genocide denial tends to go hand-in-hand with the denial of the genocidal crimes carried out by Serbian Nazi quislings and collaborators during World War II. When the Milosevic and Karadzic regimes waged their war for a Great Serbia in the 1990s, a major element in their propaganda was the equation of the entire Croat and Bosniak nations with the Ustashes (Croatian fascists) of World War II. The reality was that the Serb, Croat and Bosniak nations during World War II were all divided between anti-fascists and quislings or collaborators. Thus, the

Nazi-quisling camp included Croat Ustahas, Serb Nedicites and Ljoticites and Muslim soldiers of the SS Handzar Division, while the anti-fascist Yugoslav Partisans comprised Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks and others. But the Great Serbian nationalists of the 1990s waged a hate-campaign against Croats and Bosniaks, seeking to equate the entire Croat and Bosniak nations with the Ustahas.

One man who saw through this propaganda early on was the Jewish American medical doctor Philip J. Cohen. As Philip told me when I met him back in the mid-1990s in the US, he approached the Bosnian genocide as a Jew who knew the history of the Holocaust and the failure of the world to prevent it, and felt strongly that something similar should not be allowed to happen again. He was not in the slightest bit taken in by the Serb-nationalist campaign to equate all Croats and Bosniaks with the Ustahas, and responded to it by researching and writing the book *Serbia's Secret War*. This book traced the history of anti-Semitism in Serbia and the role of Serbian quislings and collaborators in the Holocaust. It therefore demolished the myth that in the former Yugoslavia, it had only been Croats and Bosniaks who had produced quislings, or engaged in anti-Jewish actions. And although Cohen was not a professional historian or academic, the book is very good.

Needless to say, Cohen does not in any way deny the crimes of the Croatian Ustahas against Jews, Serbs or others. But his exposure of the crimes of Serbian quislings against Jews in World War II led to his being the subject of an anti-Semitic denunciation by a Serb nationalist writer called Vasilije Todorovic, who published an open letter in 1996 claiming (falsely) that 'Cohen, this self-serving Jew, has even managed to condone the killing of 60,000 Jews in WW II, by the very Croats from whom he receives his major support. I believe you Jews call this, Chutzpah!' And 'How astonishing that for 46 years the Roman Church and its Vatican failed to recognize Israel. Now this upstart Jew, Philip Cohen, defends their actions.' Todorovic extended his attack on Cohen into a general diatribe against Jews: 'There are no Spielberg movies made about these brave Serbian families who saved Jews. At the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Serbs

were totally ignored as the Museum honored a Roman Catholic woman for saving the lives of 6 Jews.' Furthermore, 'Cohen omits the documents that reveal that Jews also joined the Ustasha and the Partisans and murdered numerous loyalists Serbs. In Cohen's personal secret war against the Serbs, no mention is made that many of the Croatian Nazi officers had Jewish wives.' And so on.

Todorovic's article was written fifteen years ago, but the attacks on Cohen for having the temerity to write of the activities of Serbian Nazi quislings have continued. Two years ago, the amateur Serbian-American historian Carl Savich attempted to smear Cohen by claiming that he hadn't even written his own book:

'Philip J. Cohen is a medical doctor, a dermatologist with no background or training in history, let alone the World War II history of Serbia. Moreover, he has no knowledge of the Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian languages. How could he have written Serbia's Secret War, which required a detailed and exhaustive analysis and research of Serbian language documents? Such a massive undertaking would require a thorough knowledge of the historical debates and nuances involved in the issues examined. Cohen couldn't have written it. And he didn't write it. Cohen was the front, the front man in a Croatian propaganda hoax. Because Croatia was a satellite, proxy, and client state of the U.S., Cohen received U.S. support and backing. The screed buttressed the anti-Serbian U.S. infowar and propagnada war.'

Savich claimed that Serbia's Secret War had actually been written by a Croatian historian called Ljubica Stefan. He offered not a shred of evidence for his allegations.

I can personally testify that Cohen is the author of Serbia's Secret War. At the time he was writing it, I met him at a seminar at Yale University, where I was studying at the time, and he asked me to assist him in working on the manuscript to his book. Consequently, I read his manuscript, made comments on it, then stayed with him at his home for two or three days and helped him work through some of the documents he had yet to analyse. Although Philip did not read Serbo-Croat himself, he told me he

had benefited from a lot of assistance, in translating documents, from the Croatian writer Anto Knezevic. Having spoken with him at length and seen his library and archive, I know for a fact that Savich's allegations are complete fabrications.

*'Other prominent Jews would apply
the same techniques against the Serbian Orthodox population'*

Savich is not a real historian and has no qualifications in history other than a Master's degree, so it may not be surprising that his treatment of historical fact is less than professional. But he is also himself ready to engage in anti-Semitic writing. Here is a comment he wrote on the history of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia:

'One consequence of the Austrian occupation of Bosnia was that Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities were flooded with over 9,500 bureaucrats and administrators and commercial and trade interests. Many of these were Ashkenazi Jews. Austrian Jews sought to benefit from the annexation and occupation of Bosnia. Racism and bigotry are based in self-interest. The racist attack against Orthodox Serbs by the Jew Freundlich can be explained in this way. His moral outrage is selective and self-interested. Austrian Jews would gain economic advantages by the Austrian occupation of Bosnia. Remarkably, Roy Gutman, Anthony Lewis, Susan Sontag, James Rubin, and other prominent Jews would apply the same techniques against the Serbian Orthodox population, i.e, professing a disingenuous concern for the human rights of the Albanians and Bosnian Muslims, at the same time ignoring the genocide and repression of the Palestinian population by the zealous Zionist nationalist government in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which were being illegally settled by Jewish settlers. There was little concern for the human rights of the Palestinians, Kurds, or Basques. There is a dictum: Follow the money trail. Self-interest goes a long way in explaining the bias. Thus, under Austrian occupation, there were thousands of occupation administrators and bureaucrats, many of whom were Jewish.'

Savich is himself an apologist for the Nazi-quisling Nedic regime that ran German-occupied Serbia, claiming that it had ‘no choice in the matter of its collaboration’, that it was no different from the Judenraete in occupied Poland and the Soviet Union, and that it played no role in running concentration camps. All these claims are false.

Savich’s smear, of course, targeted not only Cohen, but also Ljubica Stefan. Stefan is listed among the ‘Righteous among Nations’ at Israel’s Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, as a Croatian who protected Jews during the Holocaust. This is what Savich has to say about her (again, without producing any evidence whatsoever):

‘Although she lived most of her life in Serbia, she was an ethnic Croatian. She lived and worked in Belgrade. She knew the Serbian language. She had access to Serbian documents and archives. Also, as a hack historian, a pseudo-historian, someone below the radar, she did not have to concern herself about academic or scholarly accountability. Moreover, everything that appears in the Cohen text also appears in propaganda screeds published by or attributed to Stefan when she worked for the Croatian Government Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Stefan worked closely with Croatian ultra-nationalist Franjo Tudjman in rehabilitating the Ustasha regime and engaged in historical revisionism by attempting to equate Serbia’s role during the Holocaust with that of Croatia’s Ustasha NDH government.’

So Savich, who has no academic qualifications beyond a Master’s degree and who is an apologist for the Nazi-quisling Nedic regime, accuses Stefan, who was a tenured professor at a Belgrade faculty and who actually protected Jews during the Holocaust, of being a ‘pseudo-historian’ guilty of ‘historical revisionism.’

‘Agent of imperialism’

Anti-fascist Serbs, as much as non-Serbs, can become victims of racism when they oppose the activities of the Serbian extreme-right. The Serbian human-rights activist Sonja Biserko of

the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, a frequent victim of physical harassment and defamation at the hands of Serbian fascist thugs and their rag-sheets, is periodically denounced by them as a 'lesbian'. But she has also been denounced for supposedly not being of pure Serbian racial stock. Thus, an anonymous Srebrenica genocide denier – whose genocide denial subsequently led to him being banned by the proprietor of Modernity Blog – challenged my description of her as 'Serbian' in the following terms: 'Serbian, eh? Funny thing is, Sonja Biserko keeps her biographical details well hidden. A wiki page lists her as Croatian, whereas a poster on some forum claims that: her brother was a member of Croatian troops, so called "Zbor narodne garde" and was killed in fight with Krajina Serbs.'

The anonymous creep in question challenged me to confirm or deny the truth of his rumours. This sort of malicious gossip always puts us in a difficult position, as however unlikely it is that such rumours are true, we cannot formally deny them unless we know for certainty that they are false. Readers may recall the rumour that former Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic recruited for the SS during World War II; no evidence has ever been produced to substantiate this claim, so we have to assume that it is false, particularly given the seriousness of the charge. But I cannot say for absolute certainty that it is untrue.

However, having now researched the matter, I can say for absolute, 100% certainty that Biserko's brother was not a member of the Croatian armed forces, and was not killed in combat with Serb forces. He was not even present in Croatia during the war. As for the claim that Sonja is 'Croatian' rather than Serbian; since she is a Serbian citizen, was born in Belgrade and since her father was an ethnic Serb, the smear entirely rests on the fact that her mother is an ethnic Croat. The suggestion being that any Serb whose background isn't 100% ethnically pure is 'not really' Serb at all.

The idea that someone's patriotism can be called into question on the basis of their 'alien' ethnic background has been a favourite of the far right since the Dreyfus Affair. In reality, people from ethnically non-Serb or mixed backgrounds, including

ethnic Croats and Bosniaks, have often become hardline Serb nationalists, or supported the Milosevic regime – examples are Emir Kusturica, Jovan Zamenta, Franko Simatovic and Mihalj Kertes. The Serbian fascist leader Vojislav Seselj was frequently accused of being an ethnic Croat, on the grounds that ‘Seselj’ is a Croat surname – he was pathetically reduced to obtaining a certificate from the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (for which he allegedly paid a small sum in deutschmarks) to ‘prove’ he was ‘genuinely’ Serb.

As a footnote, the smear against Sonja was posted on the ‘Aar-onovitch Watch’ malicious-gossip site, about which I have recently written, and is entirely characteristic of the sort of material that is posted there. Biserko’s smearer was actively encouraged to post malicious rumours about me as well by the blog’s proprietor, the Guardian columnist and Credit Suisse stockbroker Daniel Davies (interestingly, Credit Suisse is the same company for which the late Richard Holbrooke worked). Evidence suggests that Davies may not be entirely neutral in former-Yugoslav matters; he has spoken of his friendship with the blogger Splintered Sunrise, a sympathiser of the neo-Nazi Serbian Radical Party; and of Christopher Deliso, author of a viciously Islamophobic propaganda tract about Balkan Muslims significantly entitled *The coming Balkan caliphate* (which I have dissected), which itself draws heavily on the ‘work’ of Srebrenica genocide deniers, in particular Darko Trifunovic, but also Nebojsa Malic. Davies has also stated that during the war in the former Yugoslavia, ‘I actually had a certain amount of sympathy for the Serbian Republic (though not the Bosnian Serbs)’.

Davies’s friend Splintered Sunrise has himself described Biserko as an ‘agent of imperialism’ in a comment on the Lenin’s Tomb blog (the comments are no longer visible online, but I possess the print-out). A further example of demonisation and character assassination that is entirely characteristic.

Thursday, 24 March 2011 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

NEBOJSA MALIC AND THE SKULL TOWER

Nebojsa Malic, the increasingly bitter and paranoid Balkans affairs columnist at *Antiwar.com*, has a post on his blog, accusing me of having written an anonymous ‘character assassination’ of him, which was published by Palluxo [see below]. Why exactly he considers the article in question a ‘character assassination’ is unclear, since he does not seem to dispute almost any of the points it makes. For example, the article accuses Malic of being a denier of the Srebrenica genocide, which is something to which he readily admits. The article lists various factual errors that Malic has made in his writings about Srebrenica; Malic does not attempt to challenge any part of this refutation. And so on.

For the record, I did not write the article in question. If I had wanted to write an article exposing Malic’s genocide-denial and poor grasp of history, I would have done so under my own name, after which Palluxo or anyone else would have been free to republish it.

Having said that, I must confess that I have recently been tempted to write a post about Malic, after reading this absolute gem that he penned a couple of months ago, about the Skull Tower of Nis. I strongly recommend reading the whole post, but for those who understandably can’t be bothered, Malic begins:

If there was just one thing I could show someone seeking to understand the Serbs, I would take them to a hill northeast of Niš (Ниш), and show them the Skull Tower.

Though Serbian medieval statehood was mortally wounded in the battle of Kosovo (1389), its last embers were smothered in 1459, as the conquering Ottoman Turks swept into Europe again following their conquest of Constantinople. For the next three centuries, Serbs lived under the Ottoman yoke. Some converted to save their lives and property. Some sought refuge in remote areas, or the Austrian and Hungarian borderlands. Others trudged on, bowed but not broken, all the while hoping for freedom.

And he concludes:

Today, their own government tells the Serbs they should value comfort over freedom, material goods over dignity, pleasure over honor. In just the last twenty years, over a million Serbs have been forced from their homes and dispossessed. First forced into Communist-imposed borders, Serbia itself is now being partitioned anew, as its province of Kosovo was occupied by NATO in 1999 and declared an “independent” Albanian state in 2008. The very real suffering of Serbs in Ottoman times, during two German occupations in the 20th century, and in the wars of the 1990s, is routinely dismissed or minimized, even as Serbs are accused of committing wholly fabricated “genocides” against their neighbors, who somehow always happened to serve the conquering outsiders.

The Skull Tower is not just a reminder of the steep but necessary price of freedom. It is also a monument to the brutality of the supposedly “tolerant” and “multicultural” Ottoman Empire, and the horrific institution of *devşirme* that produced psychopaths like Hurshid Ahmed Pasha.

Those who seek to conquer the Serbs ought to take a long, hard look at this monument. The Turks once believed their dominion would last forever. But in 1815 another uprising began. By 1830, Serbia was an autonomous principality. In 1878 it was recognized as independent. And in 1912, the Ottoman Empire was chased out of the Balkans at long last.

So long as a people value freedom, they can either prevail or perish, but can never be conquered.

For anyone with an appreciation for the comic side of Serb nationalism, it really doesn't get any better than this. To criticize this masterpiece would be – as Punch said in relation to P.G. Wodehouse – like taking a spade to a soufflé, and I'm not going to do it. I don't want to be accused of being anti-Serb; for all I know, there may be Croats who get equally dewy-eyed when writing about the statue of Ban Jelacic in Zagreb's central square, and Britons who get that way when writing about Nelson's Column ('If there was just one thing I could show someone seeking to understand the British, I would take them to a square in the

middle of London, and show them Nelson's Column. Or possibly the London Dungeon.').

Still, I do find Malic's abandonment of any lingering pretense at a libertarian anti-war philosophy, and retreat into outright romantic-nationalist narcissism and historical-mythological escapism, truly bizarre.

As for who really wrote the Palluxo article – Nebojsa could always adopt the traditional strategy of blaming it on the Vatican. Or possibly the Germans.

Thursday, 9 July 2009 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

4

Bosnia Over Political Mud

SIR MALCOLM RIFKIND: ARMS EMBARGO ON BOSNIA WAS
'THE MOST SERIOUS MISTAKE MADE BY THE UN'

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, as Defence Secretary until July 1995 and thereafter as Foreign Secretary, was one of the architects of Britain's disastrous policy toward the war in Bosnia. For over three years, on the basis of this policy, Britain obstructed all meaningful intervention to halt Serbian aggression and genocide in Bosnia, pressurised the Bosnian government to accept the dismemberment of its country, and – most notoriously – mercilessly upheld a UN arms embargo that seriously restricted Bosnia's ability to defend itself. It was, in effect, an intervention on the side of the aggressor and against the victim. As a direct result of that policy, Bosnia remains a mess to this day.

Yet Sir Malcolm has had time to reconsider. Monday's edition of *The Times* published a powerful piece by him calling for intervention in support of the rebels in Libya, in which he argues the following:

'First and most important should be an open and urgent supply of the necessary weapons to the insurgents so that they can fight Gaddafi on equal terms. The UN has imposed an arms embargo and some have suggested that this makes illegal any supply of weapons to either side in Libya. The UN

Resolution, however, refers to a ban on arms supply to the Libyan “Jamahiriya”, which is Gaddafi’s invented name for the state he controls. It need not prevent supplies to those trying to bring him down. Otherwise, we will repeat the mistake of the Bosnian war – when the UN embargo had much less impact on the Bosnian Serbs who were, already, heavily armed. Having been Defence Secretary at that time I have, in retrospect, felt that that was the most serious mistake made by the UN.’ [emphasis added]

Indeed, there had likewise been no legal obligation on the part of UN member states to enforce the arms embargo against Bosnia, since *UN Security Council Resolution 713* had been imposed on the state of Yugoslavia, not on the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those enforcing the embargo against Bosnia did so because they wanted to, not because they were legally obliged to. So it is with the Libyan rebels today.

As Jesus said, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Former US president Bill Clinton has similarly admitted his error in failing to intervene to stop the genocide in Rwanda: ‘I feel terrible about it because I think we could have sent 5,000, 10,000 troops there and saved a couple hundred thousand lives. I think we could have saved about half of them. But I’ll always regret that Rwandan thing. I will always feel terrible about it.’

One wonders whether Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton will one day regret the shameful policy they are pursuing toward Libya today.

NB As The Times operates a paywall, non-subscribers are unable to read Sir Malcolm’s article.

THE ARREST OF EJUP GANIC:
SERBIA'S AGGRESSION AGAINST BOSNIA CONTINUES

Imagine if, fifteen years after the end of World War II, the Japanese government had tried to have Henry A. Wallace, Vice President of the US during the war, extradited to face trial in Japan for the deaths of Japanese soldiers during the Battle of Pearl Harbour. Imagine if the German government after the war had tried to have survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising extradited from Israel to Germany to face trial for the killing of German soldiers during the uprising.

On Monday, Ejup Ganic, the former *de facto* Bosnian vice-president during the war of 1992-95, was arrested in London at the request of the Serbian government, which seeks his extradition to face trial in Serbia for the killing of Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) soldiers in Sarajevo on 3 May 1992. This incident demonstrates that Serbia is still very far from showing repentance for its aggression against Bosnia during the 1990s. On the contrary, with the arrest of Ganic, Serbia is continuing this aggression, by attempting to persecute Bosnians guilty only of trying to defend their country from it.

The incident for which Ganic's extradition is being sought by Belgrade occurred at Dobrovoljacka ulica (Volunteers' Street) in Sarajevo on 3 May 1992. At this time, the JNA forces in Sarajevo and in Bosnia as a whole were *de jure* and *de facto* the forces of the neighbouring state, the self-proclaimed 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' (i.e. Serbia and Montenegro), which was then engaged in a full-scale war of conquest against Bosnia-Herzegovina, involving the systematic massacre and expulsion of non-Serbs from the areas that it occupied. In principle, the JNA should have been the joint army of all the former Yugoslavia's republics and peoples. But thanks to the Serb preponderance in its top command and its officer corps, from 1990 the JNA had been transformed into an exclusively Serbian (and technically also Montenegrin) army. On 27 June 1990, Veljko Kadijevic, the Yugoslav Secretary of People's Defence and the most senior officer of the JNA, agreed with Borisav Jovic, Serbia's representative

on the Yugoslav Federal presidency and Slobodan Milosevic's right-hand man, a plan 'forcibly to expel' Slovenia and a dismembered Croatia from Yugoslavia, thereby breaking up the common state and creating what was in effect a Great Serbia. The JNA was thereafter steadily transformed into a Serbian army.

During the war in Croatia in 1991-92, the JNA fought against Croatia, bombarding Croatian cities, killing and expelling Croatian civilians and turning over territory to the Serb rebels in Croatia – all without any authorisation from its constitutional commander, the Yugoslav Federal presidency, or from the Yugoslav government of Ante Markovic. The JNA simply disregarded orders given to it by Stjepan Mesic, the Yugoslav president. On 3 October 1991, even formal pretence that the JNA was still 'Yugoslav' was dropped; the Serbian and Montenegrin members of the Yugoslav presidency carried out a *coup d'etat*, appropriating to themselves the right to command the JNA. This represented a violation of the rights of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was still part of Yugoslavia. From then on, the JNA on Bosnian territory was a Serbian and Montenegrin army of occupation.

The Bosnian presidency and government under Alija Izetbegovic remained neutral during the war in Croatia. They bent over backwards to avoid provoking the JNA on Bosnian territory, and to retain good relations with it. Izetbegovic, his fellow Bosnian presidency member Ejup Ganic and other senior Muslim political leaders naively believed that war could be avoided and that the JNA would not support the Serb extremists. This was an error of monumental proportions. Following a long and careful preparation, at the start of April 1992 – before Bosnia-Herzegovina's independence had been recognised by the international community – the JNA, under Serbia's formal control, launched a full-scale military attack on Bosnia-Herzegovina. Eventually, the Bosnian Serb nationalists under Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic would assume command of a formally independent Bosnian Serb army ('Army of the Serb Republic'). But until 19 May 1992, all Bosnian Serb forces were either themselves part of the JNA, or under JNA command.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in its 2007 verdict in Bosnia's case against Serbia for genocide, ruled that 'it is established by overwhelming evidence that massive killings in specific areas and detention camps throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina were perpetrated during the conflict' and that 'the victims were in large majority members of the protected group [the Muslims], which suggests that they may have been systematically targeted by the killings.' Moreover, 'it has been established by fully conclusive evidence that members of the protected group were systematically victims of massive mistreatment, beatings, rape and torture causing serious bodily and mental harm, during the conflict and, in particular, in the detention camps.' This process began while all Bosnian Serb forces were still under the command of Serbia and the JNA, whose central role in these crimes has been extensively documented.

Izetbegovic and Ganic were certainly guilty in relation to the JNA – they were guilty of failing to prepare their country to resist its aggression, and for failing to take action against it even after this aggression had begun. Already during 1990, in preparation for its attack on Bosnia, the JNA had begun disarming the Bosnian Territorial Defence, but had run into resistance from sections of the latter, which refused to turn over their weapons. After Izetbegovic and Ganic came to power in the Bosnian elections of autumn 1990, their Bosnian presidency actually ordered the Bosnian Territorial Defence to turn over its weapons to the JNA. Izetbegovic and Ganic would continue to restrain Bosnian resistance to the JNA until long after the aggression had begun. When the Serbian paramilitaries of Zeljko Raznatovic 'Arkan' attacked the Bosnian city of Bijeljina on 1 April 1992, Izetbegovic sanctioned the JNA's occupation of the city, in the belief that it would restrain the Serb extremists. Weeks after the JNA and Serbia's paramilitaries had already begun conquering Bosnian towns and killing and expelling their non-Serb inhabitants – Bijeljina on 1-3 April, Kupres on 8 April, Zvornik on 8-10 April, and so forth – Izetbegovic was still systematically vetoing moves by Bosnia's commanders to strike back against the JNA.

On 26 April, Izetbegovic negotiated in the Macedonian capital of Skopje with Branko Kostic, acting president of the self-declared rump presidency of 'Yugoslavia' (i.e. Serbia and Montenegro), and with Blagoje Adzic, chief of staff of the JNA, over the possible withdrawal of the JNA from Bosnia. Agreement was reached that JNA troops from Serbia and Montenegro should be withdrawn. But agreement was not possible over the more than 80% of JNA troops on Bosnian territory, mostly Serbs, who were citizens of Bosnia. The Bosnian presidency demanded that they either be withdrawn or place themselves under Bosnian command, while the Belgrade leadership rejected either option, seeking instead to have them placed under Bosnian Serb command, and rejected furthermore any solution that was not agreed to by the Bosnian Serb leadership. Consequently (contrary to what was subsequently claimed by Serbia in its request for Ganic's extradition) no agreement was reached between Izetbegovic and Belgrade over the withdrawal of the JNA from Bosnia.

Sarajevo was the object of a full-scale offensive on 2 May, on the part of Colonel General Milutin Kukanjac, commander of the Sarajevo-based Second Military District of the JNA, attacking with his garrison within the city and attempting to seize control of the Bosnian presidency building, while additional JNA forces attacked the city from outside. Sarajevo's post office, telephone exchange and other public buildings were bombarded. On the same day Izetbegovic, returning from peace negotiations at Lisbon, was kidnapped by the JNA at Sarajevo airport. This amounted to a concerted assault by JNA forces on the organs of Bosnia's democratically elected government. But the JNA's offensive against Sarajevo was defeated by the Bosnian Territorial Defence, and Kukanjac's column was surrounded.

It was perhaps Bosnia's greatest military victory to date, and it was largely squandered by Izetbegovic. Initially, on 3 May, Izetbegovic negotiated his own release from JNA captivity in exchange for the Bosnian armed forces allowing Kukanjac to leave Sarajevo. But immediately afterward, Kukanjac demanded that his entire JNA garrison be allowed to leave Sarajevo as the price for Izetbegovic's release. This revised deal was not supported by

Ganic and the Bosnian military commanders in Sarajevo, but it was supported by General Lewis Mackenzie, the UN commander in Sarajevo and subsequently a paid lobbyist of SerbNet, a Serb-nationalist lobbying group in the US. Once Izetbegovic was safely back in Bosnian hands, the Bosnian forces opened fire on the JNA convoy in Volunteers' Street, succeeding in killing or capturing dozens of JNA soldiers.

There is some uncertainty as to whether the initiative to attack the JNA convoy was taken spontaneously by the Bosnian soldiers on the ground themselves, as Jovan Divjak, the then deputy commander of the Bosnian Territorial Defence, claims, or whether it was ordered by the top Bosnian commanders or even by Ganic himself, deputised by Izetbegovic to head the Bosnian presidency and critical of the deal with Kukanjac. Were the attack on the JNA convoy a war-crime, it would make no difference: Ganic and other members of the Bosnian wartime presidency – including Izetbegovic himself – as the supreme command of the Bosnian armed forces, would be automatically responsible. But the attack was not a war crime: it was an attack on a legitimate military target. At most, the Bosnian defenders were guilty of violating a ceasefire agreement extracted from them under duress, by an enemy that had attacked them, been defeated, then sought to extricate itself from its defeat by kidnapping their democratically elected president and holding him as a hostage.

The real guilt of Bosnia's leadership in the spring of 1992 was not that, on this and one or two other occasions, its forces attacked and killed soldiers belonging to the army of a foreign state that was attacking its country. Its guilt lies in the fact that its forces did not do so more often. Where Bosnia's defenders did prepare their defences and fight back against the JNA, they were sometimes able to protect their people from killing and massacre. So it was at Tuzla, where on 15 May 1992, the city's defenders successfully destroyed the city's JNA garrison, as a result of which Tuzla's population was spared the massacres, expulsion, torture and rape that befell the citizens of other East Bosnian towns. So it was initially in Srebrenica, where the local defenders fought back and saved their town from destruction for three years, though

they would eventually pay a very heavy price for their resistance. But in towns where the Bosnian authorities followed Izetbegovic's lead and did not resist the JNA, such as in Foca and Visegrad, the non-Serb population was massacred or expelled.

The JNA would nevertheless probably have been allowed to withdraw peacefully from Sarajevo and Tuzla had it been willing to return the weapons it had confiscated from Bosnia's Territorial Defence. Yet Belgrade's strategy – carried out via the JNA – was to disarm Bosnia's defenders and keep them disarmed, while arming the Bosnian Serb forces to the teeth, to enable them to carry out their genocidal plans against a defenceless enemy. In principle, the JNA had been the collective army of all Yugoslavia's republics, and even its own weapons were therefore the collective property of all of them; the claim by Serbia and Montenegro (the 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia') to be the sole successor state of the defunct Yugoslavia was never accepted by the UN or the international community. The ability of Bosnia's defenders to defend their civilian population from the Serbian genocidal attack depended largely on their ability to recapture their weapons from the JNA – their attacks on the JNA in Sarajevo and Tuzla were a matter of life and death.

With the arrest of Ejup Ganic and attempt to have him extradited to Serbia, Belgrade is persecuting a former member of the democratically elected presidency of the state that it attacked in 1992, for the crime of having resisted that attack. Last September, Ilija Jurisic, one of the Bosnian military commanders who directed the attack on the JNA at Tuzla on 15 May 1992, was sentenced by a Belgrade court to twelve years in prison for his role in the attack. Fifteen years after the end of the Bosnian war and ten years after the overthrow of Milosevic, Serbia is still hounding Bosnians who attempted to resist its aggression and genocide in the 1990s. Such behaviour is of a kind with the Serbian parliament's unwillingness to recognise the Srebrenica massacre as an act of genocide, despite the fact that this genocide has been recognised by two different international courts.

Britain must release Ejup Ganic at once. Britain and other EU members must make it absolutely clear that such behaviour on

Serbia's part will not be tolerated; that until Belgrade ceases its persecution of Ganic, Jurisic and other politicians and soldiers of the Bosnian war of independence, it will have no place in the EU or in democratic Europe.

This article was published today on the website of the *Henry Jackson Society*.

Update: This article has been published in Bosnian in *BH-Dani*.

Correction: When it was published on 3 March 2010, this article contained the following claim:

'On 26 April, Izetbegovic signed an agreement with the regime in Belgrade to permit the JNA to withdraw from Bosnia, along with its own weapons and those that it had confiscated from the Bosnian Territorial Defence. This was arguably an act of treason on Izetbegovic's part, since he had turned over Bosnia's confiscated armaments to the army of a neighbouring state that was currently engaged in attacking and conquering his country. But it did not mollify the JNA, whose operations against Bosnia did not cease; at the start of May, JNA forces previously withdrawn from Croatia were used to conquer the Bosnian towns of Derventa and Doboj.'

Subsequently, my research on behalf of Ejup Ganic's legal defence team revealed this claim to be false: no agreement was reached between Izetbegovic and Belgrade over the withdrawal of the JNA from Bosnia, either on 26 April 1992 or thereafter. Nevertheless, Serbia's request for Ganic's extradition from the UK claimed falsely 'On April 27, 1992, the Agreement was made between B&H and FRY on peaceful withdrawal of JNA until May 19, 1992 [sic – all grammatical errors in original].'

The article has been amended accordingly.

BOSNIA: WEIGHING THE OPTIONS

These days, even the most ardent Bosnian patriot or foreign friend of Bosnia-Herzegovina finds it difficult to be optimistic about the country's future. In its current constitutional form, Bosnia is a state that does not and cannot work. No conceivable solution appears very good, while even bad solutions appear unachievable. Yet the *status quo* appears worst of all. I have been defending Bosnia-Herzegovina for seventeen years – ever since I campaigned on its behalf when the war broke out there in 1992. In this article, however, I shall weigh up Bosnia-Herzegovina's different options and prospects as cold-bloodedly as possible.

The Dayton Peace Accords of 1995 established a Bosnia-Herzegovina that was more partitioned than united. For every year that it exists, the constitutional arrangement for Bosnia established by Dayton brings Bosnia another step closer to full and complete partition. Every year, Republika Srpska further consolidates itself as a *de facto* independent state; the Office of the High Representative declines in power and authority; the international community's will and ability to coerce the Republika Srpska are that much weaker; the already dim prospect of Bosniaks and Croats returning to Republika Srpska recedes further; and the share of the Bosnian population that can remember the unified, multinational country that existed before 1992 becomes smaller. Despite apparent steps toward reintegration taken while the Office of the High Representative was headed by the energetic and determined Paddy Ashdown, subsequent high representatives have lacked either the will or the international support to continue down Ashdown's path, with the result that Bosnia has further unravelled in recent years. However monstrous the injustice that Bosnian partition would represent, with every year that passes, the injustice is further forgotten by the world and full partition – like death – draws nearer. We need only look at the other injustices that have become *realities on the ground*: the three-way partition of Macedonia in 1912-13; the dispossession of the Armenian population of Anatolia; the dispossession of the Palestinian population of present-day Israel – these are realities

on the ground. The partition of Bosnia is steadily becoming as irreversible as the partition of Macedonia.

Consequently, the best strategy for Bosnian Serb nationalists who want to achieve an independent Republika Srpska is simply to continue the existing constitutional arrangement while quietly chipping away at Bosnia from within. Ironically, however, the present arrangement may serve the interests of the Bosnian Serb political classes at the present time *better* than a full partition. A unified, homogenous Serb nation embracing the Serb populations on both sides of the River Drina is a myth; the dominant historical thrust of Bosnian Serb nationalism is toward an independent Bosnian Serb state rather than toward annexation to Serbia. Thus, for the Bosnian Serb political classes, the existing arrangement, whereby the Republika Srpska increasingly enjoys complete *de facto* independence, may be preferable to a full partition that would threaten them with being swallowed up by Serbia. One day, the Serb population of the Republika Srpska may cease to support annexation to Serbia, as the Greek population of Cyprus has ceased to support *enosis* with Greece. Until then – and until international conditions are fully favourable to the disappearance of Bosnia – Republika Srpska's leadership might sensibly desire to stay put.

Conversely, the best hope for supporters of a unified Bosnia may be for Milorad Dodik's increasingly arrogant regime to continue and escalate its present policy of rocking the boat, inciting Serb-nationalist passion and baiting the Bosniaks and the international community. Eventually, we may hope, Dodik might become sufficiently stupid actually to attempt unilateral secession prematurely, or some other such outrage that would provide Bosnia and the world with a legitimate pretext to overturn the Dayton order and reintegrate Republika Srpska with the rest of the country. This is not a wholly dim prospect, as recent antics on the part of the leaderships of both Serbia and the Republika Srpska highlight the continued Serb-nationalist propensity to self-destructive nationalist confrontation. Last month, Dodik issued a gratuitously offensive denial of the Tuzla massacre of 1995. This followed hot on the heels of Serbian president Boris

Tadic's recent act of provocation against Bosnia, when he visited the Bosnian Serb entity without Bosnia's permission, to open a new school named 'Serbia' in Pale, the former Bosnian Serb rebel capital outside of Sarajevo.

At this point, we should be clear about what partition would mean. Partition might be appealing for those Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats who would be able to unite with Serbia and Croatia respectively, exchanging their citizenship of a dysfunctional state for citizenship of states that function. But for the Bosniaks, partition would cement their confinement to what is effectively a ghetto comprising the two territorial enclaves around the Sarajevo-Zenica-Tuzla triangle and Bihac respectively. The EU's recent extension of visa-free travel to Serbia, following on from Croatia, thereby in practice to Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats but not to Bosnia and the Bosniaks, is evidence that this is indeed a ghetto. An 'independent' Bosniak entity comprising these enclaves would be non-viable, while its embittered and demoralised population would fall under the influence of the most reactionary form of conservative Islamic politics. Bosniaks would be fully justified in choosing war before accepting such a grim fate.

A territorially fairer form of partition – which one or two of my own Bosniak correspondents have suggested to me – would envisage both Republika Srpska and the Bosnian Croats giving up territory to the Bosniaks in exchange for the right to secede, resulting in a separate Bosniak entity comprising somewhat less than half of Bosnia, with roughly a third going to the Serbs and a fifth to the Croats. This would represent a great injustice to the Serb and Croat inhabitants of the transferred areas, who would suddenly find themselves ethnic minorities in a Bosniak national state. The Republika Srpska, at least, would find such a solution unacceptable, so it would have to be imposed unilaterally – involving, in effect, a new war and ethnic cleansing. This is not something that twenty-first century Europe can sanction.

Any form of outright partition, furthermore, would destabilise Bosnia's neighbours: Serbia, Croatia and those further afield. Serbia and Croatia have slowly and painfully democratised over the past decade, turning their back on aggression and expansionism.

In Serbia, in particular, the struggle between pro-European reformists and aggressive nationalists is far from over. The acquisition of new irredentas would mark a huge setback for this process: the newly expanded states would be unstable as they struggled to integrate the new populations; their party systems would be further fragmented; the expansionist nationalists would be vindicated and revived. Serbia, in particular, would be encouraged by such an annexation to pursue further expansionist goals – possibly against fragile Macedonia or even NATO-member Croatia. Ultimately, what Serbia needs to prosper is to be kept firmly within its existing legal state borders. The reason why Bulgaria and Romania entered the EU before Serbia is that they were fortunate enough to have lost World War II and to have been confined to their own borders, with no prospect of further territorial expansion. Serbia, which came out of World War II ambiguously – neither wholly as victor nor as vanquished – and which appeared to have some prospects for territorial expansion in the 1990s, has paid a heavy price. The last thing Serbia needs is to be tempted off the wagon.

The redrawing of international borders and partition of a sovereign state would encourage those elements in the Balkans that wish to partition Kosovo and Macedonia as well. Partitioning Bosnia outright could open a Pandora's box, with unforeseeable consequences. Yet as we have seen, the *status quo* – the Dayton system – represents not an alternative to outright partition, but *de facto* partition with the likelihood of full *de jure* partition at some point in the future, when circumstances are more favourable to the Bosnian Serb nationalists. In the meantime, the Bosniaks have the worst of both worlds. Not only have they been squeezed into a ghetto and forced to inhabit a dysfunctional state, but their energies must be expended in permanent political conflict with Serb and Croat politicians who do not want the state to cease being dysfunctional. The Bosnian Croats, meanwhile, suffer as the minority party within the Bosnian Federation, permanently squeezed by the embittered Bosniak majority. The Republika Srpska leadership, by contrast, should feel wholly satisfied with the existing order, which grants it all the cards except one: the right to secede formally one day without complications.

Republika Srpska's lack of the right to secede comprises the only strong card in the hands of supporters of Bosnian unity, though the card is unlikely to remain strong indefinitely.

The Western alliance should have cause to regret the rise of Republika Srpska, which may be relied upon to undermine its interests in South East Europe. In May, Dodik unilaterally withdrew Bosnian Serb soldiers from Bosnia's participation in NATO exercises in Georgia, which he then boycotted, in a move attributed to pro-Russian sentiment. Nebojsa Radmanovic, the Bosnian Serb member of the Bosnian presidency, recently stated that most Bosnian Serbs oppose NATO membership, and mooted the possibility of a referendum on NATO membership in Republika Srpska. *A de jure* or *de facto* independent Republika Srpska will obstruct the Balkans' Euro-Atlantic integration and serve as a bridgehead for Russian influence in the region.

Supporters of a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina, both inside the country and internationally, must act now if Bosnia-Herzegovina is to be saved. Highlighting the fact that the Dayton system is leading inexorably toward the outright partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, they must campaign for an end to this system and the restoration of a unified, functioning Bosnian state, through the reintegration of Republika Srpska with the rest of the country. This should not involve the entity's outright abolition; rather, it should involve the transfer of all meaningful power to the central government in Sarajevo, leaving *Republika Srpska* a *de facto* administrative entity. Justification for such a move may be found in numerous places: Dodik's repeated calls for Bosnia-Herzegovina's dissolution; his continued denial of the Srebrenica genocide, in disregard of the verdict of the international courts; the Serb failure to arrest Ratko Mladic as the Dayton Accords required; the Republika Srpska's failure to permit the return of Bosniak and Croat refugees. This is not a good option, but it is the least bad of the possible options.

If they do not wish to or are unable to campaign on this platform, Bosnia-Herzegovina's supporters might as well give up and accept that at some point in the future, Bosnia-Herzegovina is likely to disappear from the map of Europe.

This article was previously published in Bosnian by *BH Dani*, and in English by the *Henry Jackson Society*.

Sunday, 11 October 2009 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

SREBRENICA DENIERS GET THEIR MUCKY PAWS ON RWANDA

When, back in the 1940s under the shadow of the Holocaust, Raphael Lemkin coined the term ‘genocide’, then lobbied to have it recognised as a crime in international law, his aim was to prevent such crimes occurring in the future. Since then, there have been those who have attempted to use the concept of genocide, in the spirit of Lemkin, to agitate against the mass extermination of human beings. But there have also been those who have paradoxically attempted to use the concept of genocide to ensure that acts of mass extermination are allowed to take place. During the war in Bosnia, supporters of the genocidal project of Milosevic and Karadzic expended an enormous amount of energy trying to deny the reality of the mass killings – from arguing that the atrocities were being invented by the Western media, to redefining Serb concentration-camps as ‘detention centres’, to claiming that the Bosnians had carried out the atrocities against themselves. But one of their favourite tactics was to set up, then attack, the straw man that ‘the Bosnian genocide was the same as the Holocaust’. Since it was not the same as the Holocaust, they argued, it could not really have been genocide. And since it was not genocide, it wasn’t anything to get upset over.

Thus, it suits the deniers and supporters of genocidal acts to define ‘genocide’ as narrowly as possible. A genocide, such as occurred in Bosnia, can be measured against the benchmark of a ‘perfect’ genocide such as the Holocaust, and found wanting. They tend to define ‘genocide’ as something that has to involve the total physical extermination of an entire ethnic group. This, of course, is a much narrower definition than the one in international law, which defines genocide as an attempt to destroy a group ‘in whole or in part’. And as Adam Jones has pointed out in *Genocide: A*

Comprehensive Introduction' (Taylor and Francis, 2007), according to the international legal definition, genocide technically does not have to involve actually killing anyone at all.

Nevertheless, even with their narrowest possible definition, the deniers have to recognise that at least a couple of cases of genocide have historically occurred. I recall having an exchange about Milosevic on the blog Crooked Timber with a notoriously unpleasant little Stalinist by the name of Louis Proyect, who assured me that the only cases of genocide that were universally acknowledged were the Holocaust, the Armenians and Rwanda. This was already inaccurate, of course, as the Armenian Genocide has been the object of a sustained campaign of denial by Turkish nationalists and their supporters. But it is true that Rwanda has tended to be spared. Back in December 1995, an article by Fiona Fox appeared in *Living Marxism*, the principal propaganda rag of Milosevic's and Karadzic's supporters in the UK, entitled 'Massacring the truth in Rwanda'. *Living Marxism* had pioneered Bosnia genocide denial, and Fox attempted a similar form of denial over Rwanda, but this was something of a flash in the pan: Rwanda so far has simply not provoked such a large and active denialist lobby as Bosnia.

The primary reason that the denialists have been much more vocal over Bosnia than Rwanda was that the Bosnian genocide occupied a much larger place in the Western consciousness than the Rwandan genocide, and was a much more prominent foreign policy issue, and over a longer period of time. So far as left-wing deniers were concerned, a second important motive was their wish to minimise the crimes of a reconstituted Communist regime – Milosevic's ruling party called itself 'Socialist'. But let there be no illusions: the more widespread and vocal nature of Bosnian than of Rwandan genocide-denial has nothing to do with the fact that the scale of the mass killings in Rwanda was much greater than in Bosnia, or that the Rwandan genocide was much more absolutist in its exterminationist goals than the Bosnian genocide.

That this is so, is evidenced by the fact that two fools have now rushed in where wiser devils have feared to tread. Edward

S. Herman and David Peterson were the founders of the ‘Srebrenica Research Group’, set up to deny the Srebrenica massacre had taken place. Their efforts have appeared increasingly laughable, as in terms of forensic evidence, the fact and scale of Srebrenica are probably better documented than any other genocidal massacre in history. The cynicism and downright clownishness of their denialist antics are highlighted by the fact that they repeatedly highlighted the figure of roughly 100,000 Bosnian war-deaths, established by Mirsad Tokaca’s Research and Documentation Centre (RDC), as proof that earlier estimates of 200,000 Bosnian dead were part of an elaborate campaign of anti-Serb disinformation – while themselves repeating massively exaggerated figures for Serb war-dead that the RDC’s research had already discredited.

Herman’s and Peterson’s denial of the Rwanda Genocide has been dissected by Gerald Caplan (in two pieces) and by Adam Jones. I’m not going to regurgitate the admirable job that these two colleagues have done, but what is particularly striking is the amateurish, almost whimsical nature of the deniers’ arguments. Readers may recall the case of the Bosnia genocide denier Thomas Deichmann, who thought that he could disprove the eyewitness accounts by reporters of the Serb concentration-camp at Trnopolje because he noticed that the barbed wire in the picture of the camp was on the ‘wrong’ side of the fence poles, and as his wife pointed out, this wasn’t how fences were organised in their garden. Among the similar gems of stunning insight now produced by Herman and Peterson, which they feel refutes all the evidence for the genocide produced by genuine experts, historians, journalists and war-crimes investigators, we have the following:

Would it not have been incredible for Kagame’s Tutsi forces to conquer Rwanda in 100 days, and yet the number of minority Tutsi deaths be greater than the number of majority Hutu deaths by a ratio of something like three-to-one? Surely then we would have to count Rwanda 1994 as the only country in history where the victims of genocide triumphed over those who committed genocide against them, and wiped the territory clean of its “genocidaires” at the same time. If ever a prima facie case existed for doubting

the collective wisdom of “academics, human rights activists, [and] journalists” whose opinions the establishment respects, we find it here, with the alleged Hutu perpetrators routed and fleeing for their lives in neighboring countries, and the alleged Tutsi victims in complete control.

Jones points out that it wasn't the Tutsi victims who defeated the genocidaires, but the Rwandan Patriotic Front invading from Uganda. Apart from that, the sloppiness of the deniers is indicated by their assumptions that the side that lost the civil war cannot be the one that carried out the genocide, and that the victorious side 'ought to' have carried out the most killing. We could ask what such an interpretative model would say about the battle for Srebrenica in 1995, when the victims' side lost but still had its genocide denied, and its own killings of enemy civilians equated with the actual genocide, by Herman and Peterson. Or about World War II in Bosnia, when the Partisans, composed in large part of Serb victims of the Ustasha genocide, defeated the Ustasha perpetrators of the genocide.

Caplan describes Herman and Peterson as 'two dedicated anti-imperialists [who] have sunk to the level of genocide deniers'. Yet it is a remarkable form of 'anti-imperialism' that feels no desire to condemn or expose Western collusion with either the Bosnian or the Rwandan genocides. Indeed, the well documented history of active French complicity in the Rwandan genocide is a particularly fruitful field for those who really do want to expose the crimes of 'Western imperialism'.

Clearly, Herman and Peterson are anti-Americans before they are anti-imperialist. But it is even worse than that. For them, 'anti-imperialism' ultimately *is* genocide denial. Should any act of genocide be made known to the Western public, they see their job as ensuring that nothing is done to stop it while it is occurring, and as denying it after it has occurred – that is what 'anti-imperialism' is for them. Such are the depths to which these people have sunk.

Update: Peterson appears to have graduated from putting 'massacre' in inverted commas when speaking about Srebrenica,

and ‘genocide’ in inverted commas’ when speaking about Rwanda, to putting ‘the Holocaust’ itself in inverted commas:

I find Jones’s comparison between the “holocaust” and events in Rwanda 1994 to be strangely revealing—but about Jones, not Rwanda. To me, it betrays an emotional, self-dramatizing, even defensive attachment to the “Holocaust in Rwanda”—that is, to a particular model for discussing events in Rwanda during 1994—that appears to overwhelm everything Jones thinks and writes about it. Indeed. “The Genocide” in Rwanda stands out in Jones’s work (and in the work of many others) as a kind of fetishized, supra-historical entity in its own right.

SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTER CARL BILDT
DENIES OVER HALF THE SREBRENICA MASSACRE

In his memoirs of the Bosnian war, Carl Bildt, the foreign minister of Sweden – which took over the EU presidency on 1 July – has this to say about the Srebrenica massacre:

*‘In five days of massacres, Mladic had arranged for the methodical execution of more than three thousand men who had stayed behind and become prisoners of war. And probably more than four thousand people had lost their lives in a week of brutal ambushes and fighting in the forests, by the roadside and in the valleys between Srebrenica and the Tuzla district, as the column was trying to reach safety.’ (Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey: The struggle for peace in Bosnia*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1998, p. 66 – all subsequent page references are to Bildt’s book).*

The Srebrenica massacre, an act of genocide against the civilian population of Srebrenica that claimed the lives of approximately eight thousand victims, including at least five hundred children under the age of eighteen, has therefore been reduced by Bildt to ‘more than three thousand’, all of them ‘prisoners of war’, while four thousand of the victims are portrayed as battlefield deaths.

This would be equivalent to claiming that only two and a quarter million Jewish 'prisoners of war' had perished in the Holocaust, while the rest of the six million had been killed in battle.

This was not a casual slip on Bildt's part. At the time of the Srebrenica massacre, Bildt was the EU's special envoy to the former Yugoslavia. His massive downplaying of the Serb genocide reflects the EU policy of the time, which was to collaborate with Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia and with Radovan Karadzic's Bosnian Serb extremists, and to appease their expansionism. Unlike the US, the EU states staunchly supported the international arms embargo against Bosnia, which prevented the country from defending itself from Serb aggression.

In his memoirs, Bildt's chapter on July 1995, the month when the Srebrenica massacre occurred, is entitled 'Success and failure: July 1995'. He believes that when describing his record as EU peace mediator in Bosnia for the period of the Srebrenica massacre, the word 'success' should appropriately be put before the word 'failure'. Some might feel that using the word 'success' in relation to EU policy that presided over a genocidal massacre of eight thousand people was just a wee bit inappropriate. But not Bildt, who seems quite proud of his record.

Following the Serb conquest of Srebrenica, Bildt records how he attempted in London on 21 July 1995 to dissuade the Western states from intervening militarily to defend a second Bosnian enclave that was being threatened with a similar fate:

'[British foreign secretary Malcolm] Rifkind was a little taken aback when I started his day by saying that Gorazde was scarcely threatened, and even if this was the case, I did not believe it could be defended by air strikes. We had to focus on getting the political process going. If we left London with a bombing strategy but without a political strategy, we would almost certainly be faced with even more acts of war and suffering. But sooner or later, we would be forced to return to the political track in any case. Bombing strategies were all very well, but we should not bomb our political opportunities to smithereens.' (p. 67).

When Serb forces based in Serb-occupied Croatia (so-called 'Krajina') attacked the Bihac enclave in north-western Bosnia that same month, threatening to overrun it and enact another massacre on the model of Srebrenica, Croatia – which had signed a military agreement with Bosnia on the 22nd for the defence of Bihac – responded in August with a full-scale military offensive ('Operation Storm') against the Krajina area. According to his memoirs, Bildt made no effort whatsoever to deter the Serb attack on Bihac – which he barely acknowledges even occurred – but instead attempted to halt the Croatian counter-offensive. As Bildt records,

'My public statement was clear: The Croatian offensive against areas inhabited by Serbs must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. This attack is occurring after negotiations have commenced, and when the Serbs are clearly willing to make substantial concessions on both economic and political matters. This will cast a long shadow over Croatia for many years to come. The shelling of the civilian population which is now being reported is particularly serious. It should be recalled that Martić, the 'president of Krajina', was charged with war crimes after the Serb rocket attack on Zagreb in May. It is difficult to see any difference between this and the bombardment of Knin, for which President Tudjman must be held responsible.' (p. 75).

In other words, the same Bildt who had made no such threat against the leaders of Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs when they were attacking Srebrenica, nor when they attacked Bihac, was now threatening the Croatian president with a war-crimes indictment for launching a counter-offensive against the Serb forces; a counter-offensive made, moreover, on the basis of an agreement with Bosnia-Herzegovina's legitimate government for the purposes of defending part of its population from conquest and genocide. Bildt described the Serb-occupied areas of Croatia – defined as 'occupied' by the UN General Assembly – as 'areas inhabited by Serbs', forgetting that these areas had had a substantial Croat population before being ethnically cleansed by the

Serb forces in 1991. He found it 'difficult to see any difference' between the Krajina Serb extremists' wholly gratuitous act of civilian terrorism against Zagreb's civilians in May 1995 and the legitimate Croatian government's bombardment of Knin, made in the course of a military offensive against the same Serb extremists who were using Croatia's territory to attack the territory of a neighbouring state, with the likely aim of perpetrating an act of genocide.

We can compare the way in which Bildt attempted to halt the Croatian offensive against Krajina with the way he had responded to the previous month's Serb offensive against Srebrenica:

I had no way of knowing who was responsible for what was happening around Srebrenica, but it was hard to imagine that Milosevic, at any rate, was unable to influence the course of events. Before going to Geneva that afternoon, I therefore sent a clear letter of warning to Milosevic. There was a clear risk, I wrote, that our talks would be completely overshadowed by what was happening around Srebrenica. The entire situation could take a turn for the worse. If the enclave were attacked and overrun, this would be a very serious provocation which might well lead to an escalation of hostilities throughout much of Bosnia. I thus urged him to do everything in his power to prevent this.' (p. 56).

So whereas Bildt threatened Tudjman with a war-crimes indictment – a threat he was wholly unauthorised to make – he threatened Milosevic with the possibility that 'our talks would be completely overshadowed'!

Bildt goes on to describe how, at the time of Operation Storm, he told the press:

I said it was regrettable that the attack meant that Croatia had chosen war, not peace, and said that I assumed that The Hague Tribunal would examine the question of the shellfire against Knin sooner or later, in the same way that it had considered the question of responsibility for the missile attacks on Zagreb.' (p. 77).

Bildt did not accuse the Serb leaders who had just conquered Srebrenica and Zepa, and who were now trying to conquer Bi-hac, of 'choosing war, not peace'; nor did he threaten them with indictment for war crimes. Rather, his threats were directed solely against Croatia. He ends his chapter on the Croatian offensive against Krajina with the following complaint:

'For me, the conclusion from Srebrenica was not that we should blind ourselves to atrocities committed by others, but that we had to react strongly and clearly against all atrocities. In November 1995, The Hague Tribunal indicted Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic for war crimes committed in and around Srebrenica. However, as this book goes to print, the Tribunal has so far not considered anyone responsible for the massive and brutal ethnic cleansing of the Krajinas in August 1995.' (p. 80)

Bildt, in pointing out that the Hague Tribunal indicted Karadzic and Mladic over Srebrenica, omits to mention that he did not call for such indictments at the time, in contrast to his call for an indictment against Tudjman over Operation Storm – and this despite his claim that his 'conclusion from Srebrenica' was that 'we had to react strongly and clearly against all atrocities'. He does not complain that 'as this book goes to print', neither Milosevic or anyone else from Serbia's leadership had been indicted for conquering and ethnically cleansing the Krajina region of Croatia in the first place.

Bildt was, in other words, an arch-appeaser, who actively opposed every attempt to resist the Serb forces militarily, whether by the international community or by Croatia. He denies over half the Srebrenica massacre, and describes its child and other civilian victims as having been 'prisoners of war'. He describes the month in which the Srebrenica massacre occurred as a month of 'success and failure'. Following the fall of Srebrenica, he attempted to block NATO air-strikes to defend Gorazde. He tried to deter the Croatian offensive against Krajina by threatening Tudjman, but made no equivalent threat to deter the Serb assault on Srebrenica. He called for Tudjman to be indicted for war-crimes, but

not for Karadzic, Mladic or Milosevic to be indicted. He complained in 1998 that Tudjman had not been indicted, but he did not complain that Milosevic had not been indicted.

Some things never change. On behalf of Sweden's EU presidency, Bildt has claimed that 'Serbia is fully cooperating with the Hague Tribunal'. He pledged that 'Sweden would take a pragmatic stand on the Kosovo issue, taking into account the fact that several EU member-states had not recognized the independence of Kosovo.' Also: 'We want to liberalize the visa regime with Serbia, but not Kosovo, as a dialogue on visa liberalization is being conducted with Serbia, not Kosovo.'

In other words, Bildt is saying that the policy of Sweden's EU presidency will be: 'Stuff Mladic's Bosniak victims. Stuff the relatives of the people killed by him at Srebrenica, who still want him brought to justice. Stuff Kosovo and its people. I'm going to go on appeasing Belgrade, just as I did in 1995.'

No doubt, with Sweden at the helm of the EU, we can look forward to another glorious episode in the illustrious history of this heroic institution.

Update: Owen Beith has pointed out to me that Bildt's Srebrenica revisionism is actually worse than I originally indicated: not only has he reduced the number of Srebrenica massacre victims to 'more than three thousand', but he describes them all as having been 'prisoners of war'; i.e. captured soldiers. In fact, the Srebrenica massacre was perpetrated against the Bosniak civilian population in general, not simply against captured soldiers, and those killed included at least five hundred children under the age of eighteen. This post has been updated accordingly.

Update no 2.: Daniel of the Srebrenica Genocide Blog has posted a refutation of Bildt's Srebrenica revisionism in full, which I strongly recommend reading.

Tuesday, 21 July 2009 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

THE BIZARRE WORLD OF GENOCIDE DENIAL

I get older, they stay the same age – as someone once said in another context. It's one thing I like about Bosnia genocide-deniers. When I first started taking them on at the age of nineteen, their arguments were already easy to refute, and I was hampered only by the limits of my own knowledge. Now, nearly two decades on, I know a lot more, but I still periodically find myself repeating the same old refutations of the same old canards – canards that sound increasingly silly as time goes by. Evidence that Germany 'encouraged' Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia, or that the Western media was 'biased' against the Serb side in the war, or that Bosnian forces shelled their own civilians to provoke Western military intervention against the Serb rebels, has proven as elusive as the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The steady gathering of forensic evidence has made the Srebrenica massacre the most well-documented genocidal crime in history. Yet like lambs to the slaughter, new waves of deniers step forward to sacrifice any reputations they might have in the service of a long-discredited cause.

I say 'like' because it makes the job of the historian wishing to refute their propaganda very easy. But it's also extremely boring. A couple of years ago I sacrificed a couple of days of my life to writing a review that catalogued the numerous falsehoods and distortions contained in the sensationalist anti-Muslim propaganda tracts about the Bosnian war written by Christopher Deliso and John Schindler. Since then, I have never seen either of those books cited by any reputable author. If my review contributed to this happy state of affairs, then writing it was a worthwhile use of my time. But it's a chore rather than a pleasure; I'd rather devote this time to historical research or writing.

Consequently, it has been with a certain inner groaning that I've become aware of the latest regurgitations of the old denialist narrative. One such regurgitation is David N. Gibbs, *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2009). To give a foretaste of what you can expect of this book, Gibbs has this

to say about the Srebrenica massacre: ‘Certainly, the murder of eight thousand people is a grave crime, but to call it “genocide” needlessly exaggerates the scale of the crime.’ (p. 281).

Needless to say, Gibbs has no academic expertise on the former Yugoslavia or the Balkans and does not read Serbo-Croat. He hasn’t bothered to engage with the existing literature, but simply ignored all the existing works that undermine his thesis. He has not tackled the evidence presented by Daniele Conversi, myself and others, that the Milosevic regime and the Yugoslav People’s Army deliberately engineered the break-up of Yugoslavia; or the work of Michael Libal and Richard Caplan, exploding the myth that Germany encouraged Croatia to secede from Yugoslavia; or the work of Brendan Simms, demonstrating that Britain’s intervention in Bosnia actually shielded Karadzic’s Serb forces from hostile international intervention. Instead, Gibbs has cherry-picked a few odds and ends in order to present the same old revisionist story, only with a larger number of endnotes than the previous versions written by Diana Johnstone, Michael Parenti et al. Yet he must know very well that his book will not survive a critical review by a genuine specialist in the field, that it will be ignored by all serious scholars and that it will serve only to confirm the views of the small, dwindling minority already committed to the revisionist narrative.

Dear readers, I promise I will get round eventually to doing a demolition job on Gibbs’s sorry little propaganda pamphlet. For the time being, I mention him because he practices the old denialist trick in relation to the Srebrenica massacre, of describing the military actions of the Bosnian military commander in the Srebrenica region, Naser Oric – involving attacks on Serb villages around Srebrenica and atrocities against Serb civilians – while neglecting to mention the incomparably larger-scale Serbian offensives that preceded Oric’s actions, and to which the latter were a response. Gibbs writes:

‘The Srebrenica safe area had an especially brutal history, and it was besieged by Serb forces throughout the war. It is important to note, however, that Muslim troops also behaved brutally. Especially problematic was the Muslim

commander Brigadier Oric, who based his forces inside Srebrenica and conducted forays against Serb villages in the surrounding region. One UNPROFOR commander later described Oric's activities as follows: "Oric engaged in attacks during Orthodox holidays and destroyed [Serb] villages, massacring all the inhabitants. This created a degree of hatred that was quite extraordinary in the [Srebrenica] region... [etc.]" (pp. 153-154).

Anyone reading this who didn't know better would be left unaware that, prior to Oric's offensives, Serb forces had massacred and expelled Muslims across the whole of East Bosnia – at Bijeljina, Zvornik, Visegrad, Foca, Bratunac, Srebrenica itself and elsewhere; that 94.83% of the civilians from the Podrinje (East Bosnia) region killed during the war were Muslims and only 4.87% were Serbs (according to the figures of the Research and Documentation Centre); or that more Muslims from Podrinje were killed in 1992 than in the year of the Srebrenica massacre. The military actions of Oric's forces against neighbouring Serb villages were those of defenders of a beleaguered enclave whose inhabitants were threatened with massacre, rape, torture and expulsion already inflicted on other towns all over East Bosnia. That Gibbs lays such stress on Oric's atrocities while wholly neglecting to mention the incomparably greater-in-scale Serb atrocities in the same region that preceded them is distortion of the most blatant kind; equivalent to writing of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising without bothering to mention the Holocaust. No doubt the sort of bone-headed ultra-left activist who would turn to Gibbs's book for information on the Bosnian war, instead of to a serious work, is easily and happily deceived.

Those wishing to read the history of the genocidal massacres of Muslims in East Bosnia in 1992 that don't find a place in books like *First do no Harm* are recommended Edina Becirevic's splendid *Na Drini genocid*, soon to appear in English translation, which demonstrates that the Srebrenica massacre was not an aberration but the culmination of a genocidal policy that began in East Bosnia in 1992. In addition, an excellent case study of the background to the Srebrenica genocide by Daniel Toljaga has

recently been published on the website of the Bosnian Institute, entitled *Prelude to the Srebrenica Genocide*. Toljaga's knowledge of the history of the Srebrenica genocide is unrivalled, and he traces the grim story: the summoning of local Serb-nationalist leaders to meet with Milosevic's agent Mihalj Kertes in Belgrade in early May 1991; the killing of the first Muslim civilians in the Bratunac municipality on 3 September 1991; the killing of the first Muslim civilians in the Srebrenica municipality on 15 April 1992; and the deployment of the Yugoslav People's Army around Srebrenica by April. As Toljaga recounts:

'Following the takeover of Bratunac, the Serb forces began the attack on Srebrenica on 18 April 1992, firing around 5000 mortar shells on the town and the surrounding Bosniak villages. There was no resistance. The same day, Serbs entered the town, looting Bosniak property, setting houses on fire and killing Bosniak residents who were unable to flee into nearby woods. The Serb occupation of the town of Srebrenica lasted until 8 May, the day when Serbs burned to death 23 Bosniak civilians in the downtown Srebrenica. The victims died in excruciating pain. From April 17 to May 8, a total of 74 Bosniak civilians were killed in the occupied Srebrenica. The youngest victim was the 12-month-old boy Nezir Suljic whose charred body was still lying in his cradle. His father Huso, his mother Muška, and his brother Nisvet were burned to death in the same room. Nezir's nine-year-old sister Sanela survived by jumping through a window and hiding in nearby woods.'

Anyone reading Becirevic and Toljaga cannot pretend, as Gibbs does, that the 'extraordinary hatred' in the Srebrenica region began with Oric's counteroffensives, which occurred subsequent to the Serbian attack on the region. Or can they? The evidence suggests that revisionist authors of the kind under discussion here simply disregard all inconvenient evidence and go on repeating old falsehoods in their books and articles, which consequently have no scholarly credibility but which are nevertheless eagerly seized upon by their ideological fellow travellers. In his book, Gibbs touches on the question of Rwanda in 1994, which

he avoids describing as a genocide. Complaining of the 'asymmetrical focus on specific conflicts, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, or more recently, Darfur, and the 'emotionalism' that this involves, he advances the bizarre thesis that the massacres in Rwanda were caused by a fall in the price of coffee (pp. 219-220)! Needless to say, this thesis is not borrowed from a genuine scholar of the Rwandan genocide; it is taken from an article by Michel Chossudovsky, a conspiracy theorist who has likewise argued that break-up of Yugoslavia was engineered by German imperialism as part of a 'long Western efforts to undo Yugoslavia's experiment in market socialism and workers' self-management and to impose the dictate of the free market.'

Gerald Caplan, in tackling Edward Herman and David Peterson, two Srebrenica genocide deniers who have mutated into Rwanda genocide deniers, has written of 'a tiny number of long-time American and Canadian genocide deniers', who disregard the copious work of genuine scholars that undermines their denialist thesis, but 'who gleefully drink each other's putrid bath water. Each solemnly cites the others' works to document his fabrications'. Indeed, as I recently wrote, the Srebrenica deniers simply will not stop digging, and are applying their same methods – already discredited over Srebrenica – to the if anything even more monumental task of trying to deny the Rwandan genocide.

In his latest response to Herman and Peterson, Adam Jones has noted:

'Like Herman & Peterson, the deniers cherry-pick a few useful factoids and declamations from serious scholarship on Rwanda (or halfway serious, like Davenport & Stam), while dismissing the vast bulk of the scholarly and human-rights literature as hopelessly corrupted by nefarious (western/imperialist) interests. This has the additional advantage of cutting down on what would otherwise be an onerous reading list, since the literature on Rwanda is now so extensive, detailed, and utterly contrary to Herman & Peterson's formulations. I confess I wondered, when preparing my first response to Herman & Peterson, whether their depiction of events in Rwanda in 1994 resulted from ignorance and

incompetence, rather than actual malice. Their latest post rules this out, I'm afraid.'

Readers are strongly recommended to read Jones's article, to confirm again – if any further confirmation is needed – what happens when genocide-deniers come up against a genuine genocide scholar.

This brings us back to the question of why genocide-deniers will devote so much time to writing texts that cannot withstand scholarly scrutiny, and that merely succeed in covering the deniers with infamy in the eyes of everyone outside their tiny denialist circle. These are the activities of a sect that needs its own myths to feed its followers so as to perpetuate itself. Bosnia and Rwanda are not treated as subjects for genuine scholarly enquiry, but merely episodes to be incorporated into the mythical narrative. So long as the sect's followers continue to imbibe the myths, it does not matter if the rest of the world despises the sect and its myths.

In this context, the task of genuine genocide scholars is not to struggle to de-programme the sect's followers – a generally impossible task – but merely to ensure that their poison is kept out of mainstream discourse on genocide.

MICHAEL DOBBS ON BOSNIA: EXPLAINING EVIL OR PARROTING CLICHES?

Michael Dobbs of *Foreign Policy* and of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) appears upset at criticisms of his article *'In defense of the Serbs'*. He had claimed that the international community in 1991-1992 had treated the Serbs in an unfair and contradictory manner, on the grounds that 'Croats and Muslims were given the right to secede from Yugoslavia, but Serbs did not have the right to secede from Croatia or Bosnia.' Responding to the accusation that he thereby 'legitimizes the aggression and genocide committed by Serbs', Dobbs has responded that 'to explain evil is not to justify it'.

Dobbs is simply putting forward a general principle, since he is incapable of responding to the concrete arguments. In my last response to Dobbs, I refuted his claim that the international community had treated the Serbs unfairly. I pointed out that Serbia was not treated differently from the other former-Yugoslav republics, in terms of its right to seek international recognition, and that the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia were not treated differently from minority groups in other republics (e.g. Croats in Bosnia, Bosniaks in Serbia, Albanians in Macedonia) in terms of being denied the right to secede from their respective republics. Dobbs was unable to challenge this point.

Dobbs is right that 'to explain evil is not to justify it'. Unfortunately, he does not explain evil; he merely parrots the evil-doers' own excuse for the evil, taking it as face value. Had he said 'Serb nationalists opposed the international recognition of Croatia and Bosnia within their existing borders, and argued that the Serb minorities in these republics should have the right to secede from them', then he could have reasonably claimed to be explaining the Serb nationalists' point of view (or at least the point of view that they gave in public). But he went further than this, and effectively said that *the Serb nationalists were right*; that though they may have carried out the bulk of the atrocities, their view of the break-up of Yugoslavia was the correct one.

As has been suggested by bodies such as the Institute for the Research of Genocide Canada (IRGC) and Congress of North American Bosniaks (CNAB), this does not explain evil; it justifies it. Dobbs is claiming that the aggression and genocide unleashed by Serb leaders against Bosnia was merely a response – albeit an illegitimate and disproportionate one – to their legitimate grievances at the anti-Serb policy of the international community. As if the Serb leaders had not been planning or waging war and genocide prior to the international community's recognition of Croatian and Bosnian independence in late 1991 and early 1992, and would not have embarked upon this war and genocide if the international community had not treated them unfairly.

Thus, Dobbs claims that as a result of the international recognition of Croatia and Bosnia within their existing borders,

‘The delicate ethnic balance sanctioned by the Great Powers after World War I and enforced by Marshal Tito (a Croat) in the four decades after World War II was upset.’ As if this ‘delicate ethnic balance’ had not already been ‘upset’ by Belgrade’s crushing of Kosovo’s autonomy, raising of a Serb rebellion in Croatia, full-scale military assault on Croatia and destruction of the city of Vukovar! All of this having occurred, of course, prior to the international recognition of Croatia or Bosnia.

Dobbs continues: ‘To use a phrase attributed to the French statesman Talleyrand, leaving two million well-armed Serbs in other people’s republics was “worse than a crime.” It was a gross error of political judgment.’ He is accusing the international community of being guilty of something ‘worse than a crime’ because it rejected Serb-nationalist demands to dismember Croatia and Bosnia. It is a statement that is erroneous at several levels. Croatia and Bosnia were not ‘other people’s republics’; Croatia was the state not only of the Croatian nation but of all its citizens and minorities, among which the Serbs were explicitly listed in the Croatian constitution; Bosnia was the common homeland of Muslims, Serbs, Croats and others. In the free elections of 1990, most Croatian Serbs voted for the Social Democratic Party of Croatia, which supported a sovereign Croatia, rather than the nationalist Serb Democratic Party. In Bosnia, too, although the great majority of Serbs voted for the Serb Democratic Party, significant numbers voted for non-nationalist parties that supported Bosnian unity. Dobbs speaks of ‘two million well-armed Serbs in other people’s republics’, as if every single Serb civilian – woman, child, elderly, invalid, anti-nationalist, etc. – were ‘well armed’, and ready to burst spontaneously into armed action the moment Croatia’s and Bosnia’s independence were recognised. The very title of Dobbs’s original post, ‘In defense of the Serbs’, is patronising and offensive; he is not defending ‘the Serbs’, but merely the Serb nationalist arguments. He certainly isn’t defending the brave anti-nationalist Serbs who opposed the war and genocide: Bogic Bogicevic, Jovan Divjak, Gordana Knezevic and many others. I wonder if he even knows their names?

Dobbs appears to treat as some sort of vindication, the fact that his commentary has offended Bosniak survivors along with Serb nationalists: 'Judging from the comments on this blog, I have succeeded in antagonizing champions for both sides.' One of the most consistently offensive aspects of the West's involvement in Bosnia, has been the propensity of even the most ignorant Western observers to feel they have the right to patronise the natives 'on all sides'.

I wonder if Dobbs would have been equally pleased with himself, if he had written something about the Holocaust that had succeeded in offending equally both Germans and Jews? His argument about Bosnia is equivalent to saying 'Yes, the Nazis did start World War II and murder six million Jews and millions of Poles, Ukrainians, Gypsies and others, but on the other hand, the international community was wrong to have imposed the Treaty of Versailles that left millions of Germans in other people's countries – Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc. – so things are not really black and white, and Jews should try to understand the Germans' point of view.' Yet every student of German history knows that the Treaty of Versailles, and the 'unfair' borders imposed on the Germans, are not sufficient reasons to explain why the Nazis embarked upon total war and genocide.

To put it differently: Dobbs is right that Serbs had 'perfectly legitimate concerns' about how their rights would be protected in an independent Croatia or Bosnia. But people with 'perfectly legitimate concerns' don't normally slaughter tens of thousands of people in genocidal campaigns. Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in the US had 'perfectly legitimate concerns' about the treatment of black Americans, but they did not organise a genocide.

Contrary to what Dobbs claims, I do not think he is an idiot; merely extremely naive. I do not think he is a 'Mr Bean'; merely that he has as little to say about the Bosnian war as Mr Bean had to say about the painting 'Whistler's Mother'. I am not familiar with his work in other areas; for all I know, he may be an excellent journalist. But I remain unable to comprehend how someone with so little knowledge and such a superficial understanding of

the Bosnian war and genocide should be given so much space to write about them by *Foreign Policy* and the USHMM.

MICHAEL DOBBS: AN INNOCENT
IN THE BOSNIA CONTROVERSY

There is a scene in the film 'Bean', in which Rowan Atkinson's Mr Bean, mistaken for an expert, is forced to give a speech about a painting in an art museum, about which he knows nothing. Trying to think of something to say, he points out that the painting is 'quite big, which is excellent, because if it was really small, you know, microscopic, hardly anyone would be able to see it'. That scene sometimes comes to mind when reading Michael Dobbs, a Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) who blogs for *Foreign Policy* magazine. For reasons that are beyond me, Dobbs has been tasked by these two bodies with investigating and writing about the Bosnian war, Srebrenica massacre and Ratko Mladic trial – despite apparently having no prior knowledge or expertise about these topics, or about the topic of genocide.

Dobbs is a well intentioned individual who tries hard to be balanced and objective. He writes frankly about the horrors of the Bosnian war. He consequently comes under regular vicious attack from the creepy-crawlies of the Srebrenica genocide-denial lobby and has been forthright in confronting them. He responds to criticism in a fair and measured way. Yet it's as if the USHMM and *Foreign Policy* had simply walked into a random bar, pulled out a random Joe Bloggs, and told him to write about Bosnia and genocide. In October 2011, he wrote 'I must admit that I find it difficult to use [in relation to Srebrenica] the word genocide, which conjures up images of the Holocaust... In the popular culture, at least, when we talk about "geno-cide," we think about the killing of an entire race or ethnic group.' That a Fellow of the USHMM should be guided by 'popular culture' when considering the meaning of genocide – instead of by expertise in the history and literature of the study of genocide – is incredible. It is, on the other hand, not in the least incredible,

but wholly predictable and understandable, that his comment should have caused enormous offence among Bosniak people, prompting a letter of protest to the USHMM from the Congress of North American Bosniaks, Institute for the Research of Genocide Canada and Bosnian American Genocide Institute and Education Centre.

Now, Dobbs has put his foot in it again, with an article entitled 'In Defense of the Serbs', containing his pearls of wisdom regarding the international recognition of Bosnian and Croatian independence in 1991-1992:

Looking back at the start of the Yugoslav wars two decades later, I am struck by a contradiction in western policy to the former Yugoslavia. Europe, supported by the U.S., recognized the independence of the breakaway republics. In other words, the borders of the multi-ethnic state that resulted from the Versailles conference decisions of 1919 (see photograph above) were not inviolate. On the other hand, the international community (in the form of the Badinter commission set up by the European Union) also decreed that the borders of Croatia, Bosnia, and the other republics could not be changed simply because a minority wished to secede.

The practical effect of these decisions was that Croats and Muslims were given the right to secede from Yugoslavia, but Serbs did not have the right to secede from Croatia or Bosnia. The delicate ethnic balance sanctioned by the Great Powers after World War I and enforced by Marshal Tito (a Croat) in the four decades after World War II was upset.

For what it is worth, my own personal view is that the breakup of Yugoslavia was inevitable, just as the breakup of the Soviet Union was inevitable. On the other hand, the United States and Europe (the nations that created Yugoslavia in the first place) should have been much more vigorous about establishing and enforcing rules for the breakup that guaranteed minority rights.

To use a phrase attributed to the French statesman Talleyrand, leaving two million well-armed Serbs in other people's

republics was “worse than a crime.” It was a gross error of political judgment.’

Two decades since the start of the Bosnian war, and a Fellow of the USHMM and writer for *Foreign Policy* can do nothing better than trot out the same, tired old sophistry that was being peddled by the Serb nationalists back then. It’s as if all the scholarship on the subject of the break up of Yugoslavia and recognition of new states, written in the interval by Richard Caplan, Michael Libal, Josip Glaurdic and others, simply did not exist. Dobbs is making a point that has been extensively addressed and refuted by real experts on the subject over a period of twenty years.

It would take a lot of space to refute all the misconceptions in Dobbs’s small passage above, so let me pick just one. There was, of course, no ‘contradiction’ in the policy of the international community as regards the right to secede of Serbs and of non-Serbs in the former Yugoslavia in 1991-1992. Dobbs claims that ‘The practical effect of these decisions [by the international community] was that Croats and Muslims were given the right to secede from Yugoslavia, but Serbs did not have the right to secede from Croatia or Bosnia’. This is false: ‘Croats and Muslims’ were not given the right to secede from Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was recognised as being ‘in the process of dissolution’, and the six constituent republics were recognised as the entities that inherited its sovereignty. Thus, it was the six republics – including Serbia – not the ‘Croats and Muslims’, whose right to independence was recognised. Serbia was not treated differently from Slovenia, Croatia or Bosnia in this respect, and was entirely free to seek and receive international recognition of its independence, just as they did.

The right of the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia to secede from their respective republics was not recognised; neither was the right of the Croats of Bosnia. Nor of the Muslims/Bosniaks of Serbia’s Sanjak region. Nor of the Hungarians of Vojvodina, within Serbia. Nor of the Albanians of Macedonia and Montenegro. Nor, at the time, of the Albanians of Kosovo. In fact, the only group on the territory of the former Yugoslavia whose carving out of a wholly new entity has ever been recognised by the

international community is the Bosnian Serbs. Thus, at Dayton, the 'Republika Srpska' was recognised, whereas the Bosnian Croats' 'Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna' has been dissolved, and the right of the Bosnian Croats to establish their own entity within Bosnia has been consistently denied.

It is difficult to believe that anyone could think about this for even a few minutes before realising that the 'contradiction' Dobbs posits is no contradiction at all. But I'm not suggesting he's being insincere; merely that he hasn't bothered to think seriously about this, let alone read anything much – if at all – on the subject. Hamdija Custovic, Vice-President of the Congress of North American Bosniaks, has quite rightly written another letter of protest to *Foreign Policy* about Dobbs's article. What saddens me about this is not that Dobbs's views are particularly outrageous – as I said, I believe he is a well intentioned individual trying hard to be balanced and objective. It is that respectable bodies like the USHMM and *Foreign Policy* consider it acceptable to provide a lot of space and opportunity for someone with no expertise on the former Yugoslavia or the Bosnian genocide to write about them, as if the subject wasn't important enough to recruit a proper expert who actually has something informed to say.

The victims of the Bosnian genocide deserve better than this.

THIRTEEN YEARS SINCE SREBRENICA;
THIRTEEN FACTS TO REFUTE THE THEORISTS
OF AN 'ANTI-SERB IMPERIALIST CONSPIRACY'

Since last week was the thirteenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, this would appear to be a good occasion on which to recapitulate some facts related to the Bosnian genocide and international 'efforts' to punish its perpetrators.

- 1) Two different international courts have recognised that the Srebrenica massacre was an act of genocide: the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY); and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

- 2) A third international court, the European Court of Human Rights, has determined that genocide occurred in northern Bosnia in 1992. This means that three different international courts have recognised that genocide occurred in Bosnia in 1992-95. Be this as it may...
- 3) Only a single individual, Bosnian Serb deputy corps commander Radislav Krstic, has been successfully prosecuted for a genocide-related offence by the ICTY.
- 4) Not a single official from Serbia or Montenegro has yet been convicted of any war-crime in Bosnia by the ICTY – but not because any has been acquitted.
- 5) Rather, only six officials from Serbia or Montenegro were ever indicted for any war-crime in Bosnia by the ICTY in the first place. Two of these have died and proceedings against the other four are ongoing. The maximum possible number of such individuals who could be convicted by the ICTY is therefore four.
- 6) Serb or Serb-controlled forces were responsible for at least 86% of the killing of civilians in the Bosnian war, and for over 80% of the killing of civilians in the Wars of Yugoslav Succession as a whole.
- 7) Nevertheless, of 159 individuals indicted by the ICTY, only 108 or 68% were Serb officials (including non-Serbs employed in the Serb military or security forces). 51 or 32% were Croat, Bosnian Republic, Kosova Albanian or Macedonian officials.
- 8) Ratko Mladic, architect of the Srebrenica massacre, and Radovan Karadzic, the wartime Bosnian Serb leader, have still not been arrested, despite the continuous presence of international forces in Bosnia since the Dayton Accord was signed. This has not prevented Serbia from signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU this year.
- 9) Nevertheless, Serb nationalists and their apologists in the West have spent the last seventeen years or so whining about how the whole world is against them, and how everything that has happened in the former Yugoslavia is just one big anti-Serb conspiracy organised by Western Imperialism, ‘the

- media', the Vatican, Islam, the Jews, the Comintern, the Martians, etc. etc. etc.
- 10) Although the establishment of the ICTY (unlike the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, for example) was authorised by the UN Security Council, Serb nationalists and their apologists in the West routinely claim that the ICTY is 'illegitimate'; a 'kangaroo court'; 'NATO court'; etc.
 - 11) Milorad Dodik, prime minister of the Republika Srpska / Serb Republic, has refused to respect the ruling of the ICJ that genocide occurred at Srebrenica.
 - 12) Serbia was found guilty by the ICJ of a failure both to prevent and to punish the crime of genocide.
 - 13) Even so, Serb leaders are in the habit these days of accusing others of failing to respect international law...

Tuesday, 15 July 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

FIRST CHECK THEIR SOURCES:
ON DAVID N. GIBBS AND 'SHODDY SCHOLARSHIP'

[This is the second part of my four-part refutation of David N. Gibbs's book 'First Do No Harm'. In Part 1, I expose his attempts to blame the Bosniak victims for the bloodshed in the Srebrenica region. In this second part, I refute his response to me. In Part 3, I refute his attempt to justify Serb-nationalist territorial claims in Bosnia. In Part 4, I refute his attempt to blame Germany for the break-up of Yugoslavia.]

David N. Gibbs has responded to my post of 6 December ("The bizarre world of genocide denial"), in which I take him to task for his book *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2009), in which he denies the Srebrenica genocide and regurgitates the old denialist narrative about the break-up of Yugoslavia, despite his own lack of any expertise in the field, inability to read Serbo-Croat and unwillingness to engage with the existing scholarly literature on the subject.

Gibbs begins his reply to me, which is published by *Modernity Blog*, by trying to disqualify me on the grounds that I'm a biased reviewer:

'In undertaking these attacks, however, Hoare has omitted important information, which readers have a right to know: That the book presented an extended critique of Hoare's own publications on this topic, and so he is not a disinterested party. To be specific, my book criticized Hoare's work for shoddy scholarship, which included mischaracterizing the ethnic makeup of the Yugoslav National Army (p. 252), omitting information that the US sabotaged Bosnian peace talks (262), providing an inaccurate account of testimonies before the Hague tribunal (274), and neglecting evidence of Al Qaeda involvement in Bosnia (280). I understand Hoare's anger that I have criticized his work, but he really should let readers know when he has a vested interest in a book that he is reviewing.'

I shall deal shortly with the specific points Gibbs raises, but let us first make this clear: it is wholly untrue that Gibbs's book has 'presented an extended critique' of my own publications. Anyone reading Gibbs's book without examining carefully the endnotes would not even notice that I had been criticised at all: my name does not appear in the text itself, nor in the index. Gibbs has four trivial quibbles with me, buried in his endnotes. Gibbs does not, as he now claims, accuse me in his book of 'shoddy scholarship', and has made this accusation only in his subsequent reply to me. I cannot help but suspect that he has only decided I am guilty of 'shoddy scholarship' after reading my critique of his book.

If my own mum, dad, best friend, girlfriend or granny had reviewed my work, and come up with nothing more substantial than Gibbs's four quibbles, I'd feel I was getting off lightly and that they were being too soft on me. If all four of his quibbles were entirely justified, I hardly think they would mark me down as a 'shoddy scholar'.

However, not one of them is justified. Let us look at them each in turn:

- 1) I wrote 'At the start of the war, in 1991, the two most senior JNA [Yugoslav People's Army] officers, Federal Secretary of People's Defence Veljko Kadijevic and JNA Chief of Staff Blagoje Adzic, were a Croatian Serb and a Bosnian Serb respectively (though Kadijevic had a Croat mother). They ensured the JNA would act as Serbia's army in the wars against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.' (*The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, Saqi, London, 2007, p. 349)

Gibbs replied 'Marko Hoare provides the following misleading statement [above quote]. Hoare neglects to mention Kadijevic's deputy, Admiral Brovet, who was a Slovene, nor does he mention the JNA Air Force commander, General Jurjevic, who was a Croat.' (*First Do No Harm*, p. 83)

Gibbs is right that I did not mention that Kadijevic's deputy was a Slovene or that the JNA air force commander was a Croat, but it is unclear what point he thinks he is making. My statement was entirely accurate; Gibbs is not challenging the accuracy of my statement; and the additional information he supplies does not invalidate my statement in any way. I also did not mention – and Gibbs did not mention either – that Adzic's deputy Zivota Panic was also a Serb. And that consequently, at the start of the war in 1991, the four top posts in the JNA were held by two Serbs, one non-Serb, and one half-Serb (who had a Croat mother but who sided with Milosevic and Serbia in the war against Croatia).

Another fact that is relevant here is that in 1990 the JNA officer corps was – irrespective of the presence in it of individuals like Brovet and Jurjevic – a Serb-dominated body. James Gow writes in his 1992 study of the JNA that 'Sixty per cent of officers were Serb; a further 5.4 per cent were "Yugoslavs" and likely to be Serbs; and 6.2 per cent Montenegrins. These all shared a perspective of Yugoslavia that coincided in many ways with that of the neo-Communist Serbian leadership' (James Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military: The Yugoslav Crisis*, Pinter Publishers, London, 1992, p. 142).

I can only assume that by mentioning that the deputy secretary of defence and the air force commander in 1991 were

non-Serbs, Gibbs is trying to obscure the fact of the Serb domination of the JNA. If so, it is an extremely feeble attempt.

- 2) I wrote that ‘during negotiations at Lisbon on 18 March 1992... Izetbegovic was pressurised by representatives of the EU to agree to the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina into a Muslim, a Serb and a Croat national entity, though he subsequently repudiated the agreement.’ (*The History of Bosnia from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, p. 376)

Gibbs replied: ‘Marko Hoare misleadingly implies that Izetbegovic rejected the Lisbon agreement on his own initiative; but Hoare neglects to mention the US role in encouraging Izetbegovic’s decision.’ (*First Do No Harm*, p. 264).

As readers can see for themselves from what I wrote, I did not imply ‘that Izetbegovic rejected the Lisbon agreement on his own initiative’, as Gibbs claims. I merely noted that Izetbegovic repudiated the agreement, which he did. Gibbs is not disputing the accuracy of my statement. He is claiming that by stating a fact that he himself accepts as accurate, I am being ‘misleading’.

The subtext of Gibbs’s accusation that I am being ‘misleading’ is that I did not specifically endorse the thesis, which he subsequently repeats in his own book, that Izetbegovic rejected the Lisbon agreement on the prompting of the US, and specifically of the US ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann. Yet this thesis is at best – *at best* – unproven and controversial. To cut a long story short, the rumour that Izetbegovic repudiated the Lisbon agreement on Zimmermann’s prompting appears to have originated with an article in *The New York Times* written a year and a half later, in August 1993, by the journalist David Binder. Binder was highly sympathetic to the Serb-nationalist side in the war – readers are invited to read his grovelling 1994 interview with Ratko Mladic. Nevertheless, Binder does not actually say that Zimmermann told Izetbegovic to repudiate the agreement, merely that he asked Izetbegovic why he had signed the agreement if he didn’t like it, and that Izetbegovic repudiated the agreement after his conversation with Zimmermann. In his memoirs,

Zimmermann does not deny asking Izetbegovic why he had signed an agreement he did not like, but nevertheless claims he urged Izetbegovic to abide by the agreement: 'Drawing on my instructions to support whatever could be worked out between the European Community and the three Bosnian parties, I encouraged Izetbegovic to stick by what he'd agreed to.' (Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, Times Books, New York, p. 190).

That is, in essence, the basis for the thesis propounded by Gibbs and others – that Izetbegovic rejected the Lisbon agreement on American prompting. The sources Gibbs (*First Do No Harm*, p. 110) then cites in its support are the following:

- a) Robert M. Hayden's book, *Blueprint for a House Divided: The Constitutional Logic of the Yugoslav Conflicts* (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1999), p. 100. This is a reference falsely cited by Gibbs, as Hayden merely notes that the Muslims and Croats repudiated the agreement, without attributing it to US prompting.
- b) The aforementioned Binder article.
- c) The opinion of George Kenney, a man who in September 2004 wrote to Milosevic to tell him that 'I believed then and still believe that you are innocent of all the charges in the Tribunal's indictments.'
- d) The opinion of James Bissett, a defence witness for Milosevic at his trial in The Hague, who complained that 'he felt Milosevic had been unfairly painted as an instigator of the crisis when in fact he had worked tirelessly to keep Yugoslavia united', and accused Milosevic's trial of being 'a Stalinist show-trial' (mysteriously, Bissett's support for Milosevic is never mentioned by Gibbs, even though he is one of Gibbs's most oft-cited sources!)
- e) The Dutch government's NIOD report on Srebrenica. Although it is true that this source claims (based on the aforementioned Binder article) that the US opposed the Lisbon agreement, it does not – contrary to what Gibbs implies – claim that Izetbegovic rejected the Lisbon agreement on US prompting. What it says is this: 'According to

others Izetbegovic withdrew his acceptance on the urging of the American ambassador in Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann. It is not unimaginable that the American government did indeed tell Izetbegovic that he could achieve more by sticking to the principle of an integral Bosnia-Herzegovina that was about to be recognized.'

- f) The testimony of Cutileiro himself, who wrote in December 1995 that 'Izetbegovic and his aides were encouraged to scupper that deal [from Lisbon] by well meaning outsiders.' Gibbs notes that 'this was probably a polite reference to US activities'. I agree with Gibbs on this point, that Cutileiro probably was referring to the Americans – still, note his use of the word 'probably'.
- g) The testimony of Britain's Lord Carrington, who claimed later that the 'American administration made it quite clear that the proposals of Cutileiro... were unacceptable' and 'The Americans actually sent them [the Bosnians] a telegram telling them not to agree'. Neither quotation actually states that the Americans prompted Izetbegovic to repudiate the agreement after he had already signed it. Indeed, the wording of the second quotation rather suggests that the telegram in question was sent *before* Izetbegovic signed the agreement (advising him not to agree), not after he had done so (advising him to repudiate something to which he had already agreed). In any case, the claim that Izetbegovic repudiated the agreement on the basis of a telegram from the US contradicts the claim that he repudiated the agreement on the basis of a face-to-face meeting with Zimmermann.

So, that is the evidence for Gibbs's case that Izetbegovic repudiated the Lisbon agreement on US prompting – it can most charitably be described as inconclusive. Gibbs, however, simply states that Zimmermann 'encouraged Izetbegovic to reject the peace plan' (p. 110), as if it were a definite fact. He puts the evidence for his case in the actual text of his book (p. 110), but buries the evidence against it – Zimmermann's denial – in his endnotes (p. 264).

(NB A skeptic might simply dismiss Zimmermann's testimony on the grounds that he is an interested party, but this is not something that Gibbs can do, because he treats Zimmermann's testimony as gospel truth whenever it supports his own argument, e.g. on pages 84 and 96 of his book).

I remain unconvinced by the case against Zimmermann. I am ready to accept that Cutileiro probably sincerely believes that the US prompted Izetbegovic to repudiate the agreement. I am ready to accept that Carrington may have sincerely believed the same thing – if that is indeed what his quotes were claiming, which isn't clear. I am ready to accept that these two (unlike Bissett and Kenney) are witnesses whose opinions count for something. However, I very much doubt that Zimmermann would have lied about urging Izetbegovic to abide by the agreement. Readers may disagree.

But I challenge anyone to say, hand on heart, that Gibbs is right to accuse me of being 'misleading' because I mentioned Izetbegovic's repudiation of the Lisbon agreement without specifically endorsing his unproven thesis. I would rather suggest that it is Gibbs who is being misleading, for a) presenting the opinions of Bissett and Kenney as evidence, without telling his readers of their support for Milosevic; b) failing to inform his readers of Binder's pro-Serb-nationalist bias; c) burying Zimmermann's testimony, that contradicts his thesis, in the endnotes of his book; and d) falsely claiming that Hayden and the NIOD report support his thesis about the repudiation of the Lisbon agreement, when they don't.

- 3) I wrote of the UK's David Owen, that 'he refused to testify against Milosevic at the latter's trial at The Hague, though he appeared as a court witness to speak favourably of Milosevic's contribution to the peace process' (*The History of Bosnia from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, p. 379).

Gibbs replied 'Marko Hoare criticizes Owen because he "refused to testify against Milosevic at the latter's trial at The Hague". See Hoare, *The History of Bosnia* [above reference]. In fact, the ICTY Web site lists Owen as a prosecution witness.' (*First Do No Harm*, p. 274).

Gibbs is simply wrong; the ICTY website does not list Owen as a 'prosecution witness', but as a 'court witness' as I said. Specifically, it lists him as 'Court witness 2'.

- 4) I wrote 'Insofar as it cannot be excluded that al-Qa'ida ever had a presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, this is hardly exceptional by European standards; as the international community's High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch pointed out in November 2001, "after all, the organisation had a base in Hamburg".' (*How Bosnia Armed*, London, Saqi, 2004, p. 133) I also wrote 'The 11 September attack inevitably provided a golden opportunity for enemies of Bosnia-Herzegovina, above all from the ranks of the Serb nationalists and right-wing and left-wing fundamentalists in the West, to equate the Izetbegovic regime and the Bosnian Army with the fanatic Islamists of al-Qa'ida. This version of events upholds the popular stereotype of bin Laden as a master villain on the model of James Bond's arch-enemy Ernst Stavro Blofeld, at the head of an organisation similar to 'SPECTRE' with tentacles all over the world, one of which was allegedly linked to the Izetbegovic regime, a second to the Kosovo Liberation Army and a third to the ethnic-Albanian National Liberation Army in Macedonia... The "Bosnia - bin Laden" conspiracy theory belongs to this category of the farcical' (*How Bosnia Armed*, pp. 134-135).

Gibbs replied: 'Marko Hoare is dismissive about the possibility of an Al Qaeda role in Bosnia; he refers to the "Bosnia-Bin Laden" conspiracy theory" which "belongs in this category of the farcical." Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books and Bosnia [sic] Institute, 2004), 134, 135. In fact, Holbrooke has since confirmed the Al Qaeda role in Bosnia.' (*First Do No Harm*, p. 280).

As the above quotations from my book make clear, I explicitly did not deny that Al Qa'ida had a presence in Bosnia; I did, however, deny that Izetbegovic's regime was linked to Al Qa'ida. This was the "Bosnia - bin Laden conspiracy theory" to which I was referring, as Gibbs is well aware. All three of the books he uses to 'prove' the uncontested fact that Al

Qa'ida had a presence in Bosnia are books that I have reviewed in detail. Of the first of these, Evan Kohlmann's *Al Qaida's Jihad in Europe* (Berg, Oxford and New York, 2004), I had this to say back in 2005: 'In fact, it is as eloquent a refutation as one could hope to read of the idea that Izetbegovic's Bosnian Muslims were in any way ideological fellow travellers of Al-Qaida, or its partners in terrorist activity.' The other two books are propaganda tracts of the *First Do No Harm* variety, that I have refuted point-by-point.

On the basis of the above, I feel justified in saying that Gibbs's claims to have undertaken an 'extended critique' of my work, and to have exposed my 'shoddy scholarship', are mere wishful thinking. But what about the rest of his reply to me? Let us consider his points in turn.

1) Gibbs's whitewashing of Serb atrocities in East Bosnia

As readers may recall, in my initial critique of Gibbs, this was the specific charge that I made:

'For the time being, I mention him [Gibbs] because he practices the old denialist trick in relation to the Srebrenica massacre, of describing the military actions of the Bosnian military commander in the Srebrenica region, Naser Oric – involving attacks on Serb villages around Srebrenica and atrocities against Serb civilians – while neglecting to mention the incomparably larger-scale Serbian offensives that preceded Oric's actions, and to which the latter were a response.'

Gibbs's response is that he wrote the following: 'As war began [in 1992], Serb forces launched a major offensive in northeast Bosnia, taking over a series of villages of mixed ethnicity, and then expelling most of the non-Serb inhabitants by force. By the end of 1992, Serb forces had overrun large portions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and they controlled approximately 70 percent of the whole area of the country. The process of ethnic cleansing, for which the war

became famous, had begun... The Bosnia conflict quickly became notorious for the scale of atrocities, especially those perpetrated by Serb forces against Muslim civilians. The widespread practice of ethnic cleansing was often associated with the killing of noncombatants, and also the raping of women and girls.' (First Do No Harm, p. 122).

Gibbs's self-quotation is misleading, because he has actually conflated two paragraphs from two different sub-chapters, joining them with an ellipsis where they are, in his book, actually separated by a sub-chapter heading ('The Politics of Atrocities'). His paragraph beginning 'The Bosnia conflict quickly became notorious for the scale of atrocities...' represents his general evaluation of the war as a whole, rather than anything relating specifically to the start of the war in north-east Bosnia in 1992.

Thus, the only statement in his book that he can even remotely pretend represents an acknowledgement that Serb atrocities against Muslims in East Bosnia preceded Muslim atrocities against Serbs in the same region, is the following:

'As war began [in 1992], Serb forces launched a major offensive in northeast Bosnia, taking over a series of villages of mixed ethnicity, and then expelling most of the non-Serb inhabitants by force. By the end of 1992, Serb forces had overrun large portions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and they controlled approximately 70 percent of the whole area of the country. The process of ethnic cleansing, for which the war became famous, had begun.' (First Do No Harm, p. 122).

The first problem here is that he refers only to 'northeast Bosnia', and Srebrenica is not really in northeast Bosnia – it would be a bit like claiming that Birmingham is in 'northwestern England'. Even if one is charitable to Gibbs's vagueness about Bosnian geography, and assumes his reference to the start of fighting in 'northeast Bosnia' encompasses territory as far south as Srebrenica, he is nevertheless referring only to the 'expelling [of] most of the non-Serb inhabitants by force'. No reference to mass murder of civilians, rapes, torture, concentration camps or,

indeed, any actual bodily harm to Muslim civilians in the course of this offensive.

Gibbs does not explicitly mention the Srebrenica region until thirty-one pages and several sub-chapters later, and when he does, this is how he presents it:

‘The Srebrenica safe area had an especially brutal history, and it was besieged by Serb forces throughout the war. It is important to note, however, that Muslim troops also behaved brutally. Especially problematic was the Muslim commander Brigadier Oric, who based his forces inside Srebrenica and conducted forays against Serb villages in the surrounding region. One UNPROFOR commander later described Oric’s activities as follows: “Oric engaged in attacks during Orthodox holidays and destroyed [Serb] villages, massacring all the inhabitants. This created a degree of hatred that was quite extraordinary in the [Srebrenica] region... [Oric] reigned by terror;... he could not allow himself to take prisoners. According to my recollections he didn’t even look for an excuse. It was simply a statement: One can’t be bothered with prisoners.”’ (First Do No Harm, pp. 153-154).

So the Srebrenica region is introduced to the reader in a manner that implies it is the Muslims, rather than the Serb forces, who initiated the violence (‘created a degree of hatred’ there). Whereas Gibbs refers to Serb forces in northeast Bosnia merely ‘expelling most of the non-Serb inhabitants by force’ – without any reference to killing, rape or torture, and without any reference to atrocities against Muslims in the Srebrenica region – he refers to Muslim forces in the Srebrenica region in terms of ‘massacring all the [Serb] inhabitants’, ‘reigned by terror’, ‘could not allow himself to take prisoners’. And let us remember here that he is speaking this way about *Srebrenica* – the site of an act of genocide by Serbs against Muslims; a genocide that two different international courts have recognised but which Gibbs explicitly denies (‘Certainly, the murder of eight thousand people is a grave crime, but to call it “genocide” needlessly exaggerates the scale of the crime.’ *First Do No Harm*, p. 281)

Having blamed the Muslims for initiating the killing in the Srebrenica region in the first place, Gibbs then goes on to accuse them of precipitating the Srebrenica massacre itself in 1995: 'The origin of the Srebrenica massacre lay in a series of Muslim attacks that began in the spring of 1995.' (Gibbs, p. 160) Thus, he not only explicitly denies the genocide, but blames the genocidal crime on the victims.

II) Gibbs's disregard of the existing scholarly literature on the Bosnian war.

Gibbs writes: 'Hoare also claims that Gibbs "hasn't bothered to engage with the existing literature, but simply ignored all the existing works that undermine his thesis." He then lists five specific authors that I supposedly failed to cite (Michael Libal, Richard Caplan, Daniele Corversi, Brendan Simms, and Hoare himself). Wrong again. In fact I cited four of these authors, each several times, and also included them in the bibliography. Hoare's own writings were cited in four separate endnotes. His claim that I have ignored these authors is thus baseless.'

Since, as Gibbs pointedly mentions, he is a 'tenured full professor', I assumed he would understand the concept of 'engaging with the existing literature', but I apparently assumed too much. So let me spell this out: to 'engage with the existing literature' involves addressing the theses of books that make a significant contribution to our understanding of the topic. Quibbling over a couple of trivial details in a book you disagree with, while ignoring its overall theses and principal arguments, does not count as 'engaging with the literature'. Attaching a book to one of your endnotes in order to support a factual point, while ignoring the overall theses and argument of the book that contradict your own thesis, does not count as 'engaging with the literature'. And citing a book in support of your argument, despite the fact that the book's overall thesis actually refutes your own thesis, certainly does not count as 'engaging with the literature'.

For example, Gibbs argues that Germany encouraged the secession of Croatia and cites Michael Libal's book *Limits of*

Persuasion: Germany and the Yugoslav Crisis, 1991-1992 (Praeger, Westport, 1997) to show that the Germans felt 'euphoria' at the decision to withdraw the JNA from Slovenia (p. 94). Yet Libal's book actually presents a documented refutation of the myth that Germany first encouraged Croatia to secede and then sought prematurely to recognise its independence – a refutation that Gibbs fails to address. Gibbs argues that Western policy was consistently anti-Serb, and cites Brendan Simms's work *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia* (Penguin, London, 2001) to show that Lord Carrington blamed the Americans for undermining the Lisbon agreement – but he ignores Simms's extensively documented thesis demonstrating that British policy was anything but anti-Serb, and actually sought to shield Serbia and the Bosnian Serb forces from hostile intervention. As noted already, Gibbs quibbles with me over whether David Owen was a witness for the court or for the prosecution, but ignores the evidence I present of Western collusion with the Serbian destruction of Bosnia, of which my critique of Owen was just one element. And Gibbs wholly ignores the central aspect of the break-up of Yugoslavia noted by Daniele Conversi, Laura Silber and Allan Little and others – that Serbia's leaders actively promoted Serbia's secession from Yugoslavia. The documentary proof of this last one is wholly irrefutable – which is probably why Gibbs wholly ignores it.

III) Gibbs's reliance on Michel Chossudovsky

Gibbs writes: 'Hoare implies that my book relies too heavily on the writings of University of Ottawa economist Michel Chossudovsky, someone that Hoare does not like. In reality I cited Chossudovsky exactly once (out of more than a thousand separate endnotes).'

This statement is emblematic of Gibbs's deliberate deception of his readers. It may be true that he has only cited Chossudovsky once out of more than a thousand endnotes (I'm not going to plough through his thousand plus endnotes to check, so will happily take his word for it). But my criticism was not that Gibbs relied on Chossudovsky for his thesis on the former Yugoslavia. Rather, I pointed out that he borrowed Chossudovsky's

thesis for his own thesis on *Rwanda*, which naturally occupied a rather smaller place in Gibbs's book. His discussion of Rwanda occupies less than two pages of his book (pp. 219-220) and is supported by only two endnotes and two sources (excluding Samantha Power's book, which he cites only in order to dismiss as representing the 'conventional wisdom'). Chossudovsky is his principal source for Rwanda, though he advises his reader to 'see also' an article by another author (*First Do No Harm*, pp. 307-308). So Chossudovsky's article is rather more important for this aspect of Gibbs's argument than his misleading statistic of 'more than a thousand separate endnotes' suggests.

IV) Gibbs's dismissal of me as an authority on the topic under discussion

Gibbs writes: 'As is typical of his writing, Hoare grandiosely overstates his own accomplishments and presents himself as a leading authority on the topic of my book; he is not. In reality, my book was a study of the international relations of the Yugoslav wars, a topic on which Hoare has no qualifications. He also lacks access to German-language sources, which are crucial to understanding the diplomacy of this period. And given Hoare's numerous factual errors, the scholarly content of his work is thin.'

Whether I am a 'leading authority on the topic of Gibbs's book' is for others to decide, but I hope readers will not consider me unduly boastful if I say simply that I am considerably more of an authority on the topic of Gibbs's book than Gibbs himself is. Gibbs's bibliography contains six of his own publications, yet not one concerns the former Yugoslavia. I presume, therefore, that he has never published a single article on the former Yugoslavia in an academic journal, and that *First Do No Harm* is his first publication on the topic. He does not read any of the former Yugoslav languages. Wherein then does his claim to expertise in the topic lie?

Since Gibbs is apparently a 'tenured full professor', I am going to take his slur sufficiently seriously to answer it at some length. I have had articles on the history of Yugoslavia and its successor states in the 1980s and 1990s published in numerous academic

journals, including *East European Politics and Societies*, *East European Quarterly*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, *European History Quarterly* and *Journal of Genocide Research*; my articles on the earlier history of the former Yugoslavia have appeared in a whole lot more. I am the author of the entry for 'Yugoslavia and its successor states' in the Oxford University Press volume *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (2009) edited by Richard Bosworth, which covers the Milosevic and Tudjman regimes; and of the entry for 'The War of Yugoslav Succession' in the Cambridge University Press volume *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (2010), edited by Sabrina Ramet. I am a member of the editorial boards of three different scholarly journals dealing with the former Yugoslavia, including a journal published by the Association for Political Science of Serbia. My books on the former Yugoslavia have been reviewed positively by leading scholarly journals including *Slavic Review*, *Slavonic and East European Review*, *German History*, *European History Quarterly* and *Journal of Military History*. To the best of my knowledge, I have never received a negative review in an academic journal – unlike Gibbs's *First Do No Harm*, which was described by the Cambridge historian Dr Josip Glaurdic in a review in *International Affairs* (vol. 86, no. 2, March 2010, pp. 555-556) as containing 'glaring omissions and distortions'. And I have been invited to speak about the history of (the former) Yugoslavia, including its recent history, at academic conferences and seminars across Europe and in the US.

Thus, when someone who has not published a single journal article on the former Yugoslavia claims that the scholarly content of my work is thin, and that I have no qualifications concerning the international relations of the former Yugoslavia, I'm inclined not to take him very seriously.

V) *Gibbs's description of me in terms of 'the second coming of Joe McCarthy'*

Gibbs's paranoia and self-pity are indicated by his entitling of his response to me 'The second coming of Joe McCarthy' and his claim that 'Dr. Hoare and his network of neocon friends at the Bosnian Institute and the Henry Jackson Society have

designated themselves as the new Thought Police, while conducting their own little witch hunt.’ This really does take the biscuit – I exercise my democratic right to freedom of expression by criticising Gibbs and his book, and he becomes a victim of McCarthyite persecution! Of the Thought Police, no less! No doubt he thinks because of my blog post, he’ll be hauled up before the House Committee on Un-American Activities or be arrested by the security forces of a Central American junta, or something like that.

Gibbs may be a bit hazy about what McCarthyism actually involved; suffice it to say that if McCarthy had been a lowly academic who sat quietly at his desk writing articles exposing genocide-denial and poor scholarship on the Balkans, he would not have attained quite such notoriety. And though Gibbs appears not to have actually read George Orwell’s *1984*, I can assure him that the original Thought Police would not have been considered very terrifying if they had confined their totalitarian activities to writing book reviews and blog posts. Much as I would like to gratify Gibbs’s radical-left craving to feel persecuted, I am afraid that nobody I have ever criticised has suffered anything much worse than, perhaps, being exposed as a bad scholar and/or a genocide-denier. And that, I believe, is the point of democracy: that if a poor scholar denies a genocide, one is free to criticise them for being a poor scholar and genocide-denier. If Gibbs cannot deal with that, he should go and live somewhere where he can spout his poison without anyone calling him to account. Somewhere like Cuba or North Korea.

Merry Christmas to all my readers!

Update 1: Gibbs has proven completely unable to respond to my refutation of his attack on me, linked to above. In the meantime, further responses to his genocide-denial have been published by Daniel Toljaga and by Chroniclinghate.

Update 2: Daniel Toljaga has posted Part II of his critique of Gibbs.

Update 3: Modernity Blog has very graciously apologised to me for publishing Gibbs’s attack on me.

Update 4: Modernity Blog has evaluated my exchange with Gibbs in his comments box. He concludes: 'Professor Gibbs seems to have made a conscious choice not to address the criticism of his work in any significant way... So it seems to me that whilst Professor Gibbs was given a splendid opportunity to deal with the criticism of his work, he didn't. Whilst he could have engaged with the issues in the Balkans, he found other matters more pressing. All in all, Professor Gibbs showed a failure to address the issues, not a sparkling performance as you might expect. A missed opportunity.'

CHRISTOPHER DELISO, JOHN R. SCHINDLER
AND SHAUL SHAY ON AL-QAEDA IN BOSNIA

The role of al-Qa'ida and the foreign mujahedin in the wars in the former Yugoslavia of the 1990s remains controversial, but the controversy is not over whether the phenomenon was a positive one or not. Reading some of the coverage of the subject, one might be forgiven for thinking that the wars fought in Bosnia and Kosova were merely individual fronts in something much bigger: the global struggle between the warriors and opponents of radical Islam. Yet as is so often the case, it is the smaller, local struggle that is more bitter and protracted than the global one, and that inspires the greater loyalty and commitment. The recently published books by John R. Schindler and Christopher Deliso, *Unholy terror: Bosnia, al-Qa'ida, and the rise of global jihad* and *The coming Balkan caliphate: The threat of radical Islam to Europe and the West* respectively, are really books about the Balkans more than about radical Islam; and it is the rights and wrongs of the Balkan conflicts, more than the threat posed by radical Islam, that motivate the authors. Schindler and Deliso share a hostility to Islam and to the politics of Western liberal interventionism which goes far beyond any mere concern with the alleged Islamist threat in the Balkans.

Deliso's thesis of a 'coming Balkan caliphate' embraces Bosnia, Albania, Kosova, Macedonia and Turkey. Deliso's animosity in particular is directed against the Albanians, and he faithfully

upholds anti-Albanian stereotypes popular among the Balkan Christian peoples. He writes of 'the opportunism they [the Kosovo Albanians] have shown in siding at various times with the Turks, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Mussolini, Hitler, and, most recently, NATO' (p. 51), thereby repeating the myth popular among Serbian nationalists, of the Albanians as stooges of repeated foreign invaders, though the Kosova Albanians' record in this regard is absolutely no worse than that of other Balkan peoples. He attributes the emigration of Serbs from Kosova in the decades before 1999 to the fact that they were fleeing 'from a culturally and socially incompatible land dominated by clan-based Muslim Albanians' (p. 37). He complains of the high birthrate of the Balkan Muslims, writing 'it seems that Muslims, already outright majorities in some countries and political "kingmaker" minorities in others, are still expanding and will thus continue to enjoy all of the political, social, and economic benefits that this position entails.' And while Deliso recognises that the Balkan Muslim birthrate may eventually fall, he fears that 'these processes take considerable time and may take effect only after it is "too late" for the Christian populations to avoid returning to their Ottoman status – that is, second class citizens in their own countries.' (p. 113). Deliso also complains about mosques being too noisy, on account of the call to prayer from the minaret: 'Although it is not terribly politically correct, the term "sonic cleansing" is an apt one to describe the process by which aggressively visible and audible Islam gradually grinds away at non-Muslims, who gradually move out of what become, essentially, ghettos by choice.' (p. 86)

Deliso makes many sweeping statements about the dangers allegedly posed by the Balkan Muslim peoples, which are then refuted by his own account. Hence, he writes that 'the most fundamentally surreal dimension of the West's Balkan misadventures must be that specific policies have directly benefited Islamic fundamentalism, as attested by the Western support for Muslim-dominated secessionist movements and paramilitaries with demonstrable ties to terrorists and mafia groups in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia'. Indeed, it is self-determination and democracy that are themselves apparently to blame for the

alleged Balkan Islamist threat: 'Ironically, the creation of liberal democracies in docile, pro-Western nation-states also enables the rival development of radical Islam within them.' (p. 143)

However, throughout his book, Deliso mentions that the fundamentalist version of Islam, as put forward by the Wahhabites, was rejected by ordinary Muslims in Bosnia, Kosova, Albania and Macedonia and by their political leaders, and was out of keeping with their native tradition (e.g. pp. 54-55, 58, 84-85). In one passage, he describes bearded Islamists in the Kosovar town of Pec attacking Albanians holding a candlelit vigil to mourn the American victims of 9/11 (p. 60). Deliso's account of the aggressive way in which the Wahhabite movement is attempting to penetrate the Balkans, and the lack of receptivity on the part of native Muslims to it, is not uninteresting or uninformative. This is an important subject, and it is a pity that it is drowned in a sea of unsubstantiated propaganda directed against the Balkan Muslims and against Western policy, propaganda which his account of Wahhabite activities actually undermines. For why should self-determination for Muslim peoples, or their high birth-rates, be a problem if they anyway popularly reject radical Islam?

Deliso manages to overcome such contradictions and construct his bogey of a 'coming Balkan caliphate' through multiple conflation. He conflates nationalism with religious chauvinism; moderate Balkan Muslim national leaders with the radicals operating in their midst; Sunni al-Qa'ida with Shiite Iran; al-Qa'ida with the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates; quiet Saudi Wahhabite proselytising with al-Qa'ida terrorism – all these diverse, conflicting elements are thrown together to make a single indeterminate green Islamic stew. Thus, we get passages such as this one, concerning the involvement of the Islamic world in the 'Bosnian jihad' of the 1990s:

According to a former Sudanese intelligence agent, Osama bin Laden's operations in Sudan during the early 1990s involved an "advisory council" made up of some 43 separate Islamic groups, contraband arms depots, and several terrorist camps. Since the Saudi government preferred to keep its hands clean, supplying mostly money and logistical supplies, Iran would play the key

role in importing the fighters and military equipment through the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the national intelligence service, SAVAMA... Weapons shipments from Iran via Sudan, overseen by intelligence officials of both countries and utilizing al Qaeda-linked charities like the TWRA, also picked up in 1993 and 1994. (pp. 8-9)

Out of this stew, Deliso draws multiple non-sequiturs, such as this one:

...Alija Izetbegovic's single dream was the creation of an Islamic state in Europe. This vision was honored in December 2001, when he was awarded one million dirham (\$272,480) prize for his services to Islam by the Crown Prince of Dubai. Only two months earlier, however, the terrorist attacks on America had revealed how complicit he and his government had been in allowing al Qaeda to expand in Europe, through the Bosnian jihad.' (p. 5).

Or this one:

...the Clinton administration was planning for a second war to save yet another allegedly endangered Balkan Muslim population, this time the Albanians of Kosovo, and thus could not openly admit that it had already made a huge mistake in Bosnia – despite a reality of increasingly spectacular Islamic terrorist attacks against American interests globally, like the June 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia and the East Africa embassy bombings of August 1998. (pp. 10-11).

As the reader will note, the various assertions of motive and causality in these two passages are neither substantiated with evidence nor support each other, while the assertion that al-Qa'ida attacks in Saudi Arabia, East Africa and New York were the result of the 'Bosnian jihad' is completely out of the blue.

Deliso conflates the mainstream Bosnian Army struggle against Serb and Croat forces with the activities of al-Qa'ida and the foreign mujahedin to create a single 'Bosnian jihad', ignoring the fact that existing works on the Bosnian Army and the

mujahedin, by authors such as Evan Kohlmann, Esad Hecimovic and myself have comprehensively demolished the case for such a conflation. Yet Deliso admits that it was the police of Izetbegovic's supposedly 'Islamist' state that arrested a terrorist cell on 19 October 2005 that had allegedly been planning to blow up the British Embassy in Sarajevo (p. 14). He interviews a military intelligence analyst who tells him that, apart from the US embassy, 'nearly all diplomatic facilities in Sarajevo lack even the most rudimentary protection against attack... all the others remain vulnerable to truck bombs or determined individuals wearing suicide vests' (p. 23), making the failure of the Islamists to carry out a single successful terrorist attack against a Western target in the supposed Bosnian centre of world jihad all the more remarkable. Even Deliso's questionable 'expert' witnesses admit that Islamist terrorist training camps 'mostly don't exist' in Bosnia (p. 161). The facts simply do not fit Deliso's thesis. In scraping the bottom of the barrel to find some that do, he complains that 'Bosnian President Sulejman Tihic assured a gathering of dignitaries in Qatar that his country considered the American occupation of Iraq illegal', something that Deliso attributed to the 'Islamic factor' in Bosnian politics (p. 22). But an 'Islamic factor' was scarcely a prerequisite to considering the Iraq invasion to be illegal.

Deliso draws upon some highly dubious sources in support of his thesis about the importance of Bosnia in the development of the global jihad. One such is 'terrorism expert' Darko Trifunovic of Belgrade University, whom Deliso quotes about ten times in support of his argument. The 'terrorism expert' Trifunovic makes statements such as 'what the West seems to have forgotten is that long before the [2001] terrorist attacks against America, the Bosnian Serbs were fighting against jihad, a literal jihad ordered and funded by Osama bin Laden, in their own country. Former mujahedin have told me that bin Laden personally ordered them to fight Christians in the Balkans – and later, to expand in Europe, especially Italy and Spain. The West is now paying the price for supporting the mujahedin against the Serbs.' (p. 143) A comment of this kind might raise suspicions as to its author's objectivity in even the most naive observer – even one who did not already know that Trifunovic had been expelled

from participation in the 11th European Police Congress after the organisers learned that he was a Srebrenica denier who reduced the figure for the Srebrenica massacre to less than one hundred, and who, in an email correspondence with two Bosnian Muslims posing as a Serb, said of the Srebrenica Muslims that 'I wish Mladic had killed them all'.

Another of Deliso's sources is a certain Nebojsa Malic, whom Deliso describes as a 'native Bosnian political analyst'. Deliso quotes Malic as saying: 'Izetbegovic's vision of Bosnia was not a multi-ethnic democracy, but a multi-caste hierarchy of the kind that existed under the Ottoman Empire, the memories of which were still fresh at his birth in 1925.' (p. 25) Deliso does not mention that this particular 'native Bosnian political analyst' was a signatory of the petition of the 'International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic' which describes Milosevic as a 'Serbian patriot' whose 'crime was to set an example to the world by resisting NATO aggression'. Malic supported the neo-Nazi Tomislav Nikolic in this year's Serbian presidential election; after Nikolic's defeat, he complained that the Serbs had just proven that they 'don't have the guts' to fight over Kosova.

While quoting the most raving Serb bigots as though they were objective experts, Deliso has consulted few genuine scholarly works on the Balkans, and his references to Balkan history contain some real howlers. Thus, he writes: 'Both Croatia and Muslim Bosnia had served as fascist puppet states for the Nazis, during the Second World War' (p. 7) – there was, of course, no Bosnian fascist puppet state during World War II. Deliso describes Yugoslavia as a country that had 'sided with the United States in two world wars' (p. 41) – unlikely, given that Yugoslavia did not exist until after World War I, whereas in World War II, Yugoslavia signed an alliance with Nazi Germany but was then invaded and occupied by it – all while the US was still neutral.

Deliso's account of recent events in the Balkans is no more accurate. He describes Izetbegovic's close ally Hasan Cengic as 'a veteran of the World War II SS Handzar Division who reincarnated the unit while serving as Bosnia's deputy defense minister in the early 1990s.' (p. 8) It is unlikely that Cengic was a veteran

of the SS Handzar Division or of World War II – given that he was born in 1957. Nor does Deliso provide any evidence at all to support his assertion that Cengic ‘reincarnated’ the SS Handzar Division in the 1990s. As I have written elsewhere, claims that a ‘Handzar Division’, named after the SS unit from World War II, was ‘reincarnated’ by Bosnian Muslims in the 1990s appear to rest on a single piece of ‘evidence’: an article by British journalist Robert Fox, published in Britain’s *Daily Telegraph* on 29 December 1993. Fox’s article is based solely on second-hand information and contains factual inaccuracies. Fox himself did not actually meet anyone who belonged to the alleged ‘Handzar Division’, but merely reported its existence on the basis of what unnamed UN officials on the ground told him. But even this weak source, which Deliso cites, does not implicate Cengic in the Handzar Division’s alleged ‘reincarnation’.

Deliso’s book is not merely a piece of bad scholarship – although it is undoubtedly that. He engages in the sort of atrocity denial and conspiracy theorising that characterises supporters of the former regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Thus, in writing of the Serbian massacre of Albanian civilians at the village of Racak in January 1999, Deliso writes: ‘An alleged Serbian “massacre” at the Kosovo village of Racak, later proved by a UN forensics team to have been a place of legitimate battle, provided the necessary justification for Clinton to start the bombing.’ (p. 43) The nonsense statement ‘proved by a UN forensics team to have been a place of legitimate battle’ is a case of Deliso fluffing his denialist lines.

Schindler’s subject matter is narrower than Deliso’s, being confined essentially to Bosnia. It is less a study of the role of al-Qa’ida and the mujahedin in Bosnia and more a diatribe against the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian cause. Despite the author’s claim to having had a youthful flirtation with Islam (p. 13), he is clearly hostile to the religion and views the Bosnian war on this basis: ‘Bosnia’s Muslims were really Muslims, and some of them adhered to a faith that was deeply hostile to Western concepts of freedom, democracy, and human rights.’ (p. 19) Furthermore, ‘Muhammad himself endorsed, and practiced, the violent spreading of the faith and considered it the obligation of every

Muslim'; consequently, 'As devout traditionalist Muslims, Izetbegovic and the SDA [Party of Democratic Action] leadership adhered to the ideology of jihad that stands at the center of their faith.' Schindler considers the term 'fundamentalist' meaningless when applied to Islam, because '[a]ll truly believing Muslims are, from a Western viewpoint, "fundamentalists"' (pp. 116-117). This hostility to Muslims and Islam appears to be the guiding motive behind Schindler's book.

In this book, al-Qa'ida and the mujahedin play only supporting roles. After the introduction, the first third of the book makes no mention of them; it instead constitutes a polemic against the former regime of Bosnia's Alija Izetbegovic and against the supporters of Bosnia in the West. Indeed, Schindler follows the well trodden revisionist road that was long ago laid down by supporters of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic and of the Great Serbian cause – of which the British magazine *Living Marxism* was perhaps the most notorious – of a Western media conspiracy to demonise the Serb side in the war and fabricate Serb atrocities. Schindler puts the term 'concentration camps' in quote marks when referring to the Serb camps of Omarska, Manjaca and Trnopolje, claiming that all media reports of such camps were 'poorly sourced and based on second- and third-hand information, much of which was flat wrong' (pp. 83-84); and he accuses the Bosnians of staging massacres of their own civilians in order to incriminate the Serbs (pp. 92, 186).

Schindler revises the death-toll of the Srebrenica massacre downward to 'as many as two thousand Muslim men, mostly soldiers' (p. 231) – although, in one of several internal contradictions in this book, he earlier put the figure at about seven thousand (p. 227). He argues that '[w]hile this was unquestionably a war crime, it is difficult to term it genocide' (p. 231) – though it was not so difficult for the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, both of which formally described the Srebrenica massacre as 'genocide'. Instead, Schindler portrays the Srebrenica massacre as Serb revenge for earlier Muslim attacks on Serb civilians, and employs a gross racial stereotype in the process: 'To Mladic's troops, who

like all Bosnians believed in blood feuds and payback, this was simple revenge.’ (p. 231).

Schindler describes the siege of Sarajevo as a ‘siege manqué’ (p. 189) and as a ‘faux-siege’, where ‘conditions were much more normal than the Western media was willing to portray’ (p. 203), despite the Serb besiegers’ killing of thousands of people in Sarajevo during the war. Perhaps most tellingly of all, he claims (erroneously): ‘Ethnic cleansing, though unpleasant, was no more than the counterinsurgency doctrine learned by three generations of JNA [Yugoslav People’s Army] officers, who were trained in hunting down “fifth columnists” and “terrorists” by expelling sympathisers as well as fighters.’ (p. 82) He then endorses a CIA report, according to which: ‘The Bosnian Serb Army undertook these ethnic cleansing operations because it believed the Muslim population posed an armed threat or could act as a “Fifth Column” during the war with the Bosnian Government.’ (p. 82).

If the above citations suggest whose side Schindler is on, they do not properly convey the sheer extent of the deception in which he engages. He writes: ‘Milosevic wanted Bosnia and Hercegovina to remain in Yugoslavia, but failing that he would settle for a partition that would leave the ethnically Serbian parts under Belgrade’ (p. 63). Anyone who has looked at a map of the areas of Bosnia occupied by Serb forces in the early weeks of the Bosnian war, while they were still under the control of Belgrade and Milosevic, knows that this is untrue; they occupied huge areas in eastern and northern Bosnia in which the Muslims and/or Croats were in the majority. Schindler writes that ‘the [Yugoslav] army in the months leading to war in most cases tried to place itself between Serbs and Muslims and defuse tensions’ (p. 66), suggesting he has not read, or has simply ignored, the books by authors such as Norman Cigar, James Gow, Smail Cekic, myself and others that detail the unity of purpose between the JNA and the Bosnian Serb nationalists in the preparations for war.

Schindler writes that ‘Belgrade sought to arm the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, fearing that Yugoslavia was headed for dissolution’ (p. 68) – ignoring the fact that Belgrade was itself engineering Yugoslavia’s dissolution, as revealed in sources such

as the published diary of Milosevic's close collaborator Borisav Jovic, former president of Yugoslavia and of the Socialist Party of Serbia. Schindler then writes: 'The JNA General Staff was not brought into the plan' of arming the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia (p. 68) – again, he has either not read, or has ignored, the memoirs of Veljko Kadijevic, the most senior figure in the JNA during the war in Croatia, who describes in detail the JNA's role in arming Serb forces in Croatia and Bosnia. Schindler continues, 'Belgrade saw this concept [of arming the Serbs] as defensive, a plan to protect Serbs outside Serbia – and, in extremis, to prevent another genocide against Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia' (p. 68) – leading one to ask why Belgrade showed so little interest in protecting the substantial Serb populations of cities such as Zagreb and Split, while devoting so much energy to conquering territories such as eastern Slavonia, where Serbs were a small minority.

Schindler portrays the 'Muslim' (i.e. Bosnian) side as being the one that was initiating preparations for war, while the JNA was merely responding (p. 72). In order to make a case for this blatant falsehood and the arguments that flow from it, Schindler simply avoids mentioning almost all the acts of aggression carried out by the JNA in the first weeks of the war: the conquest of Zvornik, Foca, Visegrad, Kupres, Doboj, Derventa, Brcko and other towns; and the shelling of Mostar and Sarajevo. He consequently portrays the Bosnian military's action as coming out of the blue, enabling him to portray it as the aggressor – not very convincing to anyone who knows the history of the war, but enough to deceive an uninformed reader. Having failed to mention all these coordinated Serbian acts of conquest, he then describes 'two unprovoked Muslim attacks on the JNA that fatally poisoned relations between the army and the SDA': the Bosnian attack on the JNA in Sarajevo on 3 May and in Tuzla on 15 May. Well, yes, the attacks were 'unprovoked' if you do not consider a military assault on your country, the conquest of many of your towns and massive atrocities against your civilian population to count as a 'provocation'. Schindler claims the attack on the JNA in Sarajevo 'caused lasting bitterness among the Serbs', and describes the attack on the JNA in Tuzla as a 'killing spree' and a 'massacre' (pp. 80-81). Yet the JNA was a military target, and

attacking a military target was, presumably, a reasonable thing to do in war. By contrast, Schindler does not mention the Serb and JNA massacres of Muslim civilians that had been taking place all over Bosnia, or whether they might have 'caused lasting bitterness' among the Muslims. Similarly, Schindler mentions attacks on Serb civilians carried out by Naser Oric, the Bosnian Army commander in Srebrenica, between May and December 1992, claiming that it was '[s]mall wonder that the Bosnian Serbs thirsted for revenge against the Muslims of Srebrenica' (p. 228). But he does not mention the Serb attacks on Muslim civilians all across East Bosnia that preceded Oric's actions.

While whitewashing the role of the Milosevic regime and Yugoslav army in engineering the war, Schindler suppresses or misrepresents evidence in order to make his case: that Izetbegovic and his fellow SDA politicians were radical Islamists. He therefore makes claims against the Bosnian leadership that anyone with a cursory knowledge of the subject knows to be untrue. This involves attempting to portray Izetbegovic and his SDA as being unwilling to share power with the Bosnian Serbs. He claims that following the fall of the Communist regime in Bosnia in 1990 and the emergence of free political parties, the Serb nationalist leader Radovan Karadzic offered Izetbegovic and his party a coalition, but that the 'Muslims expressed no interest' (p. 63). In fact, Izetbegovic and the SDA did indeed form a coalition with the Karadzic's Serb nationalists, and with the Croat nationalists, that resulted in posts in the Bosnian government, presidency and administration being equally divided between the three groups of nationalists, with key posts going to the Serbs – including the command of the Bosnian Territorial Defence. Schindler then misrepresents the plan negotiated between Karadzic and the dissident Muslim politician Adil Zulfikarpasic in August 1991 as a 'power-sharing plan' (p. 71), omitting to mention that Serbs and Muslims already shared power in Bosnia, and that the plan was in fact aimed at keeping Bosnia within Milosevic's Serbian-dominated rump Yugoslavia. Schindler, indeed, argues that Izetbegovic and his party wished to deny the Bosnian Serbs full citizenship – but produces no evidence to back up his claim, other than an unsupported assertion by the Belgrade historian Aleksa Djilas (p. 64).

Schindler relies on extremely dubious source material to make his case against Izetbegovic and the SDA. One eyewitness whom Schindler quotes approvingly several times is Fikret Abdic (pp. 198, 203, 217). Abdic is certainly very liberal in his denunciation of Izetbegovic, but Schindler fails to mention that Abdic is a convicted war-criminal who staged an armed rebellion against his own democratically elected government, and fought against it on the side of Serb forces invading from outside Bosnia, from Serb-occupied Croatia. Another eyewitness in support of Schindler's case against Izetbegovic is Aleksandar Vasiljevic, head of Yugoslav military intelligence (p. 72-73) – Schindler takes everything he says about Izetbegovic at face value. A third is the former US State Department official George Kenney (p. 86), who resigned in protest at US inaction over Bosnia, but then changed sides, becoming one of the most vocal enemies of the Izetbegovic regime. Schindler does not mention the extent of Kenney's conversion, or the fact that Kenney wrote to Milosevic, while the latter was in prison in The Hague, to assure him that he considered him innocent of all charges against him, and that he considered his trial to be a 'show trial'.

So dubious, indeed, is Schindler's source material, that it is difficult to believe that he is using it innocently, or that he is attempting to convince anybody but the most naive of the merits of his case. He claims that Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic declared an 'Islamic holy war' on Bosnian TV in July 1995 (p. 200) – his source for this is the Belgrade news agency SRNA. He claims that the Bosnian Army murdered the Bosnian Croat commander Vlado Santic (p. 214) – his source for this is the Bosnian Croat newspaper *Dnevni list*, which is linked the nationalist Croat Democratic Union. He tells of mujahedin snuff videos, in which Bosnian Army commander Sakib Mahmuljin allegedly boasts of having sent a gift of twenty-eight severed Christian heads to Izetbegovic and twenty-eight more to Iran, and of Serb prisoners being made by the mujahedin to kiss the severed heads of other Serbs that were nailed to trees (pp. 166-167) – but Schindler has not actually seen any of these videos; his only source is one Croatian and one Serbian newspaper article. Schindler even endorses the view of the intelligence services of Franjo Tudjman's

Croatia concerning the alleged Islamic threat, arguing that 'the unheeded warnings from the Croatian intelligence services about the unwisdom of entering an alliance with radical Islam and the likes of al-Qa'ida had been prescient.' (p. 215).

Schindler describes Osama bin Laden as having been one of Izetbegovic's 'friends' (p. 239), though he has no evidence for this. He cites several sources in support of his claim that bin Laden was in Bosnia during the war; the one he describes as 'most credible' being the German journalist Renate Flottau, who claims to have met bin Laden in the foyer of Izetbegovic's office in the early 1990s (p. 123). Izetbegovic's staff told Flottau that bin Laden was 'here every day and we don't know how to make him go away' (p. 124). As I mentioned in my own book on the Bosnian Army, Izetbegovic himself never ruled out the possibility that he may have met bin Laden, but stated that he had no recollection of having done so; he pointed out that he met thousands of foreign Muslim visitors during the war. Izetbegovic was, of course, visited by many people during the war who were certainly not his 'friends', and many who were not Muslims, but Schindler jumps from providing evidence that bin Laden may have visited Izetbegovic to claiming that bin Laden was Izetbegovic's 'friend'. Other evidence that he produces on this score is similar in character: e.g. the claim of one of Izetbegovic's domestic opponents, the Social Democrat Sejfudin Tokic, who 'attested that photos exist of Izetbegovic and bin Laden together' (p. 125) – photos which, needless to say, Schindler has not seen. Most of Schindler's case against Izetbegovic and the SDA is based upon this sort of unsubstantiated rumour. Like Deliso, Schindler claims that Bosnian Muslim radicals during the war established a military unit named the 'Handzar Division', named after the Nazi SS division of the same name that had existed during World War II. And like Deliso, he bases this claim on the solitary, tendentious newspaper article by Robert Fox.

One of the more amusing of Schindler's blunders concerns the scientific calculation of the figure for Bosnian war-dead carried out by Mirsad Tokaca's Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo, which placed it at about one hundred thousand.

Schindler seems to endorse this figure wholeheartedly, seeing it as proof that earlier estimates of Bosnian war-dead had been 'grossly exaggerated', and complaining that Tokaca's result 'got minimal attention in Bosnia or abroad' (p. 317). The reason this is amusing is that Tokaca's figures disprove several of the figures for Serb dead at the hands of Bosnian forces that Schindler himself cites. Thus, Schindler claims that 'more than 3,000 Bosnian Serbs, some soldiers but at least 1,300 unarmed civilians, had been killed by Muslim forces based in Srebrenica' (p. 228). Yet according to Tokaca's calculation, only 849 Serb civilians were killed in the whole of Podrinje – the region that includes Srebrenica, and where Oric's alleged crimes occurred – in the whole of the war. Likewise, with regard to the Serb victims of the Sarajevo Muslim warlord Musan Topalovic-Caco, Schindler claims: 'By the war's end, it was clear that at least two thousand Sarajevo Serbs had fallen victim to Caco's gang, though the civic association representing the city's Serbs claimed the true figure was closer to five thousand' (p. 105). Yet according to Tokaca's figures, only 1,091 Serb civilians were killed in the whole of the Sarajevo region during the war, and this includes those killed by the Serb siege. Schindler claims that 'at least 1,500 Croatian civilians were killed in the fighting' between Muslims and Croats (p. 99), yet according to Tokaca's figures, in the two regions of Bosnia encompassed by the Muslim-Croat conflict, Central Bosnia and Neretva, only 786 Croat civilians were killed during the entire war, including those killed by Serb forces. So when Schindler writes that Tokaca's figures 'got minimal attention in Bosnia or abroad', he is probably referring to himself.

Schindler claims that the SDA had 'helped establish the beginnings of an Islamist statelet in Europe' (p. 253), but scrapes the bottom of the barrel to find evidence for this. He admits that 'Izetbegovic and the party leadership, for all their waxing Koranic to improve public morality, were careful to never speak openly about their plan for implementing a fully Islamic society.' (p. 196) But if Schindler is unable to find evidence for Izetbegovic's alleged Islamist plans in what he said, neither is he able to find it in what he and his party did. He mentions an SDA election poster of 2000, entitled 'Beautiful like Sarajevo girls', showing three

female faces – ‘two in Western makeup, one in hijab’, and notes: ‘This was the SDA’s new Bosnia, forged in a terrible war, and it had many wondering which worldview – Western and secular or Islamist and radical – the party really stood for.’ (p. 274). Yet an election poster that shows two Western-style women coexisting with a woman in hijab cannot by any stretch of the imagination be taken as evidence of a radical Islamic world-view.

Likewise, concerning the unproven allegation that Izetbegovic collaborated with the Nazis during World War II, Schindler writes: ‘Even out of office, the SDA founder continued to deny allegations that he had been a Nazi collaborator as a young man and had served in the Bosnian Muslim 13th *Handzar* Division of the Waffen-SS. Though no evidence emerged to tie him directly to the Nazis, it was nevertheless significant, observed a Sarajevo pundit, that Izetbegovic continued to feel the need to publicly deny rumors that had existed for many years.’ (p. 276) – an argument so feeble that it defies comment. Schindler admits that Bosnia engaged in a ‘modest participation in the American-led war on Islamist terrorism’ but complains that this provoked ‘open resentment among Bosnian Muslims’, and that ‘local newspapers regularly carried attacks on America and its leader “the state terrorist Bush.”’ (p. 293). Damning evidence indeed – most of Christian Europe was probably ‘Islamist’ by this standard.

Most instances of supposed ‘Islamist terrorism’ in the post-Dayton period that Schindler cites in his book turn out simply to be cases of former mujahedin attacking Croat or Serb civilians, above all refugees trying to return to their former homes (pp. 263-264), much as Serbs and Croats likewise attacked returning refugees from other communities – though Schindler does not mention the latter. Schindler explains away the absence of genuine Islamist terrorism in Bosnia by claiming that ‘most mujahidin were wary of targeting US or Western interests in Bosnia – anywhere else was fair game – because they appreciated that NATO gave them a de facto safe haven after Dayton.’ (p. 266). So Bosnia was free of Islamist terrorism because the type of Islamist terrorists based there did not like to attack Western targets. It therefore perhaps did not matter so much that, according

to Schindler, 'the Muslim police underperformed when it came to tracking down wanted holy warriors.' (p. 262). Yet Schindler, like Deliso, mentions the Bosnian police arresting on 19 October 2005 an armed terrorist cell that was planning to attack the British Embassy (p. 318) – somehow the police of the 'Islamist statelet' had managed to overcome their reluctance to act against Islamists and staved off an attack against a Western target.

There are so many factual errors and internal contradictions in Schindler's book that it is impossible to list them all, so what follows are just some examples. Schindler claims that 'reliable analysis concludes that between five thousand and six thousand Islamic fighters came to Bosnia during the war' (p. 162) – having previously written that 'there were probably four thousand foreign Islamists who fought for Sarajevo during the civil war' (p. 119). He claims that the Bosnian Serbs 'made up most of the agricultural population in Bosnia, and therefore controlled a disproportionate share of the land to be cleared of non-Serbs', which is simply rubbish – more agricultural land in Bosnia was owned by Muslims than by Serbs before 1992. Schindler claims that 'Ustasha' means 'uprising' (p. 33), when in fact it means 'insurgent'. He claims that Dzafer Kulenovic was made vice-president of the 'Independent State of Croatia' in November 1941 (p. 33); in fact, he was made deputy prime-minister. Schindler claims that during World War II 'the Serbs of Bosnia and Croatia were also the only Yugoslav nation exposed to actual genocide' (p. 60) – he is either unaware, or chooses to ignore, the work by two leading Yugoslav historians of the World War II genocide, the Serb Vladimir Dedijer and the Croat Antun Miletic, entitled *Genocide of the Muslims, 1941-1945: Collected documents and testimony* (Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1990), which provides evidence of the wartime Serb Chetnik genocide of the Muslims.

Schindler claims that 'alone among Bosnia's peoples they [the Muslims] had made no real contribution to Allied victory, and their collaboration with the Nazis had been unsurpassed' – another fabrication, since nearly a quarter of all Bosnian Partisans had been Muslims; their readiness to join the Partisans compared favourably with that of the Bosnian Croats; their contribution to

the anti-Nazi struggle was, for a nationality of their size, a significant one; and their readiness to speak out against Nazi crimes in 1941, and protect the victims of genocide, was virtually unparalleled in Nazi-occupied Europe. Schindler claims that the senior Bosnian Muslim Communist Osman Karabegovic was expelled from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1972 for Muslim 'exclusivism' and 'nationalism' (p. 43); this is the opposite of the truth – Karabegovic was expelled because he was too much of a Yugoslav centralist; he would later become one of the most prominent Bosnian Muslims to support Milosevic. The text 'Virtuous Muslim State', published in Tuzla in 1993, was not the 'SDA's manifesto', as Schindler claims (p. 95), but merely a proposal put forward by a senior SDA member from Tuzla. Schindler writes of the Bosnian Serb JNA officer Jovan Divjak, that he 'sided with Izetbegovic and the SDA when war broke out. It was a decision he would regret.' (p. 102). This is again untrue: Divjak never supported the SDA; he supported his country – Bosnia – in the war, and would never regret having done so. Nor is it true that the anti-nationalist Bosnian Serb journalist Gojko Beric had been 'an ardent supporter of the SDA' during the war (p. 310).

When all the rumours, unsubstantiated allegations and outright falsehoods are taken away, Schindler's case against Izetbegovic and the SDA evaporates. We are left with a picture of a secular Bosnia-Herzegovina under an SDA regime that was undoubtedly highly corrupt and frequently brutal to its political opponents, but that supported the US-led 'War on Terror', arrested Islamist terrorist suspects and was essentially free of genuine Islamist terrorist outrages on its soil – certainly more free than the US, Britain, Spain or Turkey. The most that can be said for Schindler's portrayal of Bosnia as a centre of global jihad is that, yes, some of the foreign mujahedin who fought in Bosnia would subsequently go on to engage in acts of terrorism and jihad elsewhere, some with the dubious benefit derived from possession of Bosnian passports – scarcely a free pass throughout the Western world, as anyone in the West who has Bosnian friends knows. In other words, none of the evidence presented here suggests that the global Islamist jihad would look significantly different today had the Bosnian war never taken place.

One other malevolent error of which both Deliso and Schindler are guilty is their portrayal of the Clinton Administration as being hawkishly pro-Muslim and anti-Serb. You would not know, from reading either of these books, that Clinton had enforced the arms embargo against Bosnia for the best part of the war; that he had come under massive fire from Congress for his unwillingness either to break the arms embargo or to carry out air-strikes against Serb forces; that he had forced the Bosnian Army to halt its victorious advance against Serb forces in the autumn of 1995, leaving half of Bosnia in Serb-rebel hands; that the Clinton-imposed Dayton Accords engineered the recognition of the 'Republika Srpska' incorporating nearly half of Bosnia, with a much smaller share of territory going to the Muslims; and that after Dayton, the Clinton Administration avoided arresting the Serb war criminals Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. Authors incapable of properly analysing Islamism are equally incapable of analysing US foreign policy.

After reading two such inaccurate, unscholarly, poorly researched and politically motivated works of propaganda, it actually comes as a relief to read a book that is merely very bad. Shaul Shay, unlike Deliso and Schindler, has no Balkan agenda or axe to grind; he is a former Israeli intelligence officer, and he genuinely comes at the Balkans from the perspective of someone primarily interested in radical Islam and the Islamic countries, rather than vice versa. His book contains some rather endearingly naive sentences, such as 'Yugoslavia is [sic] a mountainous country in the northern Balkans' (p. 19) and 'Bosnia-Herzegovina is a mountainous country in the Balkan [sic] that is divided into two historical geographic regions – the Bosnia region in the north and the Herzegovina region in the south' (p. 39); he elsewhere describes Bosnia as having 'a Muslim majority and a Serb minority' (p. 24).

Shay's run-of-the-mill-first-year-undergraduate-quality potted history of the Balkans repeats some of the historical and other factual errors made by Deliso and Schindler, in particular at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims, and there are numerous misspellings of names (Alija becomes 'Ilija', Cengic become 'Kengic', Vojvodina becomes 'Wivodena' and so on). Having gone into

the errors of Deliso and Schindler in detail, I'm not going to bore the reader further by listing Shay's; his are by far the most innocent of the three. In fact, he appears to be the sort of person that books of the Deliso-Schindler variety might be written to target. If one simply ignores everything Shay's book has to say about Balkan politics, then one can glean a few nuggets of information from it concerning the politics of radical Islam globally and of the Muslim states of the Middle East. But this is not enough to recommend this book when there are much better treatments of these topics available.

Radical Islam is a genuine problem facing Europe, and although it is actually less of a danger in the Balkans outside of Turkey than it is in Western Europe, this does not mean it is not a problem facing the Balkans as well. We need objective, scholarly analyses of the activities of Wahhabites and other radical Muslims in the Balkans if we are to understand and confront the problem. Unfortunately, this will not happen so long as writers simply use the issue to make propaganda to fight Balkan wars that, ultimately, have little to do with radical Islam.

This review was published last week in *Democratija*.
Monday, 2 June 2008 Posted by Marko Attila Hoare

THE BOSNIAN MUSLIMS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

This September, my latest book, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War: A History*, will be published by C. Hurst and Co. According to its blurb:

'The story of the Bosnian Muslims in World War II is an epic frequently alluded to in discussions of the 1990s Balkan conflicts, but almost as frequently misunderstood or falsified. This first comprehensive study of the topic in any language sets the record straight. Based on extensive research in the archives of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia, it traces the history of Bosnia and its Muslims from the Nazi German and Fascist Italian occupation of Yugoslavia in

1941, through the years of the Yugoslav civil war, and up to the seizure of power by the Communists and their establishment of a new Yugoslav state. The book explores the reasons for Muslim opposition to the new order established by the Nazis and Fascists in Bosnia in 1941 and the different forms this opposition took. It describes how the Yugoslav Communists were able to harness part of this Muslim opposition to support their own resistance movement and revolutionary bid for power. This Muslim element in the Communists' revolution shaped its form and outcome, but ultimately had itself to be curbed as the victorious Communists consolidated their dictatorship. In doing so, they set the scene for future struggles over Yugoslavia's Muslim question.'

(NB I refer in the book to 'Muslims' rather than to 'Bosniaks', since before the 1990s, the term 'Bosniak' applied equally to all native Bosnians – Orthodox/Serbs, Catholics/Croats and Muslims alike).

In completing this book, I have concluded the research project I began fifteen years ago as a doctoral student, and continued as a postdoc, and which previously gave rise to my books *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia: The Partisans and the Chetniks, 1941-1943* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006) and *The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Saqi, London, 2007). Since this marks, for me, the end of a personal era, I should like to say a few words about the big questions I was raising in these books.

I began my research project against the backdrop of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina of the 1990s. This war involved the destruction of the multinational Bosnian state as a result of the aggression and genocide waged by the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade and the Bosnian Serb rebels under Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. The government and majority population of Bosnia-Herzegovina made an unsuccessful bid for independence in the face of this assault, but the war ended in 1995 with Bosnia's statehood and multinational society effectively destroyed.

Although my own views of the rights and wrongs of this conflict are no secret, my motivation for embarking on my research

project was intellectual rather than political. Back in the 1990s, as today, students and scholars interested in the Bosnian war had focused on the short-term and all-Yugoslav causes of the war, above all the period from the rise of Milosevic in the second half of the 1980s. The topic was, and is, most frequently approached from the perspective of contemporary politics and human rights rather than of history. This is fine as far as it goes, but it has meant that the medium- and long-term historical background of the conflict has remained hidden; accounts of the break-up of Yugoslavia tend to have Bosnia appearing only in the final chapters, and almost out of the blue.

My contention was then, and remains today, that you cannot understand how and why the modern Bosnian state was destroyed in the 1990s unless you understand how and why it was created in the first place. And it was created in the period 1941-1946, by the Yugoslav Partisan movement which, under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, waged a successful campaign of resistance against the Nazi and Fascist occupiers of Bosnia and of Yugoslavia. This resulted not only in their liberation from Axis occupation, but in the revolutionary overthrow of the old Yugoslav monarchical order, and the establishment of a new Yugoslavia as a federation of six republics. One of these republics was the People's Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Why had the Communists decided to establish Bosnia as a separate republic in its own right? How had they been able to mobilise their Partisan soldiers – who in Bosnia were, at all times, majority Serb – to accept Communist leadership and fight for this goal? How had they been able to persuade Serbs, Muslims and Croats to fight alongside one another in a common, all-Bosnian Partisan army? How and why did they defeat their enemies – the Croat Ustasas, Serb Chetniks and Muslim autonomists – and win the war? How did they organise the new Bosnian state? These were some of the questions I attempted to answer.

I also had a secondary reason for wanting to study this topic, that was not directly related to the Bosnian war of the 1990s: the desire to understand the Yugoslav Partisan movement and

revolution of 1941-1945. The neglect of this topic by Western historians is astonishing. There have only been two successful, indigenous Communist revolutions in European history: the revolution in the Russian Empire of 1917-1921 and the revolution in the Western Balkans (Yugoslavia and Albania) in 1941-1945. The first has received enormous scholarly attention in the West; the second almost none. The orthodox Titoist narrative of the Partisans and the Yugoslav Revolution is an oversimplification that conceals as much as it reveals. The anti-Communist counter-narrative advanced by authors like David Martin and Nora Beloff is a politically motivated conspiracy theory.

To oversimplify somewhat, my book *The History of Bosnia* originally began as an attempt to trace the long-term causes of the revolution in Bosnia of 1941-1945. It explains in detail why the Yugoslav Communists supported the goal of a unified, self-ruling Bosnia-Herzegovina as an entity separate from both Serbia and Croatia. My book *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia* focuses on the early phase of the revolution and on the Bosnian Serbs. It explains in detail how the Communists were able to attain leadership over the Bosnian Serb rebellion that broke out in the summer of 1941 against the anti-Serb genocidal Ustashas and the puppet 'Independent State of Croatia'. It explains how the Chetnik movement emerged in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a Serb conservative and nationalist reaction against Communist leadership of the anti-Ustasha rebellion, and how the rebellion divided into two opposing wings. On the one side, there was the Communist-led Partisans – a multinational resistance movement directed against the German and Italian occupiers, embracing Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Jews and others, whose goal was a self-ruling, multinational Bosnia. On the other side, there was the Chetniks – a purely Serb movement that collaborated with the Italians and Germans and that aimed to exterminate or expel Muslims, Croats and Jews, and whose goal was an ethnically homogenous Great Serbia. Hence the title 'Genocide and Resistance': the Partisan-Chetnik conflict was between on the one hand those rebels who wanted to resist the occupiers and opposed genocide; and on the other, those who wanted to collaborate with the occupiers and carry out genocide. I outline this

book in more detail in my article 'Author's Perspective', *World War II Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2008, pp. 52-58.

During the second half of 1941, the Partisans in Bosnia were a predominantly Serb movement focusing on the struggle against the Ustashas. During 1942, however, the emergence of the Chetnik counter-movement in Bosnia turned the latter into the Partisans' principal enemy. The Partisans effectively won the war with the Chetniks in Bosnia by the autumn of 1943, largely because they were able to expand beyond their Serb and peasant base to embrace Muslims, Croats and the population of the towns in general. Having secured their base among the Bosnian Serb peasant population by breaking the Chetniks, the Partisans could then move on to the next stage of their struggle: the liberation of Bosnia from the Ustashas and Nazis. For this stage, the role of the Muslims, and to a lesser extent the Bosnian Croats, was crucial – in a manner not properly acknowledged in the orthodox Titoist narrative. Bosnia was also a crucial springboard for any Partisan push eastward to liberate Serbia and the rest of eastern Yugoslavia from the Nazis and Chetniks; the role of Bosnia and the Muslims was critical for the outcome of the entire Yugoslav civil war.

Thus, just as my first book about the Bosnian Partisans, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia*, focused in particular on the Bosnian Serbs, so its sequel, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War*, focuses in particular on the Muslims and Croats (the Croats were very much smaller and weaker as a community in Bosnia than either the Serbs or the Muslims, so their importance for the outcome of the struggle was correspondingly lesser). Of course, every title is an oversimplification, and both books tell the story of a multinational resistance movement and revolution, in which Serbs, Muslims, Croats, Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, Gypsies and others participated together.

As regards the war and revolution in Bosnia, some of the points I make in *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War* are the following:

- 1) That the Axis powers' incorporation of Bosnia in 1941 within the puppet 'Independent State of Croatia', the re-erasing of Bosnia's borders and identity by the Ustasha regime, and its

brutal and murderous policies, provoked two, parallel movements of resistance that supported Bosnian self-rule: the People's Liberation Movement (Partisans) and the Muslim autonomist resistance (which was not anti-fascist or anti-occupier, but merely anti-Ustasha).

- 2) That the Communist-led revolution in Bosnia that triumphed by 1945 did so because one section of the Muslim autonomist resistance went over to the People's Liberation Movement – it did not simply involve a 'pure' triumph of the Partisans, as proponents of the orthodox Titoist narrative tend to imply.
- 3) That the People's Liberation Movement on the one hand and its anti-Communist opponents, the Ustashes and the Muslim autonomists, did not comprise rigidly separate camps – as proponents of the orthodox Titoist narrative tend to imply. Rather, the three camps overlapped, with many individuals collaborating with two or three of them, and with members of each linked to members of the others through family and personal connections. These family and personal connections formed a major tool in the Partisan victory and Communist seizure of power; a conduit by which quisling soldiers and supporters of the Ustashes and Muslim autonomists could be recruited for the revolution.
- 4) That the Partisan victory was the product not simply of a successful guerrilla campaign, but also of political agitation by the Communists and their collaborators among the population of the occupied Bosnian cities and towns, and within the quisling armed forces – in particular, the Croatian Home Guard and Muslim legions.
- 5) That the Communists' agitation on a Bosnian-patriotic basis, using Bosnian-patriotic slogans and arguing for Bosnian self-rule, allowed them to win over a substantial section of the Bosnian Muslim population, including of the elite.
- 6) That a major catalyst in bringing a large section of the Muslim population over to the People's Liberation Movement, was Italian and German collaboration with the Chetniks, at the expense of the authority of the Ustasha puppet-state, and in particular Nazi Germany's apparent turn in autumn 1943

toward an alliance with Great Serbian forces, posing an existential threat to the existence of the Muslims.

- 7) That the Partisan/Communist conquest of Bosnia in 1943-1945 represented not simply a military triumph – as presented in the orthodox Titoist narrative – but occurred through the wholesale defection to the People’s Liberation Struggle of elements of the quisling and collaborationist armed forces, including parts of the Chetniks, the Muslim legions, the Croatian Home Guard, the Bosnian SS Handzar Division and even some Ustashas. Hence, there are parallels between the Communist seizure of power in Bosnia in 1945 and the Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd in November 1917, which also succeeded through the winning over of the military units of the old order.
- 8) That the mass mobilisation and emancipation of women – a previously politically untapped section of the Bosnian population – was crucial for the success of the revolution, and conditioned the nature of the Bosnian state and society that emerged from it.
- 9) That the Partisan movement was itself heterogeneous and subject to a myriad of internal contradictions that, as it expanded, posed increasing problems for the Communist leadership.
- 10) That the above process constituted a specifically Bosnian revolution that was distinct from, albeit part of, the wider revolution in Yugoslavia; and that the outcome of this process was the establishment of a Bosnian republic within the new Yugoslav federation. This was not enacted top-down by the new Communist rulers of Yugoslavia, but was the natural outcome of the Bosnian revolutionary movement, led by the Communists in Bosnia, but embracing a much wider and more diverse section of the Bosnian population.

The last quarter of my book deals with the first year and a half after the end of World War II in Bosnia; i.e. with the period from mid-1945 to the end of 1946. Here, I discuss the establishment of the People’s Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, set against the formation and organisation of the Yugoslav federation. I then discuss the weaknesses and problems faced by the new Bosnian

Communist regime; its approach to reconstructing and governing Bosnia; and its attempts to deal with the rising opposition. I show how the broad, diverse coalition that was mobilized behind the Communists, to free Bosnia from the occupiers and quislings and to establish the Bosnian republic, subsequently had to be brought to heel by the new Communist regime, and how this involved its suppression of former allies and the imposition of a new political hegemony.

Thus, after many thousands of Muslims had fought for the Partisans or been active in the People's Liberation Movement, there was a brief flowering of Muslim national and cultural freedom after World War II, and the Muslims were virtually, if not formally, recognised as a nation equal to the other five recognised Yugoslav nations (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins). But as the Communists consolidated their dictatorship, this freedom was curtailed, and many Muslims began to feel disillusioned with the new order. There was a resurgence of the radical 'Young Muslim' organisation in response, with a youthful Alija Izetbegovic, among others, figuring prominently in its dissident activities. Though they were suppressed, they would become, under the Communist regime, what the Communists themselves had previously been: a persecuted, radical sect, ready and able to lead the next revolutionary upheaval in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Part of the pleasure in writing this book was to tell in detail the exciting story of this great revolution. I have tried to avoid either idealising or demonising it, but to express its diverse, contradictory nature; to discuss both the high politics of the Communist leadership and the character of the revolution at the grass-roots level, and the many colourful characters it involved. The antics of Huska Miljkovic, the Muslim warlord of Cazinska Krajina in north-west Bosnia, were particularly fun to write about.

The Communists and Partisans succeeded in what must have appeared to many at the time an impossible task: of reuniting Bosnia, re-establishing its statehood and reintegrating its divided population. It is a story that has lost none of its relevance for the present day.

RE-MAKING KOZARAC: AGENCY, RECONCILIATION
AND CONTESTED RETURN IN POST-WAR BOSNIA

Since the war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, its people have suffered many afflictions. One of those that is not acknowledged as often as it should be is the patronising attitude with which many outsiders view them. Very often, foreign politicians, diplomats, NGO staff, activists, journalists and others view them in terms of a dichotomy of irrational nationalists and passive victims, discounting the possibility of positive agency on their part – outside the narrow framework of the agenda that the outsiders themselves impose. A large part of agenda revolves around the fetish of ‘reconciliation’, which often seems to be more about the outsiders’ own ideological shibboleths than the Bosnians’ needs and aspirations.

Sebina Sivac-Bryant’s book provides an extremely welcome alternative perspective. It is a study of the experiences of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) who were driven from their homes by the rebel-Serb campaign of genocidal mass violence in the 1990s, but have since returned. It focuses on the town of Kozarac, near the city of Prijedor – a region that formed one of the epicentres of the violence, and spawned the infamous concentration camps of Omarska, Trnopolje and Keraterm. Sivac-Bryant is herself a native of the village of Kevljani, near Kozarac, and her family was among the victims; her eldest brother was tortured and executed at Omarska, and she and her mother were driven into exile in Zagreb, where her mother died after being denied adequate medical care. Despite this tragedy, this is a dispassionate and sharply analytical study, but it benefits from the native’s awareness and insights of themes and nuances that a foreign observer might have missed. Basing her research on extensive fieldwork, interviews with returnees and personal observation, Sivac-Bryant has crafted a multifaceted little gem of a local study.

Although Kozarac was emptied of its Bosniak inhabitants and destroyed, it has become a notable success story with regard to refugee returns to Bosnia’s Serb entity, Republika Srpska (RS), and the restored town today thrives – a stark rebuke to

the genocidal goals of the Serb extremists. As Sivic-Bryant explains, this success was due precisely to the fact that so many of Kozarac's Bosniaks refused from the start to be passive victims. It had its roots in the 17th Krajina Brigade of the Bosnian army; a unit that originated with Bosniak refugees expelled from their homes in 1992, who had taken refuge in Croatia and organised themselves for military resistance. Receiving training from the Croatian Army but unwilling to let themselves become tools of Croatian official policy, they made their own way back to the war-zone and operated as a mobile military unit capable of operating across the country – something that it did very effectively, reminiscent of the legendary Proletarian Brigades with which Josip Broz Tito and the Communists spearheaded the Partisan resistance movement of World War II. This contrasted with local units of the Bosnian army whose soldiers were often unwilling to fight outside their own areas. The 17th Krajina Brigade became one of the most militarily successful units in the Bosnian army.

The Bosnian war ended in October 1995, just when the 17th Krajina Brigade was on the verge of liberating not only their homes in Kozarac, but Omarska and other sites of concentration camps where so many of their soldiers and their friends, family members and neighbours had been persecuted. This was a great disappointment, but not the end of the struggle; rather, the struggle took a new form, as with the momentum of their military effort behind them, they now campaigned to be allowed home in the newly recognised RS. As Sivic-Bryant shows, the obstacles they faced included not only the expected obstruction from the RS authorities, but also the passivity of and lack of support from the international community. The latter eventually adopted stronger action in response to the efforts of significant numbers of refugees to return home unilaterally. This culminated in the shooting dead of Simo Drljaca, the hardline Prijedor police chief, by British Stabilisation Force (SFOR) troops in 1997, marking a turning-point in the history of refugee returns and political reform in that part of the RS. In 2000, the first mosque in the whole of the RS was rebuilt at Kozarac.

Kozarac was consequently restored and repopulated thanks to its inhabitants' own effort. But as Sivac-Bryant shows, the success remains ambiguous and bittersweet. The RS authorities went from threatening and harassing the returnees to treating them as second-class citizens, who for example might receive only an hour a day of drinking water during summer, but still be charged for using a reservoir they had built themselves. Moreover, refugees suffer from their own internal divisions as well. By basing her research on extensive fieldwork, interviews with returnees and personal observations, Sivac-Bryant is able to bring these to light. She cites, for example, the case of a Serb woman who was persecuted by the Serb extremists because she had been married to a man of mixed Croat-Muslim background; now back in Kozarac, and despite both her husband and son having been killed in the genocide, she remains estranged from her former Bosniak friends and neighbours. In general, many returnees continue to suffer from loneliness and isolation, with many of their loved ones dead and friendships broken. Their dilemmas are very real; between focusing on the past and the need for justice and for recognition of their losses on the one hand, and for economic improvement and cohabitation with RS authorities on the other. The portrayal of the complexity of the returnees' emotions is one of the great strengths of this book.

Over and above the divisions at the grass roots, Sivac-Bryant argues that a small clique of Bosniak insiders has monopolised both leadership positions in the community and relations with the RS authorities, marginalising other Bosniaks from Kozarac. Such fissures are too often brushed over by foreign observers who often tend to essentialise Bosnians along ethnic lines, even though they may be as significant as those between the different ethno-national groups, if not more so. It is this unflinching scrutiny of the internal politics of the Kozarac Bosniak community, and of the relations between it and the internationals, that is likely to make this a controversial book in some quarters.

The author is merciless in her critique of the model of 'reconciliation' attempted by some foreign activists and NGOs, albeit often well-meaning. She recalls attending a conference on

reconciliation organised in Malta by a British charity (which she does not name), in which ‘we, the Bosniaks, were supposed to play the role of survivors’; assigned a psychologist, ‘we could not even go to the bathroom alone without the psychologist accompanying us’. Sivac-Bryant describes her experience as follows:

‘Another way of emphasising our status as “victims of trauma” was in the way we were coached to enter the conference room. We were asked to wait for all participants to take their seats and then our psychologist would invite us in. A back corner of the room was allocated for us, and upon entering the room, the participants’ gaze turned towards us. It felt as though they knew something we did not. The conference was organised by a British woman, the organiser, and her daughter, who talked about their own life tragedies, and how they learned to overcome them, which was why they founded a charity that helps others work through their trauma. While the atmosphere was high on a note of self-healing, our group was struggling to remain quiet as our conversation was mostly humorous. Meanwhile, a famous American psychologist began a ‘puppet-show’ in which he described how to regain self-worth. Although we were entertained, we could not fathom what all this had to do with us. Mirza was listening to the psychologist, trying to take on board his advice for personal growth, but the rest of us either did not understand English, or were too bored to listen.’ (pp. 141-142)

The message of the book is that victimhood is not a permanent or unchanging status, and that return to a form of normal life for victims works best when they themselves work towards it on their own initiative. In particular, Sivac-Bryant describes the efforts of two Bosniak entrepreneurs, Jusuf Arifagic and Enes Kahrmanovic, to bring economic activity and jobs to the locality in the face of official obstruction or indifference, as having been particularly valuable for the wellbeing of the community. For all the physical and emotional suffering, and conflict and animosity that Sivac-Bryant describes, hers is ultimately an extraordinary study of human perseverance in the face of adversity:

'Having witnessed the resourcefulness of returnees to Kozarac over a decade or more, I am optimistic about the potential for returnees to have a positive effect on their home regions, even where return is contested and highly contentious. Learning the lessons from such case studies, I believe can help us design better, more imaginative and more effective policy for similarly affected communities around the world.' (p. 205)

SREBRENICA GENOCIDE DENIER DAVID N. GIBBS PRAISES
DONALD TRUMP ON FOREIGN POLICY

We have had periodic cause to comment here on the fourth-rate scholar and Srebrenica genocide denier David N. Gibbs of the University of Arizona, author of the propaganda tract *First do no harm*, which attributed the break-up of Yugoslavia to a German conspiracy and blamed Srebrenica on its Bosniak victims. He has now popped up on 'OpEdNews', where he has given an interview entitled 'Trump Might Actually be Right about NATO'. This is what he says:

'Well, let me start out by saying that most of Donald Trump's positions are classic demagoguery and are quite dangerous. But on some foreign policy issues he does occasionally make sense, especially with regard to the issue of NATO. He has repeatedly questioned the value of NATO to US security, as an overly expensive extravagance, and this is a very legitimate issue to raise. To my knowledge no other candidate in recent years, not even Bernie Sanders has been willing to address this issue.'

'Mostly, NATO seems like an expensive extravagance, a military alliance in search of a justification. Candidates for president should be debating NATO's value. So far, only Trump is willing to engage the issue.'

'While Hillary Clinton has been on the hawkish side of the spectrum, the mainstream of both parties has been strongly supportive of NATO, and has favored efforts to find new

enemies and new missions to justify the alliance. Until Trump's recent statements on the issue, there has been almost no criticism of the alliance, and no real debate. Hopefully that will change.'

'Trump is far from an ideal candidate to be raising the issue of NATO's lack of value. He is rightly viewed as a racist, divisive figure. But no other candidate is addressing the issue that NATO is a huge taxpayer expense to America's taxpayer, while providing no real benefit in terms of enhanced security.'

The sort of 'left-wing' ideology that leads Gibbs to deny the genocide of a European Muslim people, leads him also to praise the foreign-policy position of someone he admits is a racist; a supporter of banning Muslims from entering the US. He goes so far as to suggest that Trump's views on NATO are preferable to those of the radical left's own Bernie Sanders.

I wish I could say I was shocked, but this is sadly predictable.

XAVIER BOUGAREL'S ERRORS CONCERNING THE BOSNIAN MUSLIMS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Xavier Bougarel has reviewed my book *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War* for *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, but appears to have done so without reading it at all carefully. What follows is my correction of his misrepresentation of my work. Although I would have preferred to have published this correction in the journal in question, and although some academic journals (e.g. *Slavic Review*, *Journal of Contemporary History*) do permit authors to publish responses or corrections to book reviews, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* is not one of them.

1) On the character of the Muslim autonomist movement

Bougarel writes:

'Hoare draws artificial parallels between two movements [the Muslim autonomist movement and the Communist-led

People's Liberation Movement] *that had very different characteristics and aims. He ignores the persistent anti-communist views of most members of the Muslim autonomy movement (especially the Muslim clerics). He speaks of a 'dual Bosnian movement of resistance' (9), whereas the history of the Muslim autonomy movement is chiefly the story of their collaboration with the Third Reich. He even makes the odd assertion that the SS Handschar Division was 'the flagship project of the Muslim autonomist resistance' (103) whose 'ruling ideology shared some common ground with the multinational Bosnian patriotism of the Partisans' (195).*

Bougarel here seems to be claiming that I have somehow glossed over the Muslim autonomists' collaboration with the Third Reich, and presented them as some sort of anti-Nazi resistance movement. Yet this is the very opposite of what I actually did write.

- 1) I wrote 'Although the Muslim autonomists were not a resistance movement in the sense of being anti-fascist, anti-Nazi or anti-occupier – they were none of these – they were a resistance movement in the sense of being anti-Ustasha and anti-NDH' (p. 10). They were a 'specifically Bosnian anti-Ustasha (though not anti-fascist, anti-Nazi or anti-occupier) current of resistance, that paralleled and overlapped with the Communist-led People's Liberation Movement (NOP)' (p. 14).
- 2) I described the Muslim autonomist leader Uzeir-aga Hadzihanovic as 'the de facto leader of the pro-German but anti-Ustasha wing of the Muslim elite' who 'adopted a back-seat role in channelling Muslim autonomist opposition to the NDH' (p. 41).
- 3) I discuss the efforts of Muslim autonomists 'who were anti-Ustasha but nevertheless ready to collaborate with the occupiers' (p. 40) to seek 'direct German military administration over the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina' (pp. 40-41); the stated desire of Murat-beg Pasic, a Muslim autonomist notable from Bijeljina, to 'fight for Bosnia-Herzegovina, albeit

under German military protection' (p. 44); and the attempts of Muslim autonomists in Hercegovina to 'express the loyalty of the Muslims of Hercegovina to the Kingdom of Italy' and seek 'the establishment of an autonomous Bosnia-Hercegovina under Italian protection' (p. 50).

- 4) I described in detail the Muslim Memorandum to Hitler of November 1942 as 'the culmination of activity on the part of the pro-German, anti-Ustasha wing of the Muslim autonomist movement. Up until the summer and autumn of 1943, Muslim autonomist activity aimed predominantly at direct collaboration with the Germans to bypass the Ustashas, rather than at direct resistance activity.' (p. 51).
- 5) I cite the Memorandum's enthusiastically pro-Hitler, anti-Semitic words addressed to 'Our Führer!': 'Nobody, not a single ethnic group, not a single tribe, likewise not a single nation in all Europe has with greater devotion felt and understood your gigantic movement to establish a New Order in Europe as have we Bosnians, Muslims of Bosnia. We have in the principles of National Socialism, your movement, felt that it alone brings justice, order and peace to Europe, which has been blighted and ruined by democracy.' (p. 52) I cite the Memorandum's reference to the fact that 'the Jewish problem among us has finally been solved...' (p. 52).
- 6) I describe the opposition of the leading Sarajevo Muslim autonomists Uzeir-aga Hadzihanovic and Mehmed Handzic to collaboration with the NOP (p. 82); the fact that Handzic was the 'most powerful opponent of both the Partisans and the Ustashas among the Muslim autonomists' (pp. 247-248) and that the NOP may have assassinated him; the execution by the Partisans of the Tuzla Muslim autonomist leader Muhamed-aga Hadziefendic (p. 137); that Nesad Topcic, leader of the Muslim autonomist 'Green Forces', directed his activity primarily against the Partisans (p. 189) and was eventually killed by them (p. 257); that Tito considered Muslim autonomist leader Hafiz Muhamed efendi Pandza, with whom the Partisans collaborated, to have been 'an agent of the Gestapo all along' (p. 153); and the Partisans' execution of Srebrenica

Muslim autonomist Ismet Bektasevic after he abandoned them for the Ustashas (p. 143).

- 7) I describe the origins of the Handzar Division in the machinations of the Nazi leadership: ‘At Himmler’s suggestion, Hitler approved in February 1943 the establishment of an SS division made up of Bosnian Muslims. The Ustasha functionary Alija Suljak arrived in Tuzla at the end of the March 1943 with the goal of mobilising the Muslim population behind the formation of a Bosnian SS division... The name chosen for the Division was the 13th SS Volunteer Bosnian-Herzegovinian Division (Croatia)’, an attempt to reconcile the feelings of both its Croat and Muslim members. Yet it was more commonly known as the Handschar (Scimitar) Division’ (pp. 53-54).

Regarding my supposedly ‘odd assertion’ of shared ideological ground between the Partisans and the command of the Handzar Division – this was demonstrated by evidence that Bougarel has not disputed.

- 8) I wrote ‘The most notorious Muslim quisling unit – the 13th SS Volunteer Bosnian-Herzegovinian Division (Croatia), better known as the “Handschar” or “Handzar” Division, to which this book devotes some attention – was, like the Partisans, the repository of hopes for Bosnian autonomy on the part of sections of the Muslim population; the Bosnian autonomist goal was, ironically, shared by the Communist-led Bosnian resistance movement and by the Muslim supporters of its Bosnian Nazi antithesis.’ (p. 10)

The specific passage in my book to which Bougarel refers is as follows:

[the Handzar Division’s] ruling ideology shared some common ground with the multinational Bosnian patriotism of the Partisans. [Its commander Karl-Gustav] Sauberzweig informed his troops “you all know that, in addition to the Muslims, Catholics and people of the [Serbian Orthodox] faith also call this their home. They must all be absorbed into the Bosnian community... We shall give the

first liberated land to the Muslims, but we shall not permit the others to be left out. Please consider this and forget the petty hatreds, which only cause new discord.” (p. 195).

Sauberzweig furthermore believed that ‘a community composed of all faiths must be constructed, and that all interests particular to each group must be forgotten in the interests of the community.’ (p. 195)

This echoed the Partisan support for Bosnia-Herzegovina as the common homeland of Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Bougarel has not challenged the veracity of the passages in question, so it is not at all clear why he considers my assertion to be ‘odd’.

II) On the Partisans as both a Bosnian and a Yugoslav movement

Bougarel writes:

‘At the same time, his [Hoare’s] emphasis on the ‘Bosnian patriotism’ of the Partisan movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina leads him to ignore its Yugoslav dimension. Yet this aspect was clearly visible not only in most official resolutions and propaganda tracts, but also on the ground. As Hoare himself notes, the region of Cazinska Krajina was long dependent on the Communist Party of Croatia, the Partisans of Vojvodina fought in Eastern Bosnia and the Bosnian units took part in the ultimate liberation of Serbia and Croatia. Hoare ignores the fact that the Yugoslav idea was decisive in mobilizing Bosnian Serbs, who were the majority of Bosnian Partisans until the war ended.’

Again, Bougarel’s claims that I a) ignore the Yugoslav dimension of the Partisan movement and b) ignore the role of the Yugoslav idea in mobilising Bosnian Serbs, are both directly contrary to what I actually wrote in the book. My actual position, as I elaborate in detail, is that both the Bosnian and Yugoslav dimensions are crucial to understanding the victory of the Partisan movements, but that the Bosnian dimension has been ignored by the traditional historiography.

- 1) I describe how the Staff of the Partisan Group of Shock Battalions appealed to the Serbs and Muslims of East Bosnia with the slogan 'Long live the people's liberation struggle of all the peoples of Yugoslavia!' (p. 25).
- 2) I describe the events of the First Session of the Antifascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), which 'issued individual appeals to each of the Yugoslav nations, including the Muslims', and promised the Serbs 'a free and brotherly union of Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Hercegovina and Macedonia' (p. 26).
- 3) Chapter 4 is entitled 'Bosnian assembly and Yugoslav federation' and largely devoted to the relationship between the Partisan state-building processes at the Yugoslav and Bosnian levels; I argue that 'The Bosnian and Yugoslav state-building impulses therefore converged. In November 1943 the convening of the First Session of ZAVNOBiH [Country Antifascist Council for the People's Liberation of Bosnia-Hercegovina] and the Second Session of AVNOJ, establishing a new Yugoslav state on a federal basis, within which Bosnia would be one of six equal units, set the seal on this process and paved the way for the foundation of a Bosnian state' (p. 155).
- 4) I argue that the 'laying of foundations of Bosnian statehood at this time [autumn 1943] was therefore the product simultaneously of specifically Bosnian, all-Yugoslav and international developments' (p. 164).
- 5) I cite the First Session of ZAVNOBiH's declaration that Bosnia-Hercegovina would be 'in the great democratic federal union of peoples of Yugoslavia an equal member with the other countries of Yugoslavia' (p. 179).
- 6) I devote a subsection of Chapter 4 to the Second Session of AVNOJ (pp. 181-186), and another in Chapter 5 to the 'Yugoslav Road to Bosnian statehood' (pp. 200-203). I quote the KPJ Central Committee's proclamation: 'Peoples of Yugoslavia! Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Muslims! ... Forward for a free Serbia, a free Croatia, a free Slovenia, a free Macedonia, a free Montenegro and a free Bosnia-Hercegovina in a free Democratic Federative Yugoslavia'

(p. 199). I argue that ‘The Bosnian and wider Yugoslav federal state-building processes ran parallel, each decisively influencing the other’ (p. 288).

- 7) I describe how, at the Third Session of ZAVNOBiH in April 1945, the third speech was delivered by Sinisa Stankovic, president of the (Partisan) People’s Assembly of Serbia, who stated: ‘At this moment, the enemies and traitors are spreading lies about the disintegration of Serbdom. To this it can be replied, that never in history has Serbdom been so united as it is today in the free union of equal Yugoslav peoples’ (p. 301).
- 8) I describe how the senior Bosnian Serb Communist and prime minister of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Rodoljub Colakovic, went out of his way to reassure Serbs that they were united within Yugoslavia: ‘We in Bosnia-Hercegovina do not feel threatened in the slightest. On the contrary, today more than ever, we feel the inseparable bonds that bind us to our brothers in Serbia, our brothers in Croatia and our brothers everywhere where there are Serbs in Yugoslavia. But we, at the same time, also feel fraternal blood ties with all the other peoples of the new Democratic Federative Yugoslavia’ (p. 303) and ‘Nobody is thinking of questioning the right of us Serbs outside Serbia to maintain the closest links with our brothers in Serbia, which will enable the most complete and fastest development of the Serb nation. This development can only be rejoiced over by the other nations of Yugoslavia, for it will mean, like the development of its other nations, the strengthening of our common homeland – Yugoslavia.’ (p. 303)

I could provide many more citations to refute Bougarel’s mischaracterisation of my book, but I will finish by noting his statement: ‘As Hoare himself notes, the region of Cazinska Krajina was long dependent on the Communist Party of Croatia, the Partisans of Vojvodina fought in Eastern Bosnia and the Bosnian units took part in the ultimate liberation of Serbia and Croatia.’ I do indeed note this, for the very simple reason that my book explores in detail the relationship of the Partisan movement in Bosnia-Hercegovina with the Partisan movement in the rest of Yugoslavia.

Bougarel has used my actual position to argue against a straw-man position that he has falsely attributed to me.

III) On the People's Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'a nation-state without a nation'

Bougarel writes:

'he [Hoare] describes the new Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a 'nation state', a description that results in some semantic confusion: on page 287, he writes that in 1945, Bosnia and Herzegovina became 'a nation-state without a nation' (a contradiction in terms), then he concedes that the new Constitution implied 'a nationally heterogeneous citizenry' (336) and concludes by speaking of a 'Bosnian multinational patriotic model' (380; my emphasis).'

[NB the use of the term 'Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina' is Bougarel's error – in the period under consideration, it was the 'People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina']

My terminology simply describes the contradictions of the Titoist state-building project. Here is what I wrote: 'But although the People's Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was organised as a nation-state, it was not underpinned by any recognised "nation", as was the case with the other five Yugoslav republics. It was, in other words, a nation-state without a nation.' (p. 287)

The Partisans did establish a 'nation-state without a nation' in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and my book provides any number of quotations to demonstrate this:

- 1) The resolution of the Second Session of ZAVNOBiH, July 1944: 'For the first time in their history, the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina equally and freely, on the basis of their own will and their own strength, are building their statehood. The Country Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the carrier of Bosnian-Herzegovinian statehood and national sovereignty, declares that it recognises no government other than the Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia and the National Committee of

- the Liberation of Yugoslavia, which alone can represent the peoples of Yugoslavia internationally.' (pp. 209-210)
- 2) Pro-ZAVNOBiH rally in the Ključ district, July 1944: 'We are happy and full of pride that, for the first time in history, our people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was until yesterday exploited by all anti-people regimes, has gained its statehood.' (p. 212)
 - 3) Pro-ZAVNOBiH rally in the Jajce district: 'We are happy that under your leadership will be realised the age-old dream of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina for the independent administration of their country, and that the infernal plans of those who in place of brotherhood bring discord and fratricidal strife among the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina will always collapse.' (p. 212)
 - 4) Statement of Vojo Ljujic, Secretary of the People's Front of Sarajevo, October 1946: 'According to the statutes of the Federal constitution, the People's Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina has its own Constitution, People's Assembly and its own government, which in fact guarantees its sovereignty. Nobody gave this to us, nor has it even been given to us in history. Our history is full of difficult pages of slavery under Hungary, Turkey and Austria-Hungary. It is the history of colonial exploitation of slaves and peasants; the exploitation of the riches of our country, mines, forests, cattle and – most importantly – the human workforce. But it is also the history of a people that has always fought for its freedom, justice and statehood.' And: 'In the struggle for survival, once again in all its strength was born the aspiration for freedom and for the independent statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and this aspiration our people carried and developed through the struggle, establishing at once a granite foundation for its achievement. Nobody has given us the freedom we have today, nor has anyone given us our statehood. We achieved it in struggle and it is ours' (p. 312).
 - 5) Statement of Vaso Butozan, President of the Constitutional Council of the People's Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, December 1946: 'Our Republic, like the other People's Republics,

has expressed its desire to live in an equal union of nations in the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. This program and this unity are of vital importance to the happier future of the Serbs, Muslims and Croats and other Yugoslav peoples. In such a federation, every nation is guaranteed its national development and flowering. In a federation of this kind, sovereignty and the independent exercise of government are guaranteed to every Republic, except those rights that are voluntarily transferred to the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The peoples of Bosnia-Hercegovina express, on the basis of this Constitution, their statehood and sovereignty.' (p. 326)

- 6) Statement of Jakov Grguric, First Vice-President of the Presidium of the Constitutional Assembly of the People's Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina, December 1946: 'By ceding one part of its sovereign rights, on the basis of the Constitution of the FNRJ, to the jurisdiction of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the People's Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina has not thereby lost its sovereignty; rather, it has, on the basis of its sovereign people's will, only voluntarily transferred the execution of those sovereign rights to the state union; and this precisely in its own interests, for the purpose of a stronger protection of its national freedom and its economic and cultural development.' (p. 327)

Bougarel has simply ignored the enormous quantity of documentary proof that I provided in my book, showing that the Partisans did indeed seek to establish a Bosnian nation-state, despite not formally recognising a Bosnian nation.

Of course, such a project was paradoxical and problematic, but this is something I emphasised myself: "This was, in essence, a nation-state represented by a sovereign "National" or "People's" assembly, in the tradition established by the French Revolution, a tradition to which new nation-states in Europe had tended to subscribe. There was, however, a tension between the "political nation" or "people" of Bosnia-Hercegovina and the five "nations" recognised by the FNRJ Constitution – the Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins. This tension was never

resolved during the lifetime of the Yugoslav state and was formally the issue over which the war of 1992-95 broke out”’ (p. 330).

Bougarel is free to insist there cannot be a nation-state without a nation, but he should direct his criticisms at those who attempted to establish one (Tito and his Communists), not try to shoot the messenger (me).

THE JUDGEMENT ON RADOVAN KARADZIC WILL CONFIRM
THE CRIMINAL CHARACTER OF REPUBLIKA SRPSKA'S
WARTIME LEADERSHIP

This interview with me was published
in Bosnian in *Dnevni Avaz* on 23 March

On 24 March, the tribunal in The Hague will pronounce its judgement for the case of Radovan Karadžić for war crimes and genocide. What do you expect from the judgement? Will it bring justice for the victims?

I expect that Radovan Karadzic will be convicted on the majority of counts, which will result in him spending the rest of his life in prison. I don't expect him to be convicted on the first count of genocide, regarding the municipalities outside of Srebrenica – even though the ICTY Appeals Chamber ruled in 2013 on the Karadzic case that sufficient evidence existed to establish the *actus reus* of genocide for this count. ICTY Trial Chambers have, to date, failed to convict suspects of genocide outside of the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995. This contrasts with judges in Germany, who have, through the cases of Nikola Jorgic and Maksim Sokolovic in the 1990s, convicted suspects of genocide and related crimes in Bosnia outside of Srebrenica. The European Court of Human Rights, in dismissing Jorgic's appeal in 2007, confirmed that crimes consistent with the international legal definition of genocide occurred in northern Bosnia in 1992. Therefore, if the ICTY, as seems likely, fails to convict Karadzic on the first count of genocide, then the victims will not have received proper justice. To this should be added the facts that, so far, no official of

Serbia has yet been convicted of war-crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that the two most senior Bosnian Serb convicts to date, Biljana Plavsic and Momcilo Krajisnik, are both already free after serving relatively short terms in prison. We cannot therefore conclude that the victims have received proper justice.

What could be the consequences of the judgment for Bosnia? Can we expect tensions among the people, Bosnian Serbs and Muslims? Or could it be a step to final justice?

The judgement is unlikely to have major consequences for Bosnia, since it is likely to confirm the established narrative about the Bosnian war. Thus, it will not provide support for those who want to deny Serb-extremist crimes altogether, nor to those who seek recognition of the genocide outside of Srebrenica. Milorad Dodik and other Serb nationalists will continue to claim that the ICTY is anti-Serb, while the victims and their representatives will continue to feel that they have not received proper justice. The judgement will at least establish definitely the criminal character of the wartime political leadership of the Republika Srpska – already indicated by the convictions of Plavsic and Krajisnik – and in that sense will provide a small step towards final justice. But final justice remains a long way in the future.

KINSHIP AND ELOPEMENT IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Review of Keith Doubt, *Through the Window: Kinship and Elopement in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Central European University Press, Budapest and New York, 2014, 158 +xvii pp.

‘The world has read much about the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, its horrible nature and unconscionable character’, writes Keith Doubt in his preface, ‘but the world has read less about Bosnia-Herzegovina itself’ (p. xii). Indeed, it is difficult for many of us to think of the country without thinking of the war that ended in 1995 and the political struggle that has continued ever since. One of my personal regrets, as a historian specialising in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is that I never knew the country as it existed

before the war, particularly since many people who did, both natives and other foreigners, have described it as an idyll. I've been told more than once about how you could go skiing in the morning in the mountains around Sarajevo, then drive down to the coast for a swim in the afternoon. Very little is left of that idyll today.

Doubt has set out to shed light on the hidden or forgotten social relations of Bosnia-Herzegovina that existed before the war and continue to exist, and his book owes a large debt to the now-classic anthropological studies of William Lockwood and Tone Bringa. Specifically, he studies familial relations by focusing on the phenomenon of 'elopement', which as Svetlana Slapsak indicates in the foreword, does not have the same implications as it did in the pre-feminist era in other countries. Although elopement in Bosnia-Herzegovina does allow a woman to choose her marriage partner, it does not damage a woman's reputation or that of her family but represents a socially acceptable norm. Indeed, Doubt links this to the greater importance of affinal kinship ties; i.e., those based on marriage rather than blood. It is often supposed that the ancestors of today's Bosniaks, or Bosnian Muslims, had essentially the same culture as those of the Serbs or Croats until this was altered by Ottoman Islamic occupation. But according to Lockwood, as cited by Doubt: 'Muslim peasants of Bosnia give much less emphasis to patrilineality and to groups based on patrilineal kinship than do either the Croats or (especially) the Serbs... The slack seems to be taken up by an increased emphasis on affinal relations.' (Doubt, pp. 97-98). Paradoxically, in this regard, Serbs and Croats are culturally closer to Turks than any of these are to Bosniaks, for the Turks share with the former, but not with the latter, an agnatic kinship structure that defines family and community.

This observation emphasises the distinctiveness of an autochthonous Bosniak culture, distinct from both the wider Serbo-Croat and post-Ottoman neighbourhoods. It perhaps stands in tension, however, with observations that Doubt makes later, that emphasise Bosnian commonalities: 'The emphasis on establishing affinal relations is not only a cultural custom of Bosniaks, but

also a cultural custom of Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs' (p. 123). Doubt supports this assertion by reference to a survey, which indicates that even in the present day, the two sets of parents of a married couple (i.e. those of a husband and of a wife) visit each other frequently: about two thirds or three fifths of those questioned indicated that their parents visited each other at least four times a year, with very minor differences in the rate for the three nationalities.

Thus, Doubt's research powerfully illustrates the distinctiveness of both Bosnian and Bosniak culture, and the richness of its heritage. It would not be possible in this review to do justice to the complexity and nuance of Doubt's interdisciplinary study and discussion. They provide an antidote to the facile tendency among some observers, and not only foreign ones, to assume that the cultural differences between Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims can be reduced to religious ones, and the book sensitively discusses the relationship between ethnic culture and religion, though the latter features only slightly in it.

Doubt ends by overstating somewhat the extent to which the Bosnian commonality and identity have been neglected by scholars and remain obscure; they have, in fact, been explored and written about in various ways by many different scholars, myself included. If we do not have a more complete picture of what makes Bosnians specifically 'Bosnian', this is probably because non-native scholarship about the country is still relatively underdeveloped in general, rather than due to a particular neglect of this topic. In fact, almost any scholar not completely blinded by an ideological agenda, and indeed almost any visitor who spends any length of time in the country and its neighbours, will be aware that Bosnia-Herzegovina and its people are distinctive, and that the Bosnian Serbs and Croats and the lands they inhabit are not simply indistinguishable from their counterparts in Serbia and Croatia. Doubt argues that as long as the common Bosnian *gemeinschaft*, particularly *gemeinschaft* of kin, is sustained, then 'the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina is promising' (p. 135). But he also notes that the cultural phenomenon of elopement, on which the book focuses, is in decline and faces extinction.

Thus, as this book suggests, though Bosnia-Herzegovina's statehood is badly broken and its citizens politically divided along ethno-nationalist lines, shared common traditional cultural practices, albeit in decline, bear witness to the fact that the country continues to exist. Of course, this begs many questions, such as whether these cultural practices differ significantly between the different regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, how much other traditional Bosnian cultural practices differ from those in Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro, and what the implications are of the continued decline of these various practices for Bosnia-Herzegovina's long-term survival. This fascinating little book does not provide all the answers, but it does suggest a lot of original ways of looking for them.

THE SREBRENICA MASSACRE AFTER TWENTY YEARS

Wednesday, 8 July, 2015

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To mark 20 years since the Genocide at Srebrenica on 11 July, Dr Hoare looks at the international community's response to these genocidal crimes over the last 20 years and explores how far the world has come in securing justice for the Genocide in Bosnia.

This week marks the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995, when rebel Bosnian Serb forces carried out an act of genocide that claimed the lives of over 8,000 Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). In the interval, the world has come a long way

towards acknowledging the crime. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have both recognised that genocide was committed at Srebrenica. The European Parliament in 2009 voted overwhelmingly for a resolution calling upon all EU member states to adopt 11 July, the anniversary of the start of the massacre, as a day of commemoration. Consequently, the UK held its first Srebrenica memorial day event in 2013, and is currently sponsoring a resolution at the UN to mark the 20th anniversary. Bosnian Serb officers have been found guilty by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the Bosnian state court of genocide and other offences in relation to Srebrenica. The two leading Bosnian Serb perpetrators, Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, are currently on trial at The Hague for the genocide.

The world has come a long way, but from an ignominious starting point. The Srebrenica massacre did not come out of the blue; it was the crowning atrocity of a genocidal killing process that had begun over three years earlier, in the spring of 1992, and unfolded before the cameras of the global media. Not only did the international community – the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), NATO and other bodies – not intervene to halt the genocide, but what intervention did take place made the situation worse. The UN maintained an arms embargo that hampered the ability of the fledgling Bosnian army to defend its citizens from the heavily armed Serb forces. The British and other Western governments resisted calls for military intervention to halt the killing, instead seeking to appease the perpetrators by accommodating their demands for the carving out of a Bosnian Serb territorial entity through the dismemberment of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Consequently, the Bosnian Serb leaders embarked on the massacre at Srebrenica in the fully justified belief that the world would not stop them, but would recognise their conquest of the town. UN officials blocked NATO air-strikes to defend Srebrenica, and the Dutch UN peacekeeping force supposedly defending this UN ‘safe area’ then abandoned or turned over to the killers the Bosniak civilians seeking their protection. The Dayton Accords that ended the war in November 1995

recognised the town of Srebrenica as part of Republika Srpska, the Bosnian Serb entity. Srebrenica was not just the shame of Serbia and the Serb nation, but the shame of Europe, the West and the world as well.

For all the distance that the world has come, the journey remains incomplete. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2007 found Serbia guilty of failing to prevent and punish the genocide at Srebrenica. Three years later, Serbia's parliament narrowly passed a resolution recognising and apologising for the massacre. The resolution's phrasing implied a recognition that genocide had occurred, but did not make this explicit, and Serbia's leaders today remain unwilling to recognise the massacre as an act of genocide. The regime of Milorad Dodik, the president of Republika Srpska, denies the genocide outright and actively opposes all efforts at recognising it. This denialist stance has found support from Russia, which has joined Serbia in opposing the British-authored UN resolution. Meanwhile, the former Bosnian army commander in Srebrenica, Naser Orić, despite having been acquitted of war-crimes against Serbs by the ICTY, was recently arrested in Switzerland, on the basis of an international arrest warrant issued by the Serbian government. The latter has therefore signalled its determination to continue the fight against the Bosniaks of Srebrenica.

Momčilo Perišić, Chief of Staff of the Army of Yugoslavia (i.e. of Serbia and Montenegro) at the time of the Srebrenica massacre, was convicted by the ICTY in 2011 for his involvement in it, but was acquitted on appeal two years later, and to date no official or soldier of Serbia has been convicted over Srebrenica, or indeed for any war crime in relation to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The population of the town of Srebrenica itself, overwhelmingly Bosniak before the massacre, is today overwhelmingly Serb, and those Bosniaks who have attempted to return to it or to the surrounding area continue to face harassment from the Serb authorities. Yet it is a bitter irony for many Bosniaks that Serbia, the state responsible for arming and organising the Srebrenica perpetrators, will almost certainly join the EU before Bosnia-Herzegovina itself does.

Meanwhile, the wider responsibility of the international community remains to be fully acknowledged. Successful legal action brought in the Netherlands by the Srebrenica survivor Hasan Nuhanović established that the Dutch state was responsible for the deaths of three of his relatives in the massacre, and the level of compensation to which five relatives of these victims were entitled was agreed only last month, June 2015. These decisions open the door to further compensation claims by other survivors and relatives, but the process is still in its infancy. Meanwhile, Nuhanović was disinvented from a conference on Srebrenica at The Hague held last month by the Hague Institute for Global Justice and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, at the request of the Dutch organisers and participants, who would allegedly have felt 'uncomfortable' at his presence. The struggle in the West for justice and dignity for survivors is thus far from over.

Insofar as the Srebrenica genocide has achieved international recognition, this has paradoxically come at the price of the overshadowing of the wider killing process of which Srebrenica was merely the final phase. The Serb genocidal assault on the Bosniak population of Srebrenica and of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole began in 1992; in that year in the region of Podrinje (East Bosnia), where Srebrenica is located, more Bosniaks were killed than in 1995, the year of the final massacre. The mass killings, expulsions, torture and rape of men, women and children, involving the dissemination of hate-speech, organisation of concentration camps and the coordination of the Serb military and civilian authorities – all this was every bit as genocidal in nature in the regions of Prijedor, Zvornik, Visegrad and elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, as was the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. The latter represented the completion of the genocidal process begun in 1992. The Serb leadership's decision to kill every single combat-aged male – broadly defined – that resulted in a much larger-scale massacre than had occurred in the Bosnian war previously, and that has marked the Srebrenica massacre as unique, represented a shift in its tactics but not in its goal, which was at all times to bring about the destruction of the Bosniaks as a group in the Serb-occupied areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Courts in Germany that prosecuted the Bosnian Serb perpetrators Nikola Jorgić and Novislav Djajić in the 1990s established that genocide occurred in the Bosnian regions of Dobojo and Foča in 1992, and the European Court of Human Rights, in its 2007 ruling upholding Jorgić's conviction for genocide, ruled that this conviction was in accordance with the international legal definition of genocide embodied in the UN Convention. Yet because the ICJ ruled in 2007 that genocide had taken place only at Srebrenica, not elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the misleading picture has emerged of Srebrenica as a local aberration; a 'municipal genocide'. Scholars remain divided over whether it is correct to classify the mass violence across Bosnia-Herzegovina of the years 1992-95 as genocide or not, but this is above all a semantic question of a broad vs a narrow definition of the crime. The fact that the massacre at Srebrenica in July 1995 was part and parcel of a systematic process of mass killing and violence that began across the country three years earlier should be undisputed.

All of which is to show that however far the world has come toward recognition and justice regarding Srebrenica, there is still a very long way to go.

The HMDT blog invites guest contributors including academics, journalists and witnesses to provide personal perspectives on instances of discrimination, persecution and genocide. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of HMDT.

IS IT REALLY TRUE THAT 'EAST TIMOR WAS WORSE THAN BOSNIA OR KOSOVO'?

East Timor and Bosnia are two countries with parallel tragedies. Both were attacked by vastly more powerful neighbours as they tried to establish themselves as independent states. In each case, the aggression involved genocide against the country's population; in each case, the aggression and genocide were aided and abetted by the Western powers; in each case, however, the aggressor was ultimately defeated. The death toll of the East Timorese and Bosnian genocides has in each case commonly been put at 200,000.

In the last two years, scientific studies of both East Timorese and Bosnian war-losses have appeared, enabling us to begin to quantify them more accurately. In January 2006, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR) published the results of its investigation into East Timorese human losses in the period 1974-99. In June 2007, the Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo (RDC) published the results of its investigation into Bosnian human losses in the period 1991-95.

The two sets of figures are not completely comparable, as the figures for East Timor represent scientific estimates with a small margin of error so far as direct war-deaths are concerned, while the figures for Bosnia represent a body count, therefore something close to an absolute minimum. Furthermore, the figures for East Timor include a much less precise estimate for deaths from war-related hunger and disease, while the figures for Bosnia do not cover such deaths at all; conversely, the figures for Bosnia include military deaths while the figures for East Timor do not. Finally, neither the sizes of the East Timorese and Bosnian populations nor the lengths of the two conflicts were equivalent; the deaths in East Timor occurred among a much smaller population over a much longer period of time.

With these provisos in mind, what do the results tell us?

- 1) In East Timor, approximately 18,600 civilians were killed or disappeared between 1974 and 1999 (with an error margin of +/- 1,000).

In Bosnia, at least 39,684 civilians were killed or disappeared between 1991 and 1995.

- 2) In East Timor, just over 70% of killed civilians (approximately 13,094 people) were killed by the Indonesians or by their East Timorese auxiliaries, while 29.6% (approximately 5,506 people) were killed by the East Timorese resistance.

In Bosnia, at least 86% of killed civilians (34,128 people) were killed by Serb forces, while not more than 14% (5,556 people) were killed by Croat and Bosnian/Muslim forces combined.

- 3) In East Timor, a minimum of 84,200 people died from hunger or disease resulting from the Indonesian occupation, 1975-99 (with an error margin of +/- 11,000). The figure may be as high as 183,000.

In Bosnia, the number of people who died from hunger, disease or exposure resulting from the Serbian aggression, 1991-95, has not yet been calculated.

- 4) In East Timor, the absolute minimum number of deaths resulting from war, 1974-99, is 90,800 (i.e. 18,600 civilians killed by all parties and 84,200 who died from hunger and disease, with error margins of +/- 1,000 and +/- 11,000 respectively, for a range of 90,800 – 114,800). These figures do not include military casualties on either side, which were not addressed by the study.

In Bosnia, the minimum number of deaths resulting from war, 1991-95, is 97,207 (i.e. 39,684 civilians and 57,523 soldiers), *excluding* those who died from hunger, disease, exposure or other indirect causes of war. This figure represents a minimum, and may rise by up to 10,000 as further data is accumulated.

On the basis of these figures, which crime against humanity was worse: the Indonesian aggression against East Timor or the Serbian aggression against Bosnia?

The correct answer is that neither was 'worse'; only a very cynical, callous or perverse individual would seek to rank two such horrific episodes of mass killing. The figures tell us that both the East Timorese and the Bosnians suffered terribly; to describe the suffering of one as somehow 'less' than that of the other is to show a staggering disrespect for the dead.

Unfortunately, many of the same people who highlight the extent of East Timorese suffering, such as Noam Chomsky, John Pilger, Edward Herman and David Peterson, actually go out of their way to minimise the extent of Bosnian suffering. For the sake of convenience, such people can be termed *Chomskyites*. The Chomskyites like to portray East Timor as absolutely the worst crime to have occurred anywhere in the world since World

War II, whereas they like to portray Bosnia as something equivalent to a pillow-fight at a children's party.

What applies to the Chomskyites' treatment of Bosnia applies equally to their treatment of Kosovo. Chomskyites like to use terms such as 'Sunday school picnic' in relation to the suffering of the Kosovo Albanians. In reality...

Two scientific studies indicate that approximately 10,356 Kosovo Albanian civilians were killed in the period March-June 1999, or approximately 12,000 Albanians between February 1998 and June 1999 (the authors of the second survey indicate that 'most' were civilians but that it was not possible to distinguish completely between civilian and military deaths). This may be compared with the 18,600 East Timorese civilians killed (13,094 at the hands of the Indonesians and their East Timorese auxiliaries) in the period 1974-99.

So how do the Chomskyites make it look as though what happened in East Timor was incomparably worse than what happened in Bosnia or Kosovo?

- 1) They readily accept the maximum reported estimates of East Timorese deaths as the true figures, while denying every single Bosnian or Kosovar fatality that has not been definitely documented;
- 2) They blame the Indonesians for 100% of all deaths in East Timor, including those that were the work of the East Timorese resistance, while blaming Serb forces only for the deaths of Bosnians or Kosovars they actually killed themselves;
- 3) They try to convert as many Bosnian or Kosovar deaths as possible into 'military' deaths and therefore not as 'proper' victims, or into victims of the Bosnian/Muslim, Croat or Albanian forces and therefore not as Serbian victims, while assuming that all 200,000 East Timorese deaths were indeed 'proper' victims of the Indonesians alone;
- 4) They describe Bosnia or Kosovo as a 'civil war' or an 'internal conflict' and remind everyone that there were 'atrocities on all sides', while never mentioning the civil-war dimension of East Timor, or the atrocities of the East Timorese resistance;

- 5) They include deaths resulting from hunger and disease in the total for East Timorese deaths; such deaths account for over 90% of the total if one adopts the maximum figure for total East Timorese deaths, which they usually do; conversely, they exclude all such possible deaths from their calculation of the Bosnian or Kosovar war-dead;
- 6) They treat the RDC's documented body-count of 97,207 Bosnian war-dead, in reality a minimum, as if it were actually a maximum, and treat it as equivalent to the maximum *estimates* for East Timorese losses.
- 7) They treat incomplete body counts for Bosnian or Kosovar victims as though they were equivalent to total actual losses, while never requiring body counts to 'prove' East Timorese losses.

Here are some facts that you are unlikely to learn from an article written by Chomsky, Pilger, Herman or Peterson:

- In 1975, the year of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, 49% of civilians killed in East Timor were killed by Fretilin/Falantil, the East Timorese resistance movement. In no year during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, 1991-99, were non-Serb forces responsible for such a high percentage of civilian deaths. You will frequently hear the term 'on all sides' used by a Chomskyite in reference to the death toll in Bosnia or Kosovo, but never in reference to East Timor.
- In the year 1999, the Indonesian army and its East Timorese auxiliaries killed 1,400 – 1,500 East Timorese civilians according to the CAVR survey, a figure apparently supported by a study carried out by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and cited in the CAVR survey. In 1995, the RDC's figures confirm that Serb forces massacred over 8,000 men and boys at Srebrenica. Chomsky is on record as describing the Srebrenica massacre as 'much lesser' in scale than the Indonesian massacres in East Timor in 1999. He achieves this by using high estimates for East Timorese losses – high estimates of the kind that Chomskyites regularly cite as proof of 'exaggeration' and of 'pro-war propaganda' when made for Bosnian or Kosovar losses.

Quotes:

Chomsky on East Timor: ‘The massacre continued, peaking in 1978 with the help of new arms provided by the Carter administration. The toll to date is estimated at about 200,000, the worst slaughter relative to population since the Holocaust.’

Chomsky on Kosovo: ‘Up until the US/NATO bombing March 24th, there had been, according to NATO, 2000 people killed on all sides, and a couple of hundred thousand refugees. Well, that’s bad, that’s a humanitarian crises, but unfortunately it’s the kind you can find all over the world.’

Pilger on East Timor: ‘...a tiny nation then suffering one of the most brutal occupations of the 20th century. Enforced starvation and murder had extinguished a quarter of the population: 180,000 people. Proportionally, this was a carnage greater than that in Cambodia under Pol Pot.’

Pilger on Kosovo: ‘The “mass graves” in Kosovo would justify it all, they said. When the bombing was over, international forensic teams began subjecting Kosovo to minute examination. The FBI arrived to investigate what was called “the largest crime scene in the FBI’s forensic history”. Several weeks later, having found not a single mass grave, the FBI and other forensic teams went home. In 2000, the International War Crimes Tribunal announced that the final count of bodies found in Kosovo’s “mass graves” was 2,788. This included Serbs, Roma and those killed by “our” allies, the Kosovo Liberation Front.’

Herman on East Timor: ‘The U.S. support and investment did not slacken when Suharto’s army invaded and occupied East Timor in 1975, which resulted in an estimated 200,000 deaths in a population of only 700,000.’

Herman on Srebrenica: ‘The disconnection with truth is epitomized by the fact that the original estimate of 8,000, including 5,000 “missing” – who had left Srebrenica for Bosnian Muslim lines-was maintained even after it had been quickly established that several thousand had reached those lines and that several thousand more had perished in battle. This nice round number lives on today in the face of a failure to find the executed bod-

ies and despite the absence of a single satellite photo showing executions, bodies, digging, or trucks transporting bodies for reburial.'

Peterson on East Timor: 'The Indonesian military's brutal occupation caused the deaths of some 200,000 East Timorese, perhaps as many as one-third of its pre-invasion population.'

Herman and Peterson on Kosovo: 'There has never been any hint of criticism in the mainstream media of the inflated numbers given by U.S. officials, nor have there been any doubts expressed as to the accuracy of the 11,000 figure, although it came from sources of proven unreliability and was 70 percent higher than the official body count plus list of missing (6,398). In the *New York Times*, Michael Ignatieff explained that if the numbers of bodies found was less than 11,000 it must have been because the Serbs moved them out. He never explained why the bodies plus missing total fell far short of 11,000, but he didn't have to worry: in dealing with a demonized enemy anything goes.'