

# BYRONICA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE LORD BYRON FOUNDATION FOR BALKAN STUDIES

## Editorial

### THE ELUSIVE 'SERBIAN LOBBY'

The controversy surrounding the suspension of Bishop Artemije of Kosovo last February included claims that he used funds allocated for other purposes to pay for lobbying services in Washington D.C. This allegation is ironic in view of the fact that, except for the Bishop's short-lived attempt, there is not even a trace of a "Serbian lobby" in the U.S. capital.

For the past two decades Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs have been subjected to uniquely hostile treatment by the Western power centers. In Serbia and the Republika Srpska alike, the attempts to correct or even reverse such trends in the U.S. and the European Union have often relied on the Serbian diaspora in the United States and in the leading countries of the EU.

Such expectations and the reality of the Diaspora are in a chronic discord, however. It has no clout and no influence on the formulation of the U.S. policy. It is the least organized among all ethnic groups of comparable size. When an appeal went out, just over a decade ago, for the survival of Serbian studies at the University of Illinois in Chicago, it failed ignominiously. On the other hand, the Lithuanian community in Chicago – far smaller than the Serbian one – threw a benefit dinner for a similar purpose at the Drake, and collected a million dollars in a few hours.

The Serbian community has no excuse for this state of affairs. It has neither the will to donate money nor the will to work for the defense and promotion of the Serbian-American community's interests; and money is the precondition of all activity. It is naive to assume that Bob Dole, Joe Biden, the late Tom Lantos, Joe Lieberman and other Serb "friends" have acted for so many years in the manner well known to all out of moral principles and deepest conviction. Someone had to approach them, to present the specific views to them, to motivate them to accept those views – i.e. money – and to prompt them to act accordingly (money again). Those four steps are the essence of lobbying. The principle is the same, regardless of whether you are advocating a centralized Bosnia-Herzegovina or subsidies to dairy farmers in Wisconsin.

Every so often, encouraging news comes from Serbia or the Republika Srpska that a new "lobbying" effort is under way – and that this time it would certainly yield results. This almost invariably turns out to be a lie.

The shady contract which the Government of Serbia has with the disbarred Indiana lawyer Milan Petrovic – the "money man" for the disgraced former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich – is no "lobbying."

It is, at best, a bad joke (see two articles in this issue).



The "Serbian Congressional Caucus" had always been a mere Potemkin's Village, and remains in a state of deep hibernation; in any event, the members of the Caucus merely express some interest in the Balkans, but they do not necessarily support any "Serbian" positions - on Kosovo, The Hague, or Dayton... In April 2009, at a hearing before the Helsinki Committee of the House of Representatives, Paddy Ashdown and others opened fire from all weapons on the Republika Srpska and its Prime Minister Milorad Dodik, demanding the abolition of the entities and the appointment of an American envoy to the Balkans. They were not countered by a single Congressman, or a representative of the Serbian Diaspora, or a lobbyist, or a visitor from the Republika Srpska, although they would not have been denied the platform had they asked for it.

With the current pathetic state of Serbia's diplomacy things will not get any better. Two decades after the beginning of Yugoslavia's disintegration, nothing has been learned and nothing forgotten.

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## Farewell to a Gentleman

On January 10 **Jovan Trbojevic**, a friend and long time supporter of The Lord Byron Foundation, died at his home in Chicago at the age of 89. He will be long remembered in his adopted city as a restaurateur who set strict standards for fine dining and customer behavior. As *The Chicago Tribune* obituarist wrote,

The sort of casual incivility that we regard as a fact of life today would get you thrown out of a Trbojevic restaurant, whether it was *Jovan*, the restaurant he opened in 1967; the legendary *Le Perroquet*, which from 1973 through 1984 was arguably Chicago's finest restaurant; or *Les Nomades*, which he opened as a private club in 1978. Tables of loud diners who couldn't rein in their exuberance were asked to leave. Couples with very young children were turned away. In a famous incident involving architects who spread their blueprints across a *Le Perroquet* table, Trbojevic comped the meal but ordered the offenders to pack up and never return.

At *Les Nomades* (below), annual membership dues were a mere \$1, but membership was by invitation only and could be rescinded at any time. Table-hopping, the



unfortunate practice of approaching other tables in the middle of the meal, was grounds for dismissal. But those who knew the quiet, sad-eyed Serbian recall a man committed to excellence and a fascinating storyteller.

To establish some of the best restaurants in the Western Hemisphere was a singular feat, but

Jovo's previous life story is equally worthy of a fully-fledged biography. As a subaltern in the Royal Yugoslav Army, in April 1941 he evaded capture by the invading Axis forces by joining the crew of a submarine that slipped out of the Bay of Cattaro at the last moment, as Italian troops were taking possession of the naval base there, and sailed for Crete. He was transferred to Egypt, where the British – impressed by the intelligence, cool poise and polyglot eloquence of the 21-year-old – sent him back to Yugoslavia in 1942 to establish contact with General Mihailović's Četniks. Jovo arrived just as the Serbs' civil war was flaring up, triggered off by the Communists' attempt to exploit national resistance for revolutionary goals.

After a long and hazardous trek through his native country that took him from Montenegro to Serbia, Croatia, Dalmatia, across the Adriatic to northern Italy and finally to Switzerland, he knew better than anyone in the outside world the score on Tito's true motives and on the Ustaša extermination of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.



Trbojevic prepared an extensive report on his findings, which he handed to the British in Berne. He was powerless to affect the drift of British policy, however: it came to favor the Partisans, mainly thanks to strategically placed Communist agents in the British intelligence who twisted OSS agents' field reports to favor their side.

During the first decade of the Cold War Jovan Trbojevic was a Western intelligence specialist operating under a variety of covers behind the Iron Curtain. When he grew tired of what he came to see as a game for game's sake, he retired with the pledge of secrecy about his previous activities. Jovo's languages and cooking skills enabled him to live the life of a culinary nomad at top-tier hotels and cruise lines around the world. He finally settled in Chicago, the city he loved, and married Maggie Abbott, his wife of 42 years who outlives him.

Dr. Srdja Trifkovic says: "We spoke just before Christmas and he asked me to lunch the following week. I told him I'd be out of town but took a rain check for mid-January. We agreed that it would be high time for us to start recording his life story on tape – something we had planned to do for years. It was not to be."

That life story is worthy of a Hollywood script. Its protagonist was a witty, cultivated and generous man who loved life, even though he took a dim view of the ways of the modern world. Above all Jovo Trbojevic was a gentleman *par excellence*. The last of his kind. May God rest his soul.

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P.O. Box 1246, Chicago, IL 60690-1246

CANADIAN BUREAU: 30 Walgate Ave. Ottawa. ON. K2E 6M2

U.K. BUREAU: Old School House, Winterborne Houghton DT11 0PD

**Editor:** Dr. Srdja Trifkovic [trifkovic@netzero.com](mailto:trifkovic@netzero.com)

**Editorial Board:** Ambassador James Bissett (Ottawa), Yugo Kovach (London), Dr. Ronald Hatchett (Texas).

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## Ex-lawyer Milan Petrovic and his Belgrade buddies A SCANDALOUS 'LOBBYING' DEAL Srdja Trifkovic

A shady "lobbying" deal the Government of Serbia has signed with ex-Gov. Rod Blagojevich's top money man and disbarred Indiana lawyer Milan Petrovic and his Chicago-based APS Inc. has been attracting attention in Serbia for months. That attention has increased recently, in view of accusations against Bishop Artemije that he has mispent funds for lobbying in Washington. Compared to the apparent misuse of huge lobbying funds by the Government of Serbia, however, the accusations against Bp. Artemije pale into insignificance.

According to the Belgrade daily *Borba*, "Serbia's lobbying in America is in reality a well oiled scheme for private misappropriation of money which belongs to the citizens of Serbia." In view of its significance for the Serbian-American community we have decided to acquaint our readers with the known facts of this case, which has all the makings of a political scandal in Serbia itself.

**Who Is Milan Petrovic?** – As the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported on April 10, 2008, Petrovic was then-Governor Rod Blagojevich's top fundraiser: over the years, Petrovic had raised over \$1.9 million for the Governor, or half a million more than Tony Rezko, convicted on several counts of fraud and bribery in 2008. To be precise, during Rezko's trial, FBI Special Agent William Willenborg testified that Petrovic raised \$1,963,485 for Blagojevich, outpacing Rezko, who raised a mere \$1,437,350

The *Chicago Tribune* wrote, "By the time Blagojevich came to power in 2003, lobbying the hospital board had grown into a fertile business... the field was also saturated with lobbyists from Blagojevich's orbit [including] Milan Petrovic, a friend and fundraiser of the governor." *Illinois Issues* magazine, published by the Center for State Policy and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Springfield, noted that "Gov. Rod Blagojevich's main re-election platform made the spotlight again when the Sun-Times reported the state's new All Kids health insurance program awarded a major contract to McKesson Health Solutions. The company was represented by a Chicago lobbying firm, Advanced Practical Solutions, led by Blagojevich's top political fund-raiser, Milan Petrovic."

The Belgrade daily *Borba* reported on August 13, 2009, that Milan Petrovic was "involved in numerous affairs and in the state of Indiana he was even disbarred." A great unknown in his career, the paper went on, was the deal he signed with the international giant CH2M Hill:

CH2M Hill suddenly decided in 2004 to become an APS client, although Petrovic's firm APS was founded only a year earlier, as a beginner lobbying group. Why the giant... firm chose Petrovic as an

intermediary, although he was drowning in debt, remains unknown to this day. It is noteworthy that Petrovic sought bankruptcy protection on April 5, 2001, and on May 23 of that year he surrendered his law licence to the Indiana Bar because he was under investigation by the Indiana Supreme Court. He admitted knowing of the investigation and that he 'acknowledges the material facts so alleged are true' and that he would not be able to launch a successful defense if he was indicted. The facts of that case were sealed by the Indiana court and they are not known to the public... Blagojevich's 'money man' donated \$20,000 in 2006 to New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson's re-election campaign.

As Bloomberg reported on April 24, 2009, ("Blagojevich Fundraiser Represented Firm in New Mexico Probe"), a client of Petrovic, CDR Financial Products Inc., was under investigation in a federal pay-to-play probe in New Mexico.

"Milan Petrovic, who raised \$1.96 million for Blagojevich, introduced CDR to Illinois budget and debt officials, according to e-mails obtained under a public records request. He and his lobbying firm also donated \$20,000 to New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, a one-time Democratic presidential candidate who withdrew from consideration as U.S. Commerce Secretary following disclosure of the CDR probe. Richardson 'is a public official I admire,' Petrovic, 43, said in a telephone interview, declining to comment further... In Illinois, Petrovic has also represented Stratton & Associates, a Denver-based consulting firm run by a senior political adviser to Richardson, state lobbying records show. Stratton lobbied on CDR's behalf in New Mexico, according to William Sisneros, chief executive officer of the New Mexico Finance Authority... Petrovic and his ... APS, contributed \$20,000 to Richardson's campaign and political action committees in 2004 and 2005, New Mexico political finance records show. Petrovic's friends, business associates and clients donated at least \$50,500 to Richardson."

On that CH2M Hill contract, there is no mystery. In a report on Petrovic (,"A Closer Look at Blagojevich's Top Money Man"), NWI.com reported that on Nov. 30, 2006, the Illinois Toll Highway Authority gave CH2M Hill a \$2.26 million contract to do a master plan development for the Northwest Tollway. In 2007, the *Chicago Tribune* reported the firm got \$11 million in tollway contracts.

Milan Petrovic appears to be a strong proponent of ethnic diversity. In 2008 one Shqipe Osmani of Chicago, an employee of Advanced Practical Solutions (ABS), was listed as making a donation of \$2,300 to Hillary Clinton. This indicates that, whatever Petrovic may be accused of, he should not be accused of any Serbian nationalist bias – not only in his hiring practices but also in indirect support for Mrs. Clinton, who boasts of having nagged her husband



into bombing Serbia in 1999. The same Shqipe Osmani was listed as donating \$7,750 in political contributions in 2004, which indicates not only great employee loyalty in the fluid lobbying environment, but also an enviable level of discretionary income some ABS employees seem to enjoy.

**The Reaction in Serbia** – According to the Belgrade daily *Borba*, „Serbia’s lobbying in America is in reality a well developed scheme for private misappropriation of money which belongs to the citizens of Serbia.” The paper commented the deal with Petrovic last July 27 by saying that the Government of Serbia was paying „obscure firms and second-rate politicians, and that at the same time the public in Serbia knows nothing about the activities of these so-called lobbyists, or their results, and especially not about the way in which huge sums of money are being spent”:

Two main outfits for this deal are the above-mentioned firm of... Milan Petrović and ‘30 Point Strategies LLC,’ which taken together cost Serbia \$145.000 each month, or \$1.74 million a year. To make it all even more suspicious, through those agencies other firms are paid too, such as ‘Prairie Avenue Advisers [sic!] LLC,’ which cannot be found on the Internet, with one interesting detail: when its name is entered on Google it automatically corrects the last word to *advisors*, which shows that those creating this firm even don’t speak good English.

The paper added that Serbian taxpayers’ money has been paid to „candidates” from Illinois, including one Footlik Jay [ed.: defeated by Dan Seals in the 2008 Democratic primary in the 10th District]. It pointed out that the contract with Petrovic’s firm was signet by Tamara Stojčević, secretary-general of the Government of Serbia, on 30 April 2009, on the same day when the Government approved it. The first payment was made and the contract registered with the U.S. Department of Justice (No. 5933) already the following day, „while the gullible citizens of Serbia were firing their grills for the long May Day weekend.” According to the paper, the deal with Petrovic was arranged in 2008 at the Democratic Party Convention in Denver by Srdjan Šaper, a trusted member of President Boris Tadic’s inner circle, who represented Serbia’s ruling Democratic Party at the Convention.

**Outrage Across the Spectrum** - Serbia’s opposition politicians were outraged. For once they were united - in their indignation. Aleksandar Vučić, deputy president of the Serbian Progressive Party, declared that the government would have to explain on what basis the contract was signed, and why Petrovic’s firm was chosen:

It is unbelievable that the authorities are staying numb. It only proves that they don’t care about the citizens and their money. This is at the very least squandering of public funds, without any clarity. It is scandalous that nothing is known except that the money has been spent and the contract signed.

Dragan Todorović, leader of the *Serbian Radical Party* in the National Assembly, said that the contract was “criminal, just like any other contract signed by this government, because in each of them the key issue is which minister will get the percentage of the deal.” He, too, agrees that the method of selection of APS LLC was contentious and that Petrović’s firm could not do anything useful.

Velimir Ilić, former government minister and leader of the *New Serbia Party*, called the affair “a terrible business” in which “money is laundered on a grand scale.” “Serbia certainly needs lobbying, but not in this shameful manner,” Ilić said, “All of this is a major scandal.”

Dragan Šormaz, a deputy of the *Democratic Party of Serbia* of former prime minister Vojislav Koštunica, said that the affair proves that the current government of Serbia “had never wisely spent the money of its citizens: “this money is wasted and the State Auditing Service should examine the contract and the sources from which it is paid.”

Enad Prokić, a deputy of the pro-Western *Liberal Democratic Party*, said that the decision of the Government of Serbia to designate the contract with Petrovic as “Secret” (even though it is a matter of public record in the United States) aroused suspicion. And Vladan Batić, a deputy of the *Christian Democratic Party* in the Assembly, said that the selection of the right firm is crucial: “In view of Milan Petrovic’s links to Rod Blagojevich, it is hard to imagine successful lobbying.”

Vesna Pešić, a member of parliament, had tabled a question to the Government asking it to reveal the details of the contract, disputing its „Top Secret” designation on a deal which inflicted multi-million damage on the taxpayers: “Since when is the government secretary authorized to sign such a non-transparent contract, which all of the ministers claim they had never seen in their lives?... (President Boris) Tadić certainly knew about this contract, because (Foreign Minister Vuk) Jeremić knew about it.

(In fact, according to *Borba*’s sources, Minister Jeremić did not merely “know” of the contract, he is personally in charge of the Petrovic deal.)

“APS seems an odd choice” for the Government of Serbia to make, James Jatras wrote on our site on February 26. It would be a very odd choice, indeed, if the objective of those who run the Government in Belgrade was to have an efficient, cost-effective and professional firm representing a beleaguered and near-bankrupt Balkan country that has been treated abysmally by successive U.S. administrations for almost two decades. It seems clear, however, that the objectives of those who control that government have little to do with Serbia’s national or state interests, and a lot to do with their pockets and their careers.

But the story does not end there. It will continue. That much we can promise...

## SERBIA'S 'LOBBYING' DEBACLE

James George Jatras

Since the suspension of Bishop Artemije of Ras and Prizren from administration of his Diocese, efforts have been made in some quarters to use my role as a lobbyist in Washington on his behalf as a weapon in the campaign against the Bishop. I already have addressed elsewhere the questions, first raised last February by the Belgrade daily *Blic* (parroting an Albanian-American source), about the source of the funds used for lobbying in the U.S. and whether their use for that purpose was legitimate application of the ruling Bishop's discretion.

But the more damaging thing about these attacks is the notion that lobbying for Serbia's right to keep Kosovo was somehow a "waste" of money and that there were no results from it. This is more than a belittlement of the efforts that were expended by my firm and those working with us. It is, rather, a suggestion that it is both immoral and futile for Serbia to struggle for her interests by lobbying to change U.S. policy.

When we started in the spring of 2006 we were the only professional (as opposed to volunteer) activity lobbying on behalf of the Serbian cause. Our activities, through a US nonprofit organization we created, the American Council for Kosovo, were not confined to narrowly focused lobbying in the form of quiet meetings with American officials and Congressmen. More importantly, we knew we had to change the terms of debate on Kosovo, from a place where the noble West saved innocent Albanian Muslims from evil Serbs, to a place where the criminal, terrorist UÇK was committing genocide of Christian Serbs.

Most of our activities in the U.S. and elsewhere (Britain, Germany, Israel, India, Italy, the EU, Russia, etc.), often in cooperation with The Lord Byron Foundation and with the support of other volunteers, were focused on public opinion. We forced people to look at "the other side" of the Kosovo story, to the outraged howls of the Albanian lobby that we were trying to "hijack" US policy. While we were not able to overturn an American policy misinformed by decades of Albanian (and Croatian) anti-Serb propaganda, I believe we were successful in helping to delay Washington's final push for almost two years, giving Serbia a chance to fight back. Our contract, only a part of which was ever paid, was for \$100,000 per month, including (about 40 percent of the total) cost of advertising, conferences, travel, and other expenses.

In evaluating our degree of success, it might be useful to make a couple of comparisons. A few months after we began our effort under the direction of Vladika Artemije, the Serbian government (under Prime Minister Kostunica) hired another firm, Barbour Griffith and Rodgers, to lobby

officially on its behalf. That contract was for \$60,000 per month, plus costs. As far as has been publicly disclosed, they were not specifically tasked with lobbying on Kosovo, but such concentration can be inferred. Their activities were entirely closed-door meetings, and they did no public activities to make Serbia's case. They were dropped soon after the UDI in February 2008.



In the summer of 2009, Belgrade (the current government) hired another firm, Chicago-based Advanced Practical Solutions, for \$85,000 per month, plus most costs. As a professional lobbyist, I don't generally like to throw rocks at a competitor, but APS seems an odd choice. They have no active website and apparently not even a Washington office. APS's President, Mr. Milan Petrovic, is known mostly as a top fundraiser for former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich. According to press reports, when "Blago" was governor APS did a nice little business steering state contracts to its clients, mainly in the healthcare field. The operation fell apart with the Antoin "Tony" Rezko bribery conviction, Blagojevich's resignation, and Petrovic's withdrawal from the Indiana bar to avoid imminent expulsion. Maybe APS was hired by the Tadic government because it's a "Serbian firm," although that in itself means nothing. But an online search of US political campaign records finds several contributions to candidates (all Democrats: Blagojevich, John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama) by an APS employee named Shqipe Osmani, which doesn't sound Serbian.

The APS contract appears still to be in force, but it's hard to be sure since there are no discernable activities being performed. And of course that's the *real* scandal, in which the "yellow" press organs obsessed with my work for Bishop Artemije seem to take no interest. I wonder why.

I'm sure these figures for lobbying activities in the US must seem astronomical to readers in Serbia, where people are struggling to scrape by. The sad fact is, this is the kind of money it takes to array a battery of experienced media and lobbying professionals, usually with experience as government officials, Congressmen, Senators, and (like me) Congressional staff. These are people who have the access to make a foreign country's – or politician's, or political party's – case heard in Washington's corridors of power.

Many countries a lot poorer than Serbia have made the decision it's an investment they need to make, if only for self-protection. It is a choice Bishop Artemije, to his credit, made when no one else on the Serbian side was willing to step forward. And now there are those who seek to punish him for it, and punish Serbia too.

That's not just a crime, it's a blunder.

## THE HAGUE: THE SHOW GOES ON

### Nebojsa Malic<sup>1</sup>

The show trial of Radovan Karadzic continued on March 1 before the Hague Inquisition, but also in the media. Both in the West and in the Muslim world, Karadzic and the Bosnian Serbs have been convicted by the press of vilest atrocities long ago. One could almost feel the frustration of the commentators and reporters that there even has to be a trial in the first place, so strong are their convictions about Karadzic and the Bosnian War. Evidence? Facts? True believers need no such things. Nor do the Hague prosecutors, apparently.

**Challenging Cherished Myths** – Reading through the coverage of the trial inevitably reveals that reporters and editors aren't so much telling what happened in the courtroom, but trying to argue with Karadzic's defense. Take, for example, Ian Traynor of the *Guardian*, who "reports" from the trial as if he were the prosecutor rebutting Karadzic's opening statement. Other journalists took a similar approach, typically presenting the accusations as indisputable facts then saying that Karadzic "denied" war crimes.

He did, in fact, challenge the Official Truth about several key episodes of the Bosnian War, saying that there was no genocide in Srebrenica, and that Sarajevo was divided rather than besieged. The Bosnian Muslims, he argued, used civilian buildings as fortifications, and often shot at their own people for propaganda purposes. Moreover, he also claimed the war was a result of Muslim desire to establish dominion over all of Bosnia, driven by a radical Islamic agenda. He says he has evidence to back all of this up. If he does, that is more than the prosecutors, the Tribunal itself, or the media have produced so far...

**A Different Tune** – The same day Karadzic appeared in the courtroom, one of his ex-adversaries was detained at Heathrow. Ejup Ganic, once the right hand of Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic who styled himself the "vice-president" of Bosnia, was arrested by British police acting on a Serbian warrant. Belgrade is charging Ganic with responsibility in the May 1992 ambush of the retreating Yugoslav Army column in Sarajevo. The crumbling federal army had made a deal with Bosnian and Macedonian authorities to depart unhindered. Izetbegovic's forces violated that deal, and the resulting massacres of retreating Army columns ensured the bitter enmity of many Army officers, who then joined Karadzic's nascent military.

One would think, then, that an opportunity to examine these events in a court of law would be greeted with enthusiasm by the politicians and the press that keep talking about the need for "justice, truth and reconciliation" in the Balkans. Yet the response in the very same media that have

covered the Karadzic trial with so much zeal and emotion this week has been completely different when it came to Ganic. *The Economist*, for example, dismissed the ambush as a matter of "forty rifles" and bemoaned the damage allegedly done to "Serbia's attempts to rejoin the European fold" by "dragging up the past." Others focused not on what Ganic may or may not have done back in the 1990s, but on the "tensions" and "muddled ties" his arrest may cause, "feeding Balkans hysteria" in a year when Bosnia is having a general election.

What are they implying, that the Karadzic trial has no effect on Balkans relations, or tensions or ties? That the incessant propaganda about the Serbs as genocidal aggressors is good, perfectly normal and desirable while a mere mention that a Muslim could have been responsible for an atrocity is a cause for panic?

**Just Cause?** – The Tribunal and the media maintain that the Bosnian Serbs, and Karadzic as their leader, sought to occupy Bosnia and destroy Croat and Muslim populations as part of some grand conspiracy to create an ethnically pure "Greater Serbia." These charges are absurd. Alija Izetbegovic never denied being an Islamic revolutionary. He openly stated that he would "sacrifice peace for a sovereign Bosnia." Karadzic said in his opening statement that the Bosnian Serb cause was "just and holy." He didn't actually call the war itself holy, though the distinction escaped many reporters. ICTY translations have been notoriously unreliable... The Tribunal and the media have twisted words before.

**Exercise in Futility** – Given that the countries sponsoring the Tribunal have also played a key role in supporting Izetbegovic's drive for a centralized Bosnian state and occupying a portion of Serbia to carve out an "independent," ethnically cleansed "state" of Kosovo, there is no chance of Karadzic getting anything even remotely resembling a fair trial. Too much political capital has been invested in the Bank of Collective Serbian Guilt for the investors to admit the error of their ways now.

But the persecution of Radovan Karadzic and other Serb leaders isn't going to help the Empire any. Least of all will it inspire gratitude in the Muslim world, a goal several policymakers have openly alluded to in the past. Back in the 1990s, to an Empire in search of a cause it seemed like a no-brainer: claim a "genocide" through hysterical propaganda about the evil Serbs slaughtering innocent Muslims, step in to save the day, and emerge as a knight in shining armor. Over and over the Western leaders, from Bill Clinton to Tony Blair, have repeated this trope.

The world's Muslims didn't buy it. Instead, the Muslim public opinion chose to regard the West as an evil, conniving force that stood idly by and watched the slaughter. Ironically, that was one of the major talking points of the whole hysterical propaganda effort.

<sup>1</sup> Published on Antiwar.com on March 5, 2010.



## THE SREBRENICA MYTH

### Review of Alexander Dorin's book

*Global Research*, February 28, 2010

In the West, the popular mythology about 7,000-8,000 Muslim men being executed in Srebrenica in 1995 is still alive and well, but "independent research shows some 2,000 Bosnian Muslim fighters were killed in battle for Srebrenica and that is the number of bodies Hague investigators were able to find," said Swiss researcher Alexander Dorin, who has been investigating Srebrenica events for the past 14 years. In his latest book titled "Srebrenica — The History of Salon Racism" (*Srebrenica: die Geschichte eines salonfähigen Rassismus*) published in February in Berlin, Dorin focuses on manipulations with the number of Muslims who lost their lives in Srebrenica.

"Regarding the events in Srebrenica in 1995, the media manipulations still reign in the West, claiming that after the town fell to Serbian hands some 7,000 to 8,000 of Muslim fighters and male civilians were killed. However, the researchers around the world have shown this bears no relation to the truth," Dorin told Srna News Agency.

According to data he had gathered, Dorin discovered that at least 2,000 Muslim fighters were killed in battle for Srebrenica. He added the facts are showing that neither civilian nor military leadership of Republic of Srpska (Serb Republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina) ever ordered execution of the Muslim fighters and POWs. "2,000 is approximately the number of bodies Hague investigators were able to find up to this day. To that number the Muslim side added several hundred Muslim fighters, most of whom came from abroad, who were killed in battle a few years before the fall of Srebrenica, in Han Pijesak and Konjević Polje," Dorin said, adding that this is evidenced even by the Muslim documents captured by the Bosnian Serb Army.

"Prior to the fall of Srebrenica, Naser Orić's troops withdrew from this small town, leaving 25,000 civilians behind, although a certain number of civilians, some of whom were armed, was withdrawing together with Orić's fighters," Dorin said. He said that Bosnian Serb Army "did not kill a single Muslim civilian of those who remained in Srebrenica or Potocari, while it did engage Orić's column, which was breaking through to Tuzla in several groups, in fierce fighting." "There is no way the Serb Army could have captured seven or eight thousand Muslim fighters and male civilians and execute them somewhere, partly because that was technically impossible," Dorin said. He explained that, among else, there was never enough Serb soldiers who could carry out a crime on such scale.

Dorin pointed to an interesting investigation carried out by the Bulgarian reporter and author Germinal Civikov, who wrote a book about the case of Croat Dražen Erdemović, former member of the Bosnian Serb Army,

whose testimony represents the key Hague "evidence" of "Srebrenica massacre", who claimed that his commander Milorad Pelemić "ordered him and few other soldiers to execute some 1,000-1,200 Muslim POWs." But the analysis of that case, said Dorin, proves Erdemović invented most, if not all of that story. A year after the fall of Srebrenica, some 3,000 Muslim men who were supposedly killed in 1995, were voting in the Bosnian Muslim elections. In addition, at least 1,000 of the alleged 1995 "Srebrenica massacre victims" have been dead long before or after Bosnian Serb Army took the town over. "It is perfectly clear that Muslim organizations listed as Srebrenica victims all the Muslim fighters who were killed in the fights after the fall of Srebrenica," the Swiss researcher said.

According to Dorin, some Western reporters wrote back in 1995 that part of Srebrenica Muslim population, after the town's takeover, migrated to other countries. This includes an American journalist who wrote that around 800 Srebrenica Muslims went abroad — from Serbia.

"It was not possible to conduct an in-depth investigation, since no one can search the entire world to pinpoint each and every name [from the lists of alleged Srebrenica victims]. Still, the available evidence already shows there were immense manipulations at play," Dorin said. A number of photos of Muslim fighters taken during their breakthrough to Tuzla, which Dorin obtained from the Muslim sources, show Izetbegović's fighters in uniforms, with many of them wounded. "On these photos one can see a number of wounded fighters who survived the battle against the Serb Army. Muslim side is now presenting its fighters who did not recover from their wounds as the victims of an execution", said Dorin. Some Muslims have admitted at least 2,000 of their Srebrenica-based fighters were killed in the battle.

At the same time, Dutch UNPROFOR troops testified that Serb Army treated Muslim civilians in an entirely correct manner, while Srebrenica Muslim warlord Naser Orić with his fighters was massacring Serb civilians in the most monstrous fashion for years in Srebrenica municipality, and pillaging and destroying their property all the while.

Despite all the evidence about what really took place in Srebrenica and the fact there was no 'massacre', Dorin doubts the Hague verdicts in regards to Srebrenica events can be contested or overturned: "That court routinely discards everything that proves Serbs are not the monsters they have been made out to be. That tribunal has a purely political function. It has no relation to the justice and truth", Dorin says. The Swiss researcher does not expect his book about Srebrenica events will be able to break down the stereotypes. He said the book was written for those who wish to learn the truth about the events Western mainstream media sold as "Srebrenica massacre" and even "genocide", in order to justify their war against the Serbs.

## THE BLACKMAIL OF AMERICA

How the United States became Albania's enforcer

Julia Gorin<sup>1</sup>

Something happened after President Clinton's 1999 war in Kosovo: It never ended. Its continuation was characterized by anti-Serb arson, kidnappings, bombings of NATO-escorted civilian buses and efforts to kill everyone from schoolgirls to octogenarians, plus the rare peacekeeper who tried to prevent any of this.

Toward the end of 1999, several major newspapers reported on findings that mass graves such as the infamous Trepeca zinc mine turned up empty, as did the stadium we were told was being used as a concentration camp. Anyone reading this one-time follow-up also would have learned that the "cleansing" of 800,000 Albanians had more to do with NATO bombs and Kosovo Liberation Army orders than with the outrageous claim that Serbia was trying to empty the province of 90% of its population. But the bombshell postwar story had no legs. No media outlet, human rights organization or congressional subcommittee launched an investigation, and the press moved on, taking the public with it. So Americans don't know that within months of our serving as the Kosovo Liberation Army's (KLA) air force, the Albanian insurgents also tried to seize the Presevo Valley area in southern Serbia and by early 2001 started a civil war in Macedonia, which had sheltered 400,000 refugees during the Kosovo war.

At the same time, the Albanian fighters started to engage NATO troops openly. In February 2000, the U.N. and NATO in Kosovo issued a joint statement that "two young French soldiers, who came here as peacekeepers, are lying in hospital beds suffering from gunshot wounds inflicted on them by the very people that they came here to protect," the CATO Institute's Gary Dempsey reported. He added, "As a candid intelligence officer with the U.N. Mission in Kosovo [UNMIK] explained to me in November, *We are their tool, and when we stop being useful to them, they will turn against us.*"

In March 2000, *The Washington Post* reported, "A senior Pentagon official warned yesterday that U.S. troops in Kosovo this spring may have to fight their former allies, ethnic Albanian guerrillas who are rearming themselves and threatening cross-border attacks against Serbia. 'This has got to cease and desist, and if not, ultimately it is going to lead to confrontation between the Albanians and KFOR [NATO Kosovo Force].' But that didn't happen. Instead, we came around to seeing things the Albanian way. In November 2005, CNSNews.com explained why:

Rebels have blown up several vehicles belonging to UNMIK and the Kosovo [Police] Service, leading UNMIK to warn employees to check their vehicles for

bombs before starting the engines... [Ex-OSCE security chief Tom] Gambill believes that Albanian frustration over the independence issue may lead armed rebels to forge an alliance with al Qaeda. Both groups want the international presence out of Kosovo and al Qaeda has a history of attempting to destabilize the Balkans region... The threats are played down, Gambill said, because 'it does not suit the internationals to have a serious crisis such as this at the time when they are sending out reports on how much improvement has been made in Kosovo.'

We didn't want Albanians to start killing us, so we let them keep killing Serbs. Rather than see what would happen if we tried saying "no" to Albanian demands and designs, and risk Americans discerning the real nature of their new best friends - which of course would compound the domestic terror threat - we guaranteed ourselves a bigger, more entrenched and more global problem. When Kosovo re-entered the headlines in 2008, some started catching on. In March 2008, Northwestern University law professor Eugene Kontorovich wrote in the *New York Sun*,

An important ingredient of Kosovo's success in achieving self-determination seems to be their constant threats of violence. The Kosovar prime minister ... often warned of 'dangers' and 'unforeseeable consequences' if the province were not allowed to secede. ... As a result, NATO and America have become parties to the carve-up of a sovereign state that they subdued by force. ... For international law, the entire process is a string of humiliations ... peacekeepers are hostages; and sovereignty is trumped by the threat of terror.

"Hostages" precisely describes the West in Kosovo. If anyone wonders why the George W. Bush administration joined the Clintonites in the belief that "independence is the only viable option" and "there can be no compromise," it's because in the gangster's paradise of Kosovo, the United States alternates between hostage and gangster. The Albanians give us ultimatums, and we give the Serbs ultimatums. Our government toes the Albanian line, and our press toes the government line. UPI's Robert M. Hayden gave a glimpse of it in March 2008:

The problem is not that 'Serb nationalists' are resisting 'the West,' as it is put by those U.S. journalists who honor the First Amendment by parroting the State Department... [A political solution] could have been reached with Serbia, but neither the Clinton administration nor that of George W. Bush wanted one.

A clearer picture emerges of the "failed" negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, to which the Serbian delegation would come with lists of various broad compromises, and the Albanian delegation would look at their watches. Sabotaging the "negotiations" before each

<sup>1</sup> *The Washington Times*, March 4, 2010.



round - and redefining the term - Mr. Bush or Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would announce that the end result would be independence. An excerpt from a 1999 Q&A in Time magazine illuminates how far we swerved from our original goals: "The alliance wants Kosovo to be given autonomy within the Yugoslav federation, but opposes the full independence that the KLA is fighting for, fearing that creating a new Kosovar-Albanian state would further destabilize an already volatile region." Today, however, even the language is reversed: that which we knew would destabilize the region is now promoted as what is needed to "stabilize" the region. And so our military is being used to enforce KLA directives and make the last of the resisting Serbs comply with the new reality.

Most of the last resisting Serbs are in the only remaining part of Kosovo where it is still safe to be Serbian, Northern Kosovska Mitrovica, along the boundary with Serbia. The Serbs there have been open to a partition that would allow them to stay within the internationally recognized borders of their country, Serbia. But we were informed by our Albanian "partners" that a partition was out of the question, ironically invoking "territorial integrity" - which our leaders then repeated.

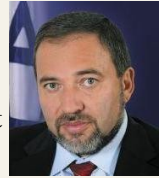
Rather than Kosovo's diabolical path to statehood, our bureaucrats and media point to Belgrade as the problem, because it backs Northern Mitrovica, where Serbian institutions are still in place. We are warned that the real threat is Belgrade's refusal to recognize the land grab, its turning to Moscow for support and its creation of "parallel institutions." A rich admonition indeed, given that Kosovo's parallel Albanian institutions within the host society were what brought us to the hailed secession itself.

NATO troops have been amassing around Northern Mitrovica, and in a few months, with or without Belgrade finally selling out the Kosovo Serbs, we will witness the next act of war by U.S.-led NATO against an ally that has never been a threat to America. We will be enforcing borders that only one-third of U.N. member states even recognize to deliver nothing less than the full territory that our masters demand. This time, when Americans watch our military "contain" the Serbs, they should recognize it for what it is. The troops themselves would do well to understand what is being enforced with their hands. And when the images gracing American TVs are again exclusively of the "wild" Serbian reaction, meant to depict Serbs as violent and therefore justifying the aggression that caused it, Americans should ask themselves how they might react if coerced to secede from their country by an ethnic group that reached majority status in their area.

In February 2007, Jim Jatras, a former senior analyst for the Senate Republican Foreign Policy Committee, asked a Hungarian member of the European Parliament, "Why are you rewarding Albanian violence with state power?" The member replied, "Because we're afraid of them."

## Lieberman and Jihad in the Balkans

The Balkans region is a major target for global Jihad, Israeli foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman says. Last January he addressed a subject that is still taboo in Washington: how the U.S. policy helped create a terrorist hotbed in Europe "that now refuses to go away."



The jihadists in southeastern Europe are using well-established methods, Lieberman said, which include huge transfers of funds and the establishment of " sleeper " cells in the region. Intelligence services had evidence that Islamic terrorist organizations were already recruiting in the Balkans, and Islamic and Saudi charities were continuously transferring funds to Muslims of Bosnian and Albanian origin. Citing Israeli intelligence sources, Lieberman said that Muslim militants planned to exploit tensions between Muslims and Christians in the Balkans to create unrest and instigate violence. Bosnian Muslims and Albanians had been recruited for terrorist training camps in preparation for being sent home to foster an Islamic revolution, he added.

Examples abound. In December 2009, Ehsanul Islam Sadeque - one of two men jailed in the U.S. for planning terrorist attacks - was found by American investigators to have been in contact with Mirsad Bektašević, a Bosnian-born Swedish citizen who was convicted in 2007 of plotting to cause explosions in Europe to make foreign troops withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan.

By siding with Bosnian Muslims in the 1990s and by supporting Albanian terrorism and separatism for the past two decades, Washington has fostered the establishment of the Green Corridor (*Zelena transversala*) that seeks to create a geographically contiguous chain of majority-Muslim or Muslim-dominated polities from Turkey in the southeast to the northwesternmost point of Bosnia at Cazin. Israeli foreign minister has merely summarized notable trends among Muslim communities in the Balkans which suggest that the Green Corridor is taking shape, deliberately or spontaneously. Thanks to Lieberman's alert, it will no longer be possible to claim that the notion of the Green Corridor is a product of "propaganda" or "Islamophobia."

Israeli intelligence sources on which Lieberman relies for his information are well aware that, in the Balkans, Al-Qaeda and its loosely linked local offshoots are capable of fielding operatives who are "European" in appearance and seemingly integrated into the Western society - the "white al-Qa'eda." There is a growing gap between the reality of Islam in the Balkans and Western mainstream narrative about the allegedly moderate and tolerant "Balkan Islam." The problem will not be resolved without critical reexamination of Western policies as well as Western illusions. That problem has morphed over the past two decades into a demographic, social and political quagmire.

## *Turkey, an Islamist State* **THE OTTOMANS ARE BACK**

**Srdja Trifkovic**

Inside the Beltway, the fact that Turkey is no longer a U.S. “ally” in any meaningful sense is still strenuously denied. We were reminded of the true score on March 9, when Saudi King Abdullah presented Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (shown with wife and a couple of friends, r.) with the Wahhabist desert kingdom’s most prestigious prize for his “services to Islam.” Erdogan earned the King Faisal Prize for having “rendered outstanding service to Islam by defending the causes of the Islamic nation.”

**Services to the Ummah** - Turkey under Erdogan’s neo-Islamist AKP has rendered a host of other services to “the Islamic nation.” In August 2008 Ankara welcomed Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for a formal state visit, and last year it announced that it would not join any sanctions aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. In the same spirit the AKP government repeatedly played host to Sudan’s President Omer Hassan al-Bashir -- a nasty piece of jihadist work if there ever was one -- who stands accused of genocide against non-Muslims. Erdogan has barred Israel from annual military exercises on Turkey’s soil, but his government signed a military pact with Syria last October and has been conducting joint military exercises with the regime of Bashar al-Assad. Turkey’s strident apologia of Hamas is more vehement than anything coming out of Cairo or Amman. (Talking of terrorists, Erdogan has stated, repeatedly, “I do not want to see the word ‘Islam’ or ‘Islamist’ in connection with the word ‘terrorism’!”) Simultaneous pressure to conform to Islam at home has gathered pace over the past seven years, and is now relentless. Turkish businessmen will tell you privately that sipping a glass of raki in public may hurt their chances of landing government contracts; but it helps if their wives and daughters wear the hijab.

Ankara’s continuing bid to join the European Union is running parallel with its openly neo-Ottoman policy of re-establishing an autonomous sphere of influence in the Balkans and in the former Soviet Central Asian republics. Turkey’s EU candidacy is still on the agenda, but the character of the issue has evolved since Erdogan’s AKP came to power in 2002.

When the government in Ankara started the process by signing an Association agreement with the EEC (as it was then) in 1963, its goal was to make Turkey more “European.” This had been the objective of subsequent attempts at Euro-integration by other neo-Kemalist governments prior to Erdogan’s election victory eight years ago, notably those of Turgut Ozal and Tansu Ciller in the 1990s. The secularists hoped to present Turkey’s “European

vocation” as an attractive domestic alternative to the growing influence of political Islam, and at the same time to use the threat of Islamism as a means of obtaining political and economic concessions and specific timetables from Brussels.

Erdogan and his friend and ally Abdullah Gul, the President of the Turkish Republic, still want the EU membership, but their motives are vastly different. Far from seeking to make Turkey more European, they want to make Europe more Turkish -- many German cities are well on the way -- and more Islamic, thus reversing the setback of 1683 without firing a shot.

The neo-Ottoman strategy was clearly indicated by the appointment of Ahmet Davutoglu as foreign minister almost a year ago. As Erdogan’s long-term foreign policy advisor, he advocated diversifying Turkey’s geopolitical options by creating exclusively Turkish zones of influence in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East... including links with Khaled al-Mashal of Hamas.

On the day of his appointment in May Davutoglu asserted that Turkey’s influence in “its region” will continue to grow: Turkey had an “order-instituting role” in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus, he declared, quite apart from its links with the West. In his words, Turkish foreign policy has evolved from being “crisis-oriented” to being based on “vision”:

Turkey is no longer a country which only reacts to crises, but notices the crises before their emergence and intervenes in the crises effectively, and gives shape to the order of its surrounding region.

A leading light in the circle of Islamist long-term strategists at the University of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia in the 1990’s, Davutoglu even asserted that Turkey had a “responsibility to help stability towards the countries and peoples of the regions which once had links with Turkey” -- thus explicitly referring to the Ottoman era in a manner unimaginable only a decade ago:

Beyond representing the 70 million people of Turkey, we have a historic debt to those lands where there are Turks or which was related to our land in the past. We have to repay this debt in the best way.

This strategy is based on the assumption that growing Turkish clout in the old Ottoman lands -- a region in which the EU has vital energy and political interests -- may





from  
 pt President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel to drop their objections to Turkey's EU membership. If on the other hand the EU insists on Turkey's fulfillment of all 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* -- which Turkey cannot and does not want to complete -- then its huge autonomous sphere of influence in the old Ottoman domain can be developed into a major and potentially hostile counter-bloc to Brussels. (President Obama is said to have approved this strategy when he visited Ankara in April of last year, shortly after that notorious address to the Muslim world in Cairo.)

Erdogan is no longer eager to minimize or deny his Islamic roots, but his old assurances to the contrary -- long belied by his actions -- are still being recycled in Washington, and treated as reality. This reflects the propensity of this administration, just like its predecessors, to cherish illusions about the nature and ambitions of our regional "allies," such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

The implicit assumption in Washington -- that Turkey would remain "secular" and "pro-Western," come what may -- should have been reassessed already after the Army intervened to remove the previous pro-Islamic government in 1997. Since then the Army has been neutered, confirming the top brass old warning that "democratization" would mean Islamization. Dozens of generals and other senior ranks -- traditionally the guardians of Ataturk's legacy -- are being called one by one for questioning in a government-instigated political trial. To the dismay of its small Westernized secular elite, Turkey has reasserted its Asian and Muslim character with a vengeance.

**Neo-Ottomanism** - Washington's stubborn denial of Turkey's political, cultural and social reality goes hand in hand with an ongoing Western attempt to rehabilitate the Ottoman Empire, and to present it as almost a precursor of Europe's contemporary multiethnic, multicultural tolerance, diversity, etc, etc.

In reality, four salient features of the Ottoman state were institutionalized discrimination against non-Muslims, total personal insecurity of all its subjects, an unfriendly coexistence of its many races and creeds, and the absence

of unifying state ideology. It was a sordid Hobbesian borderland with mosques. An "Ottoman culture," defined by Constantinople and largely limited to its walls, did eventually emerge through the reluctant mixing of Turkish, Greek, Slavic, Armenian, Jewish and other Levantine lifestyles and practices, each at its worst. The mix was impermanent, unattractive, and unable to forge identities or to command loyalties.

The Roman Empire could survive a string of cruel, inept or insane emperors because its bureaucratic and military machines were well developed and capable of functioning even when there was confusion at the core. The Ottoman state lacked such mechanisms. Devoid of administrative flair, the Turks used the services of educated Greeks and Jews and awarded them certain privileges. Their safety and long-term status were nevertheless not guaranteed, as witnessed by the hanging of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch on Easter Day 1822.

The Ottoman Empire gave up the ghost right after World War I, but long before that it had little interesting to say, or do, at least measured against the enormous cultural melting pot it had inherited and the splendid opportunities of sitting between the East and West. Not even a prime location at the crossroads of the world could prompt creativity. The degeneracy of the ruling class, blended with Islam's inherent tendency to the closing of the mind, proved insurmountable.

A century later the Turkish Republic is a populous, self-assertive nation-state of over 70 million. Ataturk hoped to impose a strictly secular concept of nationhood, but political Islam has reasserted itself. In any event the Kemalist dream of secularism had never penetrated beyond the military and a narrow stratum of the urban elite.

The near-impossible task facing Turkey's Westernized intelligentsia before Erdogan had been to break away from the lure of irredentism abroad, and at home to reform Islam into a matter of personal choice separated from the State and distinct from the society. Now we know that it could not be done. The Kemalist edifice, uneasily perched atop the simmering Islamic volcano, is by now an empty shell.

A new "Turkish" policy is long overdue in Washington. Turkey is not an "indispensable ally," as Paul Wolfowitz called her shortly before the war in Iraq, and as Obama repeated last April. It is no longer an ally at all. It may have been an ally in the darkest Cold War days, when it accommodated U.S. missiles aimed at Russia's heartland. Today it is just another Islamic country, an Islamic regional power of considerable importance, with interests and aspirations that do not coincide with those of the U.S.

Both Turkey and the rest of the Middle East matter far less to American interests than we are led to believe, and it is high time to demythologize America's special relationships throughout the region. Accepting that Mustafa Kemal's legacy is undone is the long-overdue first step.



## RADICAL ISLAM IN THE BALKANS

Lee Jay Walker – *The Seoul Times* (Pt. 1)

The former Yugoslavia was engulfed by many civil wars and during the mayhem and carnage it is clear that radical Islam built “a new bridge.” This “new Islamic bridge” was built on foundations which had already been built in Bosnia. However, the 1990s enabled this potent force to enter other areas and to gain ground throughout the former Yugoslavia and this notably applies to Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

Other areas of concern apply to Albania, Montenegro, and parts of Serbia (Sandzak). After all, if the Kosovo model is to go by then the situation looks grim in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, because the Muslim population is rising much more quickly and the same applies to the Raska Oblast in Serbia. At the same time, some Islamic organizations are intent on spreading radical Islam throughout the region and many charities and non-governmental agencies are behind this ongoing reality in the Balkans. Chris Deliso, who is the author of *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: the Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West*, highlights the current threat to the Balkans. This book, and other authors and politicians who are raising this issue, should be listened to. This is a real problem and one that appears to be neglected... For Orthodox Christians, moderate Muslims, and other non-Muslims, the ongoing Islamization is a cause of concern. At the same time nationalism on all sides will continue to divide different ethnic and religious groups and this will merely play into the hands of Islamists who desire to spread their influence.

Also, of major concern is the demographic time-bomb because it is abundantly clear that the Muslim population is growing much faster and if no unitary function exists to bind all ethnic groups and faiths; then past events in Bosnia and Kosovo will continue to haunt the future and in time the destruction of Christian churches and communities will continue, just like what is happening now in Kosovo.

Chris Deliso comments about the spread of radical Islam because he states that “....the proliferation of foreign-funded fundamentalist groups has challenged the power and legitimacy of traditional Balkan Muslim communities in unprecedented and often violent ways. Well-funded groups like the Saudi-backed Wahabbis continue to exploit internal schisms within local communities, while the international administrations in Bosnia and Kosovo have actually strengthened the grip of local mafia groups–business partners of terrorists.”

“Worst of all, the Western peacekeepers’ chronic “don’t rock the boat” mentality has allowed extremist groups to operate unchallenged. Nevertheless, regional demographic and cultural trends, coinciding with an increasingly hostile attitude in the larger Muslim world over Western military actions and perceived symbolic

provocations, indicate that the lawless Balkans will become increasingly valuable as a strategic base for Islamic radicals over the next two decades. Utilizing the post-al-Qaeda tactics of a decentralized jihad carried out through small, independent cells (“leaderless resistance”) while seeking to fundamentally and violently remold Muslim societies, such Balkan-based extremists pose a unique and tangible threat to Western security.”

Alija Izetbegovic believed in an Islamic state and he welcomed radical Islamists into Bosnia. In his book *The Islamic Declaration* it is clear that Izetbegovic desired an Islamic state, and pictures show him smiling with radical Islamists who were bent on slitting the throats of Christians. Izetbegovic stated that “Muslim nations will never accept anything that is explicitly against Islam, because Islam here is not merely a faith and the law, Islam has become love and compassion. He who rises against Islam will reap nothing but hate and resistance.” This is a clear sign that he was never interested in sharing power, but on the contrary, he was warning others either to accept Islamic power or to face resistance and death. Izetbegovic also stated that,

In perspective, there is but one way out in sight: creation and gathering of a new intelligence which thinks and feels along Islamic lines. This intelligence would then raise the flag of the Islamic order and together with the Muslim masses embark into action to implement this order. ... The upbringing of the nation, and especially the mass media – the press, TV and film – should be in the hands of people whose Islamic moral and intellectual authority is undisputed.

What hope, then, for the Christian majority in Bosnia (may soon become a minority because of the Muslim higher birth rate) and for liberal Muslims or non-religious people? In the next quote Izetbegovic sounds like Osama Bin Laden or the Muslim Brotherhood because, as he states,

Islamic movement should and must start taking over the power as soon as it is morally and numerically strong enough to not only overthrow the existing non-Islamic, but also to build up a new Islamic authority... In one of the thesis for an Islamic order today we have stated that it is a natural function of the Islamic order to gather all Muslims and Muslim communities throughout the world into one. Under present conditions, this desire means a struggle for creating a great Islamic federation from Morocco to Indonesia, from the tropical Africa to the Central Asia.

Today many Islamic charities and organizations are intent on spreading the same philosophy in the Balkans and terror networks are operating under surveillance but they are still operating. The dream of Izetbegovic and his lack of concern for the various Christian communities and other minorities are clear for all to see and while he may have died it is obvious that other Islamists share the same vision.

Lee Jay Walker is the Tokyo correspondent for *The Seoul Times*

## THE KRAJINA CHRONICLE (III)

Excerpts from Dr. Srdja Trifkovic's book on the history of the Serbs in today's Republic of Croatia, published in February 2010 by the LBF

### The Great War and Its Fruits

In the decades preceding the First World War Austria-Hungary was in a state of latent crisis. Its mosaic of nationalities could not be held together without radical constitutional reforms, but these were vehemently opposed – for different reasons – by the Hungarian land-owning nobility in the east and by the German nationalists in the west. The Monarchy tried to overcome home tensions through expansion in the Balkans, by occupying Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 and annexing it three decades later. In doing so, however, it turned Serbia from a client state of the Habsburgs – as it had been in the 1880's under King Milan Obrenović – into an enemy under the rival Karadjordjevic dynasty, restored after the coup of May 1903. The Monarchy's attempt to subjugate Serbia by a tariff war (1906-11) proved counter-productive, by enhancing Belgrade's links with Paris and St. Petersburg.

The immediate trigger of the European war in 1914 was the desire of Austria-Hungary to settle accounts with Serbia once and for all, with Germany's backing and protection vis-à-vis Russia. The murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo was an opportunity to be snatched while it was available. This was the culmination of a conflict between Austria's Balkan expansionism and Serbia's implicit *Piedmontism*. When Austria annexed Bosnia, the streets of Belgrade seethed with anger; and then, of course, Serbia did nothing. Serbia's unexpected achievements in 1912-1913, however, inflamed the 'Yugoslav' sentiment in Habsburg lands. Vienna watched with consternation the triumph of Serbian arms against Turkey, then Bulgaria, and the doubling of its territory. It felt threatened; but the threat was not *from* Serbia at all.

The war was not an 'accident.' For years before the assassination in Sarajevo on St. Vitus Day (June 28, 1914, old style) – the Serbs' hallowed *Vidovdan*, the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo – Vienna had sought German support for a 'preventive' war against Serbia. It presented the forthcoming conflict as a test of strength with a wider continental significance. The shots fired by Gavrilo Princip were seen in Vienna as an opportunity to settle the scores with a small but bothersome adversary. With a blank check hastily granted from Berlin, the Monarchy presented Serbia with an ultimatum with extravagant demands. It was not meant to be accepted: Austria-Hungary *willed* the war, and rushed into it, fuelled by a heady brew of crude Serbophobia that blended outright racism and a peculiarly Danubian brand of Orthodoxo-phobia. The popular jingle of August 1914, *Serbien muss sterbien* (see Viennese cartoon,

r.) suggested that the bile of the Frankists was approved by the *Mitteleuropa*.

The consequences were dire for the Serbs of Croatia. Frankist-led rioters took control of the streets of Zagreb, this time with the assistance of the police.

Ivan Frank, their leader, later admitted that the Zagreb Chief of Police Mraović had urged him to murder several prominent local Serbs.<sup>1</sup> The atmosphere of pogrom was fuelled by the nationalist press, which, as a Croat deputy in the Austrian parliament recalled, published invented accounts of attempts made by Serbs to use bombs to wreck trains, railway lines, ships, and other means of communication, in order to justify the draconian measures adopted by the various authorities.<sup>2</sup> "I'll never forget the horrible scene at the end of the first day of mobilization," another Croatian political leader recalled,

... when a huge bonfire was burning at Jelačić Square fuelled by furniture and household items looted from the shops and homes of the Serbs of Zagreb. The bonfire was surrounded by a screaming Frankist mob, greeting with joy those bringing fresh items to feed the fire chanting 'Hang the Serb on a willow tree.'<sup>3</sup>

The war against Serbia proved to be hugely popular among many Croats. Dr. Živko Prodanović, a Serb from Zagreb who was mobilized as a reserve medical corps lieutenant into the 26<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Karlovac, noted that "the entire city was filled with enthusiasm and joy: now was the moment to exterminate the *Vlachs* – down with Serbia!"<sup>4</sup> In his opinion, "the enthusiasm could not have been greater in Vienna or Budapest or Berlin. Some secret force intoxicated even the otherwise moderate Croats." Regimental officers were openly commenting that the war against Serbia was welcome "because a Greater Croatia can be built only on the ruins of Serbia, since there is no room for both." In Zagreb, "thousands of people poured into the streets, festive mood everywhere, Croatian flags flutter from every house, slogans praising our King, Francis Joseph, and demanding the destruction of Serbia."<sup>5</sup> The crowds joined in singing the refrain of a new marching tune, calling for the punishment of Serbia.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>1</sup> *Obzor*, Zagreb, August 11, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Speech by Dalmatian deputy Ante Tresid-Pavičić in the parliament in Vienna; *Novosti* (Zagreb), October 25, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> *Srbe na vrbe* – in Dr. Ivan Ribar, *Iz moje političke suradnje, 1901-1965*. Zagreb: Naprijed, 1965, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> Vasa Kazimirović in *Srpsko nasledje*, No. 10 (October 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Isidor Kršnjavi in *Oesterreichische Rundschau*, October 1, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> "Oj hrvatski hrabri sine, prevezi me preko Drine! Osvećena krv još nije Ferdinanda i Sofije!"

Lynchings of Serbs and lootings of Serb property were common throughout the months of July and August 1914; they were to continue, with lesser intensity, for the rest of the war. Persons marked in police dossiers as *P.V.* (politically unreliable) were fair game. Thousands of prominent Serbs were arrested and summarily deported, and dozens were killed, even before the war against Serbia was declared. As a Serb deputy stated during a debate at the Croatian Sabor in the summer of 1918, "When the war broke out, the prisons were filled to overflowing with Serbs from Zemun to Zrmanja. The cloud of suspicion fell upon them, Serb houses were ransacked and demolished, Serbs massacred and hanged without judge or judgment."<sup>1</sup>

A prominent victim of the pogrom-like atmosphere was Onisim Popović, a farmer from the area of Knin and a popular local mayor. In July 1914 he was mobilized. Within days he was arrested, brought before a court-martial in Sinj on the strength of sworn affidavit laid against him, convicted of treason, and executed by firing squad in front of his regiment. Two years later, however, his accuser fell gravely ill and just before his death publicly confessed that he had falsely accused Popović.<sup>2</sup> Similar episodes were replicated all over Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia. The Serbs were saved from wholesale massacre thanks to the commendable *sang-froid* of the ruling Serb-Croat Coalition administration domestically and then to the sobering news of the Habsburg armies' military defeats externally.

Croatian soldiers fought with dogged determination in Serbia in the summer and fall of 1914. Unlike the mainly Czech soldiers of the Eight (Prague) Corps of the Habsburg army, who were surrendering to the Serbs *en masse* and often without firing a shot, units such as the 42<sup>nd</sup> Zagreb Regiment (known as *Vražja*, "Devil's Own") fought well. They acquired reputation for toughness in combat and for singular cruelty to the civilian population of occupied Serbian territories.<sup>3</sup> The bloodiest battle involving almost solely Serbs and Croats on both sides was at Gučevo, where the 13<sup>th</sup> Zagreb Corps was badly mauled. Losses were severe on the Serbian side too: 700 men of the Rudnik Detachment entered the fray, but only 50 remained fit to fight a week later. In December 1914, the 79<sup>th</sup> (Jelačić) Regiment, composed mostly of Croats, fought to the bitter end at Torlak, on the outskirts of Belgrade, while securing the rear of the retreating Austrian-Hungarian units.

Having suffered humiliating defeats in Serbia in 1914, Austria-Hungary focused its war effort on the Russian front. But after the Allied landings at Gallipoli in April 1915, Germany could no longer ignore Serbia and the Danubian link to Turkey any further; and after the fall of

Russian Poland Germany was free to act. By October Serbia was doomed: Field Marshal August von Mackensen led the attack from the north while Bulgaria entered the war in support, and cut off Serbia's southern flank.<sup>4</sup> The campaign crushed Serbia but it did not destroy the Serbian army, which, though cut in half, marched across Albania to the coast. Allied ships kept the Austrian navy at bay, and 150,000 Serbian soldiers were evacuated. Following recuperation and complete rearmament by the French, these troops re-entered fighting on the Salonika Front where they won a decisive victory against Bulgaria in October 1918.

For the remaining three years of the war Austria-Hungary deployed its South Slav conscripts mainly on the Italian front. Serbs, Croats and *Bosniaken* fought hard to prevent Italy from gaining the borders promised by Entente powers, which included most of Dalmatia. In an ironic twist, both Serbs and Croats fought the Italians under the Habsburg banner, although for different ends. They were ably commanded by Field Marshal Svetozar Borojević von Bojna, son of a Serb *Grenzer* officer from the village of Umetići near Kostajnica and the highest-ranking South Slav in the history of the Habsburg army. It can be argued that Borojević (I.) was the second most prominent Krajina Serb, after Tesla.



As the war entered its decisive stage in the winter of 1917-1918, the future of the Monarchy was becoming uncertain. The Allies were prepared to see Serbia expand into Habsburg lands with large Serb populations, such as Bosnia and Vojvodina. Until the war's last year they did not envisage the creation of a *Yugoslavia*, let alone complete dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. President Wilson's Fourteen Points (January 1918) provided for 'autonomous development' for the Monarchy's nationalities, rather than sovereignty outside its framework.<sup>5</sup> Yet Wilson's espousal of self-determination was a revolutionary doctrine that could not be easily contained. It accelerated competing aspirations among the smaller nations of Central Europe and the Balkans that hastened the collapse of transnational empires and gave rise to ethnic conflicts and territorial disputes that remain unresolved.

President Wilson was an enthusiastic supporter of South Slav unity: the United States was the first great power to recognize the new state in January 1919. But the unification of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes came too late.

<sup>1</sup> Srgjan Budisavljević in the *Sabor*, August 1, 1918. *Novosti* (Zagreb daily), August 2, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Onisim Popović was posthumously rehabilitated in 1917.

<sup>3</sup> In the regiment's 10<sup>th</sup> company Sgt. Josip Broz, later better known as Tito, was decorated for bravery on the Serbian front.

<sup>4</sup> After conquering Belgrade Mackensen erected a monument to the Serbian soldiers and declared, "We fought against an army that we have heard about only in fairy tales."

<sup>5</sup> Ivo Lederer. *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, Chapters 1-2.

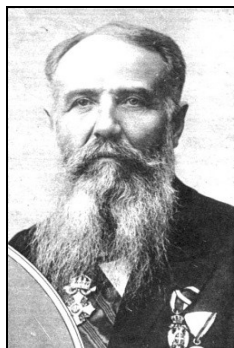


When the powers rushed to defeat Russia in 1854-56, or to obstruct Russia in 1877-78 – the era of Germany's and Italy's own unification – it might have worked. Half a century later, the process of separate cultural development and formation of separate, and even competing, South Slav national identities had gone too far to be recalled. South Slav fusion would not happen merely because Allied strategists needed a big state in the Balkans to obstruct German influence in future, or because a handful of Allied scholars and journalists thought they understood the Slav racial destiny better than their Viennese counterparts.

In chaotic times, when sound policy is most needed, it is pretty ideas and tempting concepts that rule, however good or bad. The supra-national, essentially cultural 'Yugoslav' model, founded on the ideas of the Enlightenment and mixed afterwards with the experiences of a romantic era, was already obsolete and anachronistic by the time it was applied:

Adopted mainly by the liberal intelligentsia among the Serbs and Croats, the Yugoslav idea could not be implemented in the undeveloped, predominantly agrarian society, impregnated by various feudal traditions, religious intolerance, and often a xenophobic mentality. It was the example of an 'imagined community.' Both Serbs and Croats used linguistic nationalism in the form of a Yugoslav idea as and when needed, as an auxiliary device in respect of their own national integrations... [T]he Serbs and the Croats used it with fundamentally different interpretations of its real content.<sup>1</sup>

Serbia was concerned with mere survival during the first months of the Austrian onslaught, but soon she articulated war aims that envisaged the "liberation and unification of all our brothers Serbs, Croats and Slovenes," as was officially stated in the temporary capital, Niš, in December 1914. The declaration was made in the heady days after Serbia's early victories, when it may have seemed that the downfall of the Dual Monarchy was only a matter of time. Yet from a realist perspective, Serbia's adoption of a radical program of South Slav unity – at such



an early stage of the war, and despite the enthusiasm with which some of those 'South Slav brothers' fought against Serbia – was an act of bravado, if not outright folly. It created difficulties for the Serbs and their Allies even before Italy came into play in April 1915, by making the possibility of a separate peace with Austria less likely.

The Serbian Prime Minister, Nikola Pašić (l.), acted as the

project's strong supporter just before and during the war. He claimed that South Slav unity would bring peace and stability to the Balkans by creating "one national state, geographically sufficiently large, ethnically compact, politically strong, economically independent, and in harmony with European culture and progress." Pašić's estimate was wildly optimistic, yet he went out of his way to win over the Allies for the South Slav project. To that end in early 1915 a 'Yugoslav Committee' came into being, composed of Croat, Serb and Slovene political émigrés from Austria-Hungary who had made their way to Western Europe. They lobbied the Allies on the (often exaggerated) plight of the South Slavs in the Dual Monarchy and propagated their unification with Serbia into a single state.

The creation of Yugoslavia was not the result of a wide Serbian grassroots movement. In Serbia, like in Croatia, the peasantry constituted the largest social stratum, but its role and status were different. As in Bulgaria and Greece, during the Ottoman rule the unity of *ethnos* and the Orthodox Church was legally ingrained in the administrative structure of the Empire based on the ethno-religious community, the *millet*:

In a further development of the new, mostly secularized nation-states (Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria), the *millet* legacy was no obstacle to their liberal and democratic transformation. For the Orthodox nations in the Balkans the model of the *millet* proved itself to be a solid base for transition to the standard European type of national integration – the *nation-state* model, based on the experience of the French Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

The Serbian peasant fought for, lost, and regained independence in a series of bloody battles against the Turks (1804-1815). He fought under popularly acclaimed leaders whose autocratic tendencies were firmly resisted. He distrusted bureaucratic authority and titles, hated inherited privilege identified with alien rule, and took priestly sermons in his stride. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Serbia, unlike Croatia, was characterized by considerable social mobility. By the end of the century the country's politicians were accountable to an electorate of all adult males. It was homogeneous, ethnically and socially. (This would change in 1912, with the incorporation of Kosovo and Macedonia.) After 1903 it had an established constitutional monarchy and a rapidly developing economy able to withstand Austria's 'Customs War.'

Serbia's considerable national dynamism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and its military efforts in 1912-1913 were chiefly directed at liberating *Serbs* from foreign rule, and resulted in a doubling of the Kingdom's territory (below). The wider South Slav issue, in so far as it figured at all among common people, was perceived as an extension of that task. Ordinary Serbians did not feel any need for a wider South Slav context (Illyrianism, Yugoslavism) to

<sup>1</sup> Dušan T. Bataković, "The National Integration of the Serbs and Croats." *Dialogue* (Paris), No. 7-8, September 1994.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*



Rene Albrecht-Corrie, *Italy at the Paris Peace Conference*. Archon, 1966

protect and assert their identity. Having completed the process of emancipation from the Ottoman Empire (1878) and the parallel expulsion of the Turks and other Muslims, they no longer needed 'the Other' in order to define their identity and to articulate their objectives. The 'political nation' was one and the same as the nation itself.

Millions of Serbs in the devastated, occupied Serbia, and further hundreds of thousands in the Serbian Army overseas or in captivity, were fighting and praying for a resurrected and enlarged *Kingdom of Serbia*. They had no idea what their leaders were up to, and they were never going to be asked. Further millions of South Slavs living in Austria-Hungary had no idea that some 'Yugoslav Committee' existed in the first place, let alone that it presumed to negotiate political settlements of far-reaching significance on their behalf. The Committee was, in effect, asking to share power with the Serbian government:

Pašić... could not constitutionally share his or his cabinet's power. Nor could he speak for another Serb Allied combatant, Montenegro. But he was convinced that in dealing with the Allies, the South Slavs would be most effective if they spoke with one voice.<sup>1</sup>

The Corfu Resolution of 1917, eventually agreed between the government of Serbia and the Yugoslav Committee, proposed the creation of a "constitutional, democratic, and parliamentary monarchy headed by the house of Karadjordjević," to be called the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Under its terms Serbia was not to be given any privileged status or veto power in the new state, such as had been granted to Prussia in 1870. Both Serbia and Montenegro were supposed to cease existing as

sovereign states. This outcome was a major political success for the Croats on the Committee. It reflected Pašić's weak position after the revolution in Russia (March 1917), which he saw as adverse to Serbia's strategic interests and to his own political position.

The decision of the Serbs to reject the Treaty of London (map, 1.), sign the Declaration and to present it to the Allies as its official program – even though a 'greater Serbia' was in all likelihood readily available – was an act of folly, or conceit, or generosity; in some measure, it was all three. It prompted a delighted Ante Trumbić, the Croat chairman of the Yugoslav Committee, to declare that Serbia's sacrifices "for the union of our three-named people" gave her "the absolute right to be called the Yugoslav Piedmont." Britain and France would have preferred the 'small' solution, which would consist of a greatly enlarged Serbia united with Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Adriatic coast south of Split.

This solution could be accommodated with the Treaty of London, under which Italy was to get Dalmatia north of Split. Such an outcome would have left Croatia with a mere 'four counties' of its heartland around Zagreb. It would have been squeezed between two enlarged, victorious neighbors, Italy and Serbia. Without much coastline, bereft of friends or mentors, it would have had an uncertain future. The political class in Zagreb understood the danger and started looking beyond the Serb-Croat coalition. In the final year of the war, with the deteriorating internal situation in Austria-Hungary, the Yugoslav sentiment started gaining strength. The May 1917 Declaration (*Majska deklaracija*) of South Slav deputies in Vienna heralded the trend, by demanding the union of the provinces where Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs lived in a single state. The qualifier 'under the scepter of the House of Habsburg' was obligatory, but no longer seriously meant.

As the Dual Monarchy struggled to maintain the war effort, in early 1918 South Slav political representatives went a step further and urged the creation of a 'democratically-based state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.' The new wave was driven by the fear of Italy's ambitions if the collapse of the Monarchy caught Croatia alone. The Yugoslav solution was seen as an obvious means of protecting Croatian interests. As the Monarchy crumbled in the autumn of 1918, the Croat-Serb Coalition was the driving force behind the founding in Zagreb of the National Council, an *ad hoc* body that proclaimed the 'State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs' in the South Slav lands of the Monarchy. The vote in the Sabor to sever all links with Hungary and Austria (29 October 1918) came amidst a mix of -panic and euphoria.<sup>2</sup> When external military-political developments presented the unification of South Slavs as an immediate prospect, the

<sup>1</sup> Alex N. Dragnich, *Serbs and Croats: The Struggle in Yugoslavia*. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1992, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bogdan Krizman. "Stvaranje Jugoslavije" in *Zbornik: Iz istorije Jugoslavije, 1918-1945*. Belgrade, 1958, pp. 147-164.



decision-makers in Croatia could claim but a limited mandate for the fateful steps they were taking. The political enfranchisement of Croatia's peasantry took place only after 1918, in the Yugoslav state. That state might have had a happier start if things had not been rushed, but at the time of confusion and fear in the fall of 1918 Croatia's political leaders could see no alternative to an urgent union with Serbia on the basis of the Corfu Declaration.

The significant dissenting voice was that of Stjepan Radić. He warned the delegates, as they were departing for Belgrade, that they had no mandate: "You are roaming like geese in the fog!"<sup>1</sup> Radić's quip about *guske u magli* became famous, but at the time he was isolated and rebuked by other Council members for 'rabble rousing.' Their main concern was to get the Serbian army in, to keep the Italians out, and to keep the Reds down.

The delegates from Zagreb informed Regent Alexander Karađorđević, on the last day of November, of the National Council's decision in favor of the unconditional union. On 1 December, 1918, the Regent accepted the offer of the National Council and proclaimed the establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Yugoslavia was born.

### *The Unhappy Yugoslav Experience*

For most Serbs outside Serbia the creation of the Yugoslav state was greeted as a great and glorious event, an act of deliverance pure and simple. As the Serbian Army advanced into Habsburg provinces inhabited by Serbs, it was enthusiastically greeted as the harbinger of a new, expanded Serbian state. Patriotic speeches at

assemblies that greeted the Serbian army in Knin, Petrinja, Otocac or Glina were filled with the imagery of Tsar Dušan, Kosovo and Karađorđe, of Serbia's sacrifice, resurrection and glory. There was no mention of 'Yugoslavia' and little apparent awareness that it was an option. This boundless enthusiasm of the long-suffering Serbs west of the Drina river, in the two decades that followed, turned into their deep disappointment with the Yugoslav experiment.

The trouble started immediately. On 2 December 1918 the Frankists called for action. Demonstrations broke out in Zagreb; several people died in the ensuing clashes with the National Council authorities. Within days Stjepan Radić started a campaign for a plebiscite and the establishment of an independent Croatia. He sent messages to President Wilson and other Allied powers seeking help in the creation and recognition of a 'Croatian republic.' In subsequent years Radić appealed to or attempted to involve Lloyd George, the League of Nations, France, Austria, Italy, and the Soviet Union (where he subsequently joined the 'Peasant International'). His attempts to internationalize the Croat problem, though unsuccessful, aggravated the internal situation. The Serbs were dismayed: the state was formed, very much on the insistence of 'the Croats,' and 'they' were already trying to tear it apart.<sup>2</sup>

From the moment of its creation at the end of the Great War until its disintegration just over seven decades later, Yugoslavia was constantly beset by national problems. Those problems were dealt with in different ways and with different intentions, on average once every decade: from the centralism of the Vidovdan Constitution to King Alexander's imposition of Yugoslav integralism of 1929; from the quasi-federalism of the Serb-Croat Agreement of 1939 to the bloody Stalinist dictatorship of 1945; from quasi-federalism of the 1953 FNRJ Constitution to the confederal "Amendments" of 1968; and finally, from the chaos of Tito's last period – embodied in the Constitution of 1974 – to the doomed attempt of his successors to keep the show on the road, amidst the collapse of communism and the emergence of the unipolar world order. The national problems which proved impossible to solve, in the first, royalist Yugoslavia (1918-1941) were no less difficult in the second, communist one (1945-1991). As Dr. Michael Stenton has pointed out, the Serbs were trapped into an appearance of responsibility for what was as much imposed on them as it was on others; "Yugoslavia was a country desired by the few, not the many." Structural deficiencies of each and every Yugoslavia, as a state and as a polity, were fundamental, and precluded the emergence of a viable political system. This was the root cause of its speedy and ignominious collapse in 1941, and its final, violent disintegration in

<sup>1</sup> Ferdo Šišić (1920), p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Alex N. Dragnich. *The First Yugoslavia: Search for a Viable Political System*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983, p. 19.



1991. The issue of Serb-Croat relations was at the core of the Yugoslav problem. Those relations were poisoned by the creation of a common state. The act of unification, and the decades that followed, drew a deep wedge between the two seemingly similar nations separated by one language. Serb-Croat relations could have remained ambivalent but tractable, had they not been forced under the same roof.

**T**he collapse of Austria-Hungary presented the South Slavs with unification as a fact of practical politics that did not allow any delay. The leaders of the Croats insisted that the Serbian Army take immediate possession of Dalmatia and the Littoral, which they saw as the only effective insurance against Italy's aspirations. All parties were forced to improvise. This created a problematic legacy for the new state's internal development, just as its territorial disputes created the potential for conflict with its neighbors. Neither internal solutions, such as the centralist Constitution of St Vitus's Day (*Vidovdanski ustav*, 28 June 1921), nor external settlements, embodied in the Paris treaties, were effective in providing stability at home or security abroad.

The results of the first election (November 28, 1920) displayed a sharp division between Serbs and Croats in the electoral districts of today's Republic of Croatia: eight counties (*županije*) in Croatia-Slavonia and two districts in Dalmatia. One member of parliament was to be elected by approximately 30,000 voters in each of the 56 constituencies on the basis of proportional representation: seats were allocated to party lists on the basis of their share of the vote. The Serbs' vote was divided between the Radical Party of Nikola Pašić, which was perceived as more supportive of specifically Serb interests, and to the newly-created Democratic Party of Svetozar Pribičević, which stood for the 'state-enhancing,' centralist Yugoslavism.

The Croats gave their votes *en masse* to the Croatian People's Peasant Party (*Hrvatska pučka seljačka stranka*, HPSS) of Stjepan Radić, turning it into the undisputed political representative of the nation as a whole. Radić declared that his success was tantamount to a referendum in favor of the "neutral Croatian republic" that he advocated at the time, and changed the party's name to the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (HRSS). He continued to boycott the constituent assembly, insisting on a prior 'Croatian constitutional pact' that would lead to an agreement with Belgrade based on a confederal arrangement, taking account of the 'historical boundaries' of Croatia prior to December 1, 1918. The Radical-Democrat coalition, which formed the government after the election, rejected Radić's demand without ado and supported the unitary model. Both parties were opposed to the notion of "historical boundaries" as bound to cause divisions.

Prime Minister Pašić was reputed to hold the view that Serbia should not accept any solution that would fall short of the Serbs' unification within a single political entity. He was not *a priori* against the federal model, but insisted that

it would have to be based on the principle of ethnicity: "Croats by themselves, Slovenes by themselves, Serbs by themselves, and then we can draw boundaries and make a federation... Splitting up the Serbs to facilitate the creation of Croatia... would be unjust to our people."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of debates in the Constituent Assembly deputies belonging to the Radical Party were specific in their rejection of Radić's demands. One deputy argued that "we can never accept that Serbs remain under non-Serb authority, even if it is under the fraternal Croatian authority."<sup>2</sup> Another pointed out that the principle of the will of the people had to be extended "to the Serb people of Srem, Lika, and Banija."<sup>3</sup> The Radicals, not enthusiastic about the unitary Yugoslav concept to start with, were prepared to talk about the borders; but they envisaged a plebiscite in the predominantly Serb-inhabited areas "so that those areas can be taken out and remain with the greater state community, while the reduced Croatia and Slavonia could include Medjumurje, northern Adriatic islands, and possibly Baranja."<sup>4</sup> Democratic Party leader Svetozar Pribičević saw Radić's demands as a backhanded attempt to turn the Serbs in a future confederalized Croatia into a minority, and to achieve the long desired hegemony over them:

He believed that this outcome could be prevented in a unitary state, without provincial boundaries, in which Serbs, Croats and Slovenes would rule "equally, with equal rights over the entire state." That position was embodied in the constitution, adopted by the Assembly with a simple majority of votes.<sup>5</sup>

Given Serbia's century of independence, its war record, and the Serbs' numbers, some degree of its predominance in the new state was not unexpected; but ineptly applied in the centralist framework, it appeared as hegemony to many non-Serbs. The Serbian political establishment failed to see that most Croats had accepted the new state out of necessity rather than conviction. With Radić's electoral success it became clear that they would have preferred a sovereign state of their own, just as most Serbs – had they been asked – would have preferred an expanded, strong and secure Serbia to the new amalgam that was forced upon them. By opting for the centralist concept the Serbian establishment erred by default. Challenges of nation building, of obtaining and defending recognized borders, of establishing a single currency, of

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Milenko Vesnić. *Narodni glas*, April 29, 1926, 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Miroslav Spalajković, in *Stenografske beleške Ustavotvorne skupštine*, May 12, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Branislav Gligorijević, "Politički život na prostoru RSK (1918-1941)" in *Republika Srpska Krajina*, Belgrade 1996, p. 302.

<sup>4</sup> "Our Constitutional Question": address by Lj. Jovanović at the Radical Party assembly, *Samouprava*, November 21, 1921, 1-5.

<sup>5</sup> Gligorijević, op. cit. p. 302.

regulating economic, educational and judicial systems, and above all of solving issues of multi-ethnicity, were immense. They were temporarily concealed behind the fiction of 'one nation with three names.' They demanded a departure from the well-established pre-war patterns of political action; but old habits and wishful thinking prevailed, on all sides, in the early years of the new state.

The legacy of different cultural, political and religious traditions, obvious in the case of Serbia and Croatia, was underestimated. This legacy, uneven economic development and different aspirations of the three 'tribes' of the newly-promulgated 'nation,' could not be overcome by a centralist constitution and unitarist slogans. Such differences were at the root of the political conflict in the country, which appeared to revolve around the issue of centralism. Belgrade was inclined to view the new state as a continuation of pre-1914 Serbia, and advocated centralism on the premise of national, 'Yugoslav' unity. The Croats, in turn, knew historical rights and legal agreements, contracts, *Pakta*, *Ausgleichen* and *Nagodbas*... devices based on a long tradition of seeking greater self-rule that were fundamentally opposed to the centralist concept.

Some Croats, too, were advocates of Yugoslav integralism, especially in Dalmatia, which was threatened by Italian irredentism, but their numbers and influence were small. To most ordinary people inhabiting the Krajina crescent – both Serbs and Croats – the slogans of 'national unity' did not make much sense. Serbs accepted them half-heartedly, Croats not at all. In preceding decades they had lived side by side or in mixed communities, mostly in peace, often uncomfortably; yet after 1848 at the latest they did not consider themselves one and the same people. Assimilationist claims by Starčević et al. only served to deepen the gap: they forced the Serbs to articulate and assert their goals. Likewise, after December 1918 centralism enhanced integration on the Croat side and bred opposition to the very concept of the new state.

For most Serbs in today's Croatia the creation of Yugoslavia was seen as the solution to their problems, the fulfilment of their aspirations. The result was a 'national demobilization' on the Serb side, leaving it up to the state itself to take care of national interests. On the other side,

Croats were only beginning their national mobilization focused on the idea of the Croatian state within those boundaries that, allegedly, Austria-Hungary would have granted them, had there been a 'Yugoslav' unification under the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1922 Radić spelled out in his party program the basis of future order as a confederation ... with the Serbs in a greater Croatia thus created reduced to the status of an ethnic minority, with ... municipal autonomy in areas where they lived.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gligorijević, op. cit. p. 303.

The institution of French-style parliamentary democracy, well known to Serbia prior to 1914, did not provide an adequate venue to most Croat politicians groomed under the Habsburgs. They tended to assume an *us-and-them* posture in all dealings with the state authority. The inheritance of times past became apparent in an almost reflexive treatment of Belgrade as if it were Budapest. The Serbs' response was insistence on centralism. The result was a deadlock, sealed with the general election of 1923. The Serbian political establishment did not grasp the nature of the problem it faced. It continued to behave as if the Croat storm would somehow blow itself out, as if Radić were merely an opposition politician in pre-1914 Serbia. Both sides contributed to an almost permanent political crisis throughout the first decade of the Kingdom, even after Radić's apparent *volte-face* in 1925 when he accepted the legitimacy of the state and joined government. Even then, political parties and institutions proved incapable of developing a viable political system in a fundamentally flawed political entity. Its leadership after 1929, in the period of King Alexander's personal rule, brought neither stability nor happiness to his fourteen million subjects.

The new state's external challenges were acute. The most vexing problem concerned Italy. The Italians were unwilling to give up what had been promised to them in London in 1915 as a reward for their entry into the war on the side of the Allies: Dalmatia with its hinterland and most major Adriatic islands. To their dismay, in December 1918 the Italians found that this enemy territory became, by the act of unification, an 'Allied' land. Rome came to regard the Yugoslav state as an unwelcome successor to Austria in the eastern Adriatic, a rival and potential enemy, even though Mussolini regretted the ascendancy of Croat Italophobia over the traditional Serb affection for Italy.<sup>2</sup>

The coalition between Radić and Pašić collapsed after a year, in April 1926. Radić accused his government colleagues of corruption, while Pašić complained of Radić's disloyalty and nationalist demagoguery. Pašić died only months later, while Radić, having gone into opposition, entered into another unlikely alliance in 1927, with none other than Svetozar Pribićević, the veteran leader of the Serbs in Croatia and an advocate of centralism in the early years after unification. By the late 1920s, however, he was in opposition both to the Radicals and to King Alexander. With the efforts of these two odd allies parliamentary obstructionism degenerated into virtual paralysis of the democratic process. Virulent recriminations and scenes of mayhem in the *Skupština* were a frequent spectacle thereafter. The tension culminated in June 1928, when a Radical deputy from Montenegro, Puniša Račić, shot five HSS deputies, including Radić. Two were killed on the spot, one of them Radić's nephew Pavle.

<sup>2</sup> *Documenti diplomatici italiani* (DDI), 7 ser. IV, No 59. Bodrero to Mussolini, 7 July 1925; No. 73; 24 July 1925.

The bloodshed caused shock in the country and abroad. By the end of the year a political paralysis had set in. The political system, less than a decade old, was not functioning. On 6 January 1929 King Alexander suspended the Constitution and assumed personal rule, thus effectively acknowledging the failure of a decade-long attempt to devise a workable political system based on the model of parliamentary democracy imported from Paris.

The collapse of the parliamentary system coincided with growing political radicalism throughout Europe and the beginning of a worldwide economic crisis. The failure of the attempt to nurture a degree of political consensus in Yugoslavia, with the Croatian question at its core, was profoundly important for the country's future. For six



subsequent years, the Kingdom was run on authoritarian lines in an effort to develop from above a feeling of 'Yugoslav' national unity. The power of King Alexander (I.) was exercised through the civil service, with the army in the background. The Croatian political leadership naturally opposed the King's course.<sup>1</sup> Its opposition was invigorated by the formal change

of the name of the state to Yugoslavia and the introduction of the administrative system based on nine *banovinas*, administrative units that bore no relation to historic provinces. Their boundaries cut across traditional and ethnic lines. This, and an insistence on the concept of the 'Yugoslav nation' were seen as further steps away from federalism that would respect the individuality of Croatia.

Following King Alexander's assassination in Marseilles in October 1934, the monolithic character of the Croat opposition was in sharp contrast to the disarray of Serb political parties. To Radić's successor Vladko Maček, the Croat question was the *alpha* and *omega* of all political activity. Everything had to be examined through the prism of achieving national objectives. On the other hand, to the fragmented Serb opposition the re-establishment of democratic institutions and parliamentary life was a prerequisite of any long-term reform of the state. The Croatian opposition was always *national*, while the Serbian opposition remained *political*.

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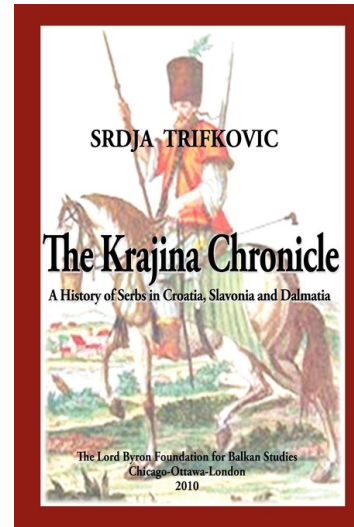
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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ljubo Boban, *Maček i politika Hrvatske seljačke stranke, 1928-1941*. 2 Vols. Zagreb: Liber, 1974.

## PRAISE FOR *THE KRAJINA CHRONICLE*

This pioneering work takes the reader through more than half a millennium of the rich and tragic history of the Krajina Serbs. They endured an attempt to exterminate them in 1941-45 that horrified even the Germans. Most recently they were ethnically cleansed from Croatia, aided and abetted by the Clinton Administration. Dr. Trifkovic ably shines the light of truth on this, a crime that is still largely ignored in the West.

**Doug Bandow**, former Special Assistant to President Reagan



Dr. Trifkovic has written a long overdue history of the Serbian warrior farmers who for centuries formed the first line of defense against Islamic incursions into Europe. It is a story of heroism and tragedy. It ends with mass expulsion of the Krajina Serbs in 1995 from their ancestral lands, abandoned by their fellow Serbs in Belgrade and former allies abroad. This excellent book is essential reading for anyone who seeks to understand the often complex and violent history of the Balkan powder keg.

**James Bissett**, former Canadian Ambassador in Yugoslavia

This comprehensive study provides the best explanation yet of the fact ignored by most media and Western governments during the 1990's Balkan upheavals: that rather than being bent on conquering the lands of other peoples, the Serbs in what is today's Republic of Croatia were actually trying to hold on to their historical native soil. It casts light on one an egregious violation of human rights that continues to be ignored by the "international community" – the right of the ethnically cleansed Krajina Serbs to return to their homelands.

**Col. Dr. Ronald Hatchett**, Schreiner University, Texas

This book brings together in one short volume episodes of European and South Slav history which are known only in fragmentary form.

**Dr. Michael Stenton**, Royal Naval College Britannia



## MASS GRAVE OF HISTORY THE VATICAN'S WWII IDENTITY CRISIS

Julia Gorin<sup>1</sup>

**T**he controversy over the canonization of Pope Pius XII concerns whether he spoke out enough against the slaughter of Jews during World War II. But that question is a red herring when trying to grasp the big picture of the Vatican's role during the war.

The real question is whether the Vatican supported the world order, or at least aspects of it, that the Third Reich promised to bring, a world order in which dead Jews were collateral damage -- which Pius indeed regretted. The answer can be found in a region of Europe that is generally ignored despite being the nexus of world wars: the Balkans.

The Catholic Church was looking for a bulwark against expanding, ruthless, church-destroying communism, but in doing so it supported a Croatian movement called Ustasha, which rose to become the genocidal regime of Nazi satellite Croatia.

American historian Jared Israel points to a February 17, 1941 *New York Times* article which reported that the archbishop of Zagreb (Croatia's capital), Alojzije (Aloysius) Stepinac, was holding conferences in Vatican City "seeking the freedom of Catholic priests detained in [pre-Nazi] Croatia in connection with the circulation of... 'Free Croatia!' pamphlets, attributed to Ante Pavelic." Pavelic, who once criticized Hitler for originally being too soft on the Jews, was the founder of the fascist Ustashes, who were engaging in terrorism all over Europe to "liberate" Croatia from Yugoslavia. He famously said, "A good Ustasha is one who can use a knife to cut a child from the womb of its mother." Israel explains the significance of the understated Times article: "The arrested priests were agitating for a fascist coup d'etat," and if these had been rogue priests, "the Vatican would have disciplined them and perhaps issued a statement condemning them; it certainly would not have [held] top-level conferences to manage their defense."

At the time, Pavelic was being harbored in Mussolini's Italy -- where his Ustasha soldiers were being trained -- after France sentenced him to death for masterminding the 1934 double assassination of Yugoslavian King Alexander I and French foreign minister Louis Barthou. When Hitler invaded Yugoslavia in April 1941, Pavelic was activated and became fuehrer, or "Poglavnik," of the new, clerical-fascist Croatia.



<sup>1</sup> Published in *The Jerusalem Post* on February 22, 2010. The Lord Byron Foundation is pleased to welcome Ms. Gorin (above), a prolific author, as a new member of its Board.

Archbishop Stepinac held a banquet for Pavelic, blessed the Ustasha leader and regime, calling them "God's hand at work," and the following month had Pavelic received by Pius XII. This was four days after the massacre in the town of Glina, where the Ustashes locked hundreds of Serbian Orthodox inside their church and burned it down, as became standard practice in Pavelic's Independent State of Croatia (known by its Croatian acronym NDH). Pius XII received Pavelic despite a Yugoslav envoy's request that he not do so, given the atrocities taking place.



In July of that year, Pavelic's minister of education, Mile Budak, publicly outlined the purification process, already being implemented against Serbs: Kill a third, expel a third, convert a third.

That August, more than a thousand Serbs had gathered inside another Glina church for conversion, after which Zagreb police chief Bozidar Corouski announced, "Now that you are all Roman Catholics, I guarantee you that I can save your souls, but I cannot save your bodies." In came Ustasha henchmen with bludgeons, knives and axes, killing all but one man -- Ljuban Jednak -- who played dead, then stole away from a mass grave.

Pius and Pavelic continued exchanging "cordial telegrams," as author Vladimir Dedijer -- former cochairman of Bertrand Russell's International War Crimes Tribunal -- wrote in his 1992 book *The Yugoslav Auschwitz and the Vatican*. The Croatian Catholic press consistently published approving articles about the regime.

In his new book *The Krajina Chronicle: A Short History of Serbs in Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia*, Dr. Srdja Trifkovic writes,

A part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy became de facto accomplices, as did a majority of the clergy. The leading NDH racial 'theorist' was a clergyman, Dr. Ivo Guberina... He urged Croatia's 'cleansing of foreign elements' by any means. His views were echoed by the influential head of the Ustasha Central Propaganda Office, Fr. Grga Peinovic. When the anti-Serb and anti-Jewish racial laws of April-May 1941 were enacted, the Catholic press welcomed them as vital for 'the survival and development of the Croatian nation'... Archbishop of Sarajevo Ivan Saric declared... 'It is stupid and unworthy of Christ's disciples to think that the struggle against evil could be waged... with gloves on.'

In an unusual move, Germany entrusted Croatia with running its own concentration camps, without oversight.

Shamefully, clergy members took a voracious dive into the bloodbath, serving as guards, commanders and executioners at the 40 camps, most famously Jasenovac, the Holocaust's third-largest yet least spoken-of camp. There, they killed Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and anti-fascist Croats. On August 29, 1942, a friar from the monastery of Siroki Brijeg, named Petar Brzica, won first place for killing the most Serbs in the shortest time, boasting more than a thousand throats slit in one night.

Historian Carl Savich quotes an AP report stating that "a priest from Petricevac led Croat fascists, armed with hatchets and knives, to a nearby village. In the 1942 attack, they butchered 2,300 Serbs." Testimony from a survivor of that February 7 massacre, Selo Drakulic, reads: "Prior to killing the adults, unborn children were violently cut from their mothers' womb[s] and slaughtered. Of the remaining children in the village, all under the age of 12, the Ustasas brutally removed arms, legs, noses, ears and genitals. Young girls were raped and killed, while their families were forced to witness the violation and carnage. The most grotesque torture of all was the decapitation of children, their heads thrown into the laps of their mothers, who were themselves then killed."

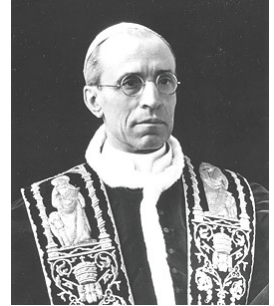
Archive photos of sadism that would make horror filmmakers blush survive today, including Ustasas displaying an Orthodox priest's head (r.) and a woman missing her eyes. In their 1991 book *Unholy Trinity: The Vatican, the Nazis and the Swiss Banks*, reporter Mark Aarons and former Justice Department attorney John Loftus corroborate the grisly Croatian crimes, as does *Genocide in Satellite Croatia 1941-1945* by Edmond Paris: "The Italians photographed an Ustasha wearing two chains of human tongues and ears around his neck."



It has been 60 years, and the world still doesn't know the story of wartime Croatia, where not only did the Vatican not speak out against crimes, not only was it complicit in the genocide of a million people, but it subsequently never expressed remorse for the spilled Orthodox blood as it's done for Jewish blood. Because the world never demanded it. Which points to the same apprehensions that have dogged Jewish groups about the Vatican's genuineness, especially with its reluctance to open archives about Pius's World War II conduct.

One can't help wondering whether the Vatican as an institution was silently cheering the decimation of its

Orthodox rival. Stepinac, who was photographed blessing the Ustasas before an upcoming battle or slaughter, reported in May 1944 the good news about 244,000 forced conversions to Pius (r.). (Pius himself might have caught BBC broadcasts such as on February 16, 1942: "The Orthodox are being forcibly converted to Catholicism and we do not hear the archbishop's voice preaching revolt. Instead it is reported that he is taking part in Nazi and fascist parades.") Observing the liquidation of Croatia's Orthodox, Heinrich Himmler's second-in-command, Reinhard Heydrich, wrote a February 17, 1942, letter to Himmler stating, "It is clear that the Croat-Serbian state of tension is not least of all a struggle of the Catholic against the Orthodox Church."



It is not Jews to whom the Church owes the biggest apology over World War II, but Serbs. If by not speaking out about Europe's Jews Pius hoped to avoid endangering millions of Catholics, what could have been the reason for not speaking out about Croatia, which itself horrified the Nazis to the point that German and Italian soldiers started shielding Serbs from Ustasas? And what would have been the risk to the faithful inside Catholic Croatia?

A July 5, 1994, *Washington Times* article attempted to get to the bottom of why so little is known of the Croatia chapter of World War II, and why Jasenovac is so rarely spoken of:

For years the gruesome details... remained officially taboo. Although documents and eyewitness accounts were at first ignored, and then mysteriously removed from international archives... [i]t now appears that a vast international conspiracy involving Marshal Josip Broz Tito... [and] the United Nations, some Vatican officials and even Jewish organizations strove to keep the Jasenovac story buried forever... Tito's watchwords were 'brotherhood and unity,' and to pursue these high goals he tried to erase the chapter of Jasenovac. The West generally went along, particularly after Tito broke with Stalin in 1948. The Vatican wanted to protect Roman Catholic Croats, who had been willing Nazi proxies in the Balkans. The silence of Jewish organizations is less easily explained... [The late Milan Bulajic, of Belgrade's Genocide Museum, met] officials of the Holocaust Museum [in Washington to] find out why no one mentions the Yugoslav Jews who died there. He did not seem to get a clear-cut answer... When Yugoslavia fell apart in 1991... troops of newly independent Croatia briefly captured the site and, according to Serbian sources, blew up whatever was left of the camp and destroyed all remaining records.

An apology is also owed to Catholic clergy whose appeals the Church ignored. Bishop Misic of Mostar, Herzegovina, asked Stepinac to use his influence with authorities to prevent the massacres. And Bulajic wrote of a group of Slovenian Catholic priests who were “sent to the Jasenovac camp because they refused to serve a mass of thanksgiving to Ustasha leader Ante Pavelic... One of the imprisoned Slovenian priests, Anton Rantasa, managed to escape... On 10 November 1942, he informed [Stepinac and the papal legate Ramiro Marcone]... on the crimes of genocide being perpetrated at Jasenovac. He was told to keep silent.” Similarly, historian Savich writes,

It bears noting that Stepinac was tried and convicted... by Roman Catholic Croats... under the regime of a Roman Catholic Croatian... Many of the historians who documented the Ustasha NDH genocide were Roman Catholic Croats, such as Viktor Novak.

In his 1950 book *Behind the Purple Curtain*, Walter Montano wrote of the Stepinac trial: “A parade of prosecution witnesses testified at Zagreb, on October 5, 1946, that Catholic priests armed with pistols went out to convert Orthodox Serbs and massacred them... Most of the witnesses were Croat Catholic peasants and laborers.”

Indeed, just as blame for tacit approval of a genocide and subsequent escape for the perpetrators can’t fall merely on “a few individuals,” it’s more than a few individuals who deserve credit for the opposite. For example, Jews were saved by the entire Catholic nation of Italy (in its sovereign pre-1943 form), including the commandant of the Ferramonti camp, who “said his job was to protect the inmates, not kill them,” as UPI reported in 2003. Not surprisingly, Italian soldiers also intervened in the slaughter of Serbs by Croats and Axis-aligned Albanians in Kosovo.

Unfortunately, rather than distancing the Church from Stepinac, the Vatican-centered newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano* responded that the “trial was a trial against the Catholic Church.” New York cardinal Francis Spellman outrageously named a parochial school in White Plains after Stepinac, and in 1952 Pius XII made him cardinal. Then, despite requests by the Simon Wiesenthal Center to hold off until the cardinal’s wartime role could be better assessed, Pope John Paul II beatified Stepinac in 1998.

Croatian groups (and some Croatian Jews) even appealed to Yad Vashem to give Stepinac the Righteous Gentile title, since he saved some Jews on condition of conversion. To which Yad Vashem had to reply in almost absurd terms: “Persons who assisted Jews but simultaneously collaborated or were linked with a fascist regime which took part in the Nazi-orchestrated persecution of Jews, may be disqualified for the Righteous title.”

The same should be said to Pope Benedict about his efforts to canonize Pius XII. Even as it denied Stepinac’s well known association with the Ustasha, Pius’s Vatican served as the conduit for smuggling the Ustashas out after

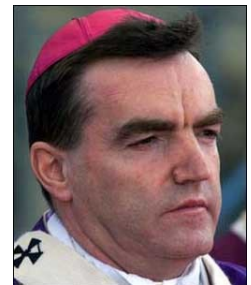
the war. According to declassified U.S. documents introduced in a recent class-action lawsuit against the Vatican Bank for laundering Ustasha loot – used to finance the Ustashas’ escapes and postwar sustenance – Pavelic was hidden in a Croatian Catholic monastery in Rome, where the office of the American Counterintelligence Corps on September 12, 1947, reported that “Pavelic’s contacts are so high, and his present position is so compromising to the Vatican, that any extradition of subject would deal a staggering blow to the Roman Catholic Church.” From Rome, Pavelic fled to Argentina, where he became a security adviser to Juan Peron, who issued thousands of visas to fleeing Ustashas.

Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* in 2006 reported that Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, Pius’s undersecretary of state and later Pope Paul VI, learned of “the investigation [that US Army counterintelligence agent William] Gowen’s unit was conducting. Montini complained about Gowen to his superiors and accused him of having violated the Vatican’s immunity by having entered church buildings, such as the Croatian college, and conducting searches there. The aim of the complaint was to interfere with the investigation.”

The Vatican’s ongoing World War II identity crisis was evident last September when, after prodding from then Croatian president Stjepan Mesic, Zagreb Archbishop Josip Bozanic (r.) paid a 60-year-late visit to the Jasenovac memorial site, the first official representative of the Croatian Church to attend the annual memorial ceremony. Instead of an apology, Bozanic defended Stepinac and the Church, and used the long-awaited moment to also mourn the massacre of fleeing Nazis by partisans in Bleiburg, Austria - where an annual, Croatian government-sponsored commemoration ceremony is well attended by Catholic dignitaries. Bozanic was not reproached by the Vatican, which also doesn’t reproach the Croatian Church’s tolerance of the ubiquitous pro-Nazi symbolism in that country, which reemerged as Croatian “culture” in the early 1990s.

President Mesic himself had to ask the Vatican in 2008 to pay closer attention to a bishop and military chaplain who regularly reads a violent poem that ends with the Ustasha saying: “For the fatherland, ready.”

This is the Balkan country that’s on the fast-track for EU membership. That’s where decades of evasion, deflection and cover-up get us, something that contributed to John Paul II’s own neglect of Jasenovac -- the Balkans’ largest killing grounds -- during his three trips to Croatia. It also leads us to last December’s spectacle of Pope Benedict having a private audience with Marko Perkovic, lead singer of the notorious clerical-fascist Croatian pop band Thompson, which regularly invokes “For the fatherland,







ready” and had an ode to Jasenovac. Many Thompson fans engage in Nazi salutes [above], and nuns and politicians attend the “patriotic” concerts.

People bury history in order to repeat it. John Ranz, chairman of Buchenwald Survivors, in a 1996 letter to *The New York Times*, wrote:

Ironically, with US help, [1990s president] Franjo Tudjman was able to accomplish last year what the Nazis and their World War II collaborators could not, namely the uprooting of the entire Serbian Krajina population... The World War II fascist regime of Ante Pavelic is being officially rehabilitated in Croatia today. Streets and public buildings are being named after the architects of the Holocaust, Nazi-era currency revived, while the numbers and scope of the human carnage are being rewritten.

Had history not been dumped into a mass grave, Western publics might have been allowed a fuller understanding of the Balkan wars, given that by 1991 it was “normal to kill Serbs,” as Zarko Puhovski, of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, put it. When Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia in June 1991 – and the Vatican was the first to recognize it despite a UN resolution warning this could imperil a peaceful solution – survival dictated that the Serbs secede from the secessionists. “A few days after the Croats declared war,” writes historian Israel, Pope John Paul II “sent a letter to the Yugoslav government demanding it not suppress the rebellion.” And so it was that in 1991 three Croatian soldiers saw “truckloads of bloated, stinking bodies, mothers and children blown up by bombs, and someone wearing a necklace made of ears,” Reuters reported on January 28, 1998.

And so it was that president Tudjman was a prominent guest at the inauguration of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993, despite saying that “900,000 died, not 6 million,” and ranged from calling Jasenovac a “myth,” to blaming Jews for the killings there, to offering a formal apology for the 20,000 Jews killed there – but not for the hundred thousand Serbs. And so it was that in 1995, as Croatian soldiers with Ustasha insignia cleansed the Krajina

of Serbs – under US air cover – the sole Glina massacre survivor Ljuban Jednak once again fled for his life, dying a refugee in 1997.

And so it was that in 2005, when then Hague prosecutor Carla del Ponte learned that indicted 1990s war criminal Gen. Ante Gotovina was being sheltered in a Franciscan monastery in Croatia, the Roman Catholic lady found herself “‘extremely disappointed’ to encounter a wall of silence from the Vatican” which, she told the *Daily Telegraph*, “could probably pinpoint exactly which of Croatia’s 80 monasteries was sheltering him ‘in a few days.’” And so it was that at the 2006 inauguration of the spruced-up Jasenovac memorial, the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Efraim Zuroff observed

the absence of any identification of the individuals responsible for the crimes described... I was amazed that none of the speakers mentioned... Croatia’s greatest achievement in facing its Ustasha past -- the prosecution and conviction of Jasenovac commander Dinko Sakic... Could it be that the punishment of such a criminal is so unpopular, even in today’s Croatia...?

And so it was that Sakic (r.) was buried last July in full Nazi uniform, with a Father Vjekoslav Lasic -- one of many who hold masses in honor of Ante Pavelic -- officiating. “Independent State of Croatia is the foundation of today’s homeland of Croatia,” Lasic said. “Every honorable Croat is proud of the name Dinko Sakic.” When no Croatian official of stature spoke out against the display, Zuroff called on the president to condemn the organizers and remind Croatian society that Sakic brought it shame, not pride.

In enshrining the Church’s divided World War II loyalties by canonizing the ambivalent pope at the time, the Church would be announcing to the world what it’s made of. But the Church is better than the sum of its nastier parts. Canonizing Pius XII would be unjust to Catholics who did more than he, and an insult to Catholics everywhere. Pius shouldn’t be demonized, but he shouldn’t be sanctified.



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## THE DESTRUCTION OF SMYRNA

Srdja Trifkovic<sup>1</sup>

BOOK REVIEW: *Paradise Lost: Smyrna 1922 — The Destruction of a Christian City in the Islamic World* by Giles Milton. New York: Basic Books, 464 pp. \$27.95

The literature in the English language on various long-established communities eradicated by the horrors of the 20th century is largely dominated by the Jewish holocaust. Accounts of other disappeared communities—of Italians in today's Croatia, the Poles of Galicia, the Serbs of the former Habsburg Military Border, or Germans everywhere east of the Oder-Neisse line—are available in the languages of the victims, but seldom in reliable English.

Over the past decade competent authors have started to fill the gap. Pamela Ballinger's *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* is a scholarly yet readable account of the Istrian-Dalmatian exodus of Italians after 1945. In *A Terrible Revenge: The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans*, Alfred-Maurice de Zayas provided a comprehensive treatment of his subject.

The destruction of the Greek and other non-Muslim communities in Smyrna and the rest of Asia Minor in 1922 was the worst exodus in history hitherto, affecting up to two million people. The event is now largely forgotten outside Greece and Turkey, but good historical sources regarding it have long been available. U.S. Consul George Horton's gripping, highly personal eyewitness account, *The Blight of Asia*, was republished in paperback in 2003. Marjorie Housepian Dobkin's *The Smyrna Affair* and *Smyrna 1922: The Destruction of a City* are near-definitive studies, conclusive on the Turks' culpability for the great fire. Michael Llewellyn Smith's *Ionian Visions: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922* deals with the diplomatic and military background to the great powers' rivalry that tempted Greece to go *va banque* with the Megali Idea. A.J. Hobbins' long essay "Paradise Lost: The Merchant Princes and the Destruction of Smyrna, 1922" offers an insight into the life of the European-descended Levantine *haute bourgeoisie* of the city on the eve of its destruction.

English journalist Giles Milton centers his account of Smyrna's demise on the same numerically insignificant but influential group ... The people of Smyrna provide a roughly sketched backdrop. The momentous political and military events leading up to the catastrophe are compiled from secondary sources, with undue emphasis on the importance of David Lloyd George. The broader social, cultural and religious context of the Pontic tragedy is absent or only hinted at. The title should have been *The Charmed Life and Demise of Smyrna's Merchant Dynasties*.

The author's account of the Levantine elite's attitudes and way of life in the early 20th century oozes with sentimentalism. The descriptions of the "rambling villas and pleasure gardens" of the exclusive suburb of Bournabat, of the inhabitants' lavish parties, yacht races, and rigidly hierarchical mores, are pure *Gone With the Wind*. One villa had "scores of reception rooms as well as a gilded ballroom, vast dining room, drawing room and library... a spectacular view of the Magnesia Mountains... the great entrance hall [was] mounted with scores of trophies and stuffed animals." Another "most lovable house" had "the unstudied charm and graciousness which comes from the daily use of beautiful things" and required "a regiment of servants to keep it going." Yet another was famous for its opulent interior, with 38 rooms, two spectacular crystal chandeliers in the great atrium, an imported iron stair balustrade ("one of the marvels of the colony"), and four grand pianos in the ballroom.

The life of the occupants, as lovingly reconstructed by Milton, focused on a never-ending sequence of "gala extravaganzas," tea parties, yachting, hunting, clubbing, and charitable events. Their *noblesse oblige* entailed wiring electricity to some fishermen's cottages here, endowing an orphanage there. Their broadmindedness included employing workers "regardless of race or nationality,"—presumably unlike their fellow capitalists in other lands and in other times. Between the lines of Milton's admiring account, these Levantine plutocrats come across as somewhat vulgar philistines, indifferent to the suffering of their fellow Christians, and haughtily convinced of their own invincibility. He does not mention whether they took note of the massacre of "more than 200,000 Armenians... between 1894 and 1896"; but when thousands of Greeks were massacred and tens of thousands summarily evicted from their homes in Adramyttium and all along the coast between May and August 1914, "they remained surprisingly sanguine in the face of such violence. Although these events were occurring less than an hour's ride from the city, they were confident that they would be safe."

After Turkey entered the fray in October 1914, the Bournabat dynasties suffered some "minor alterations to their daily routines" (such as not receiving daily newspapers from London and Paris) while continuing to live "in their own little private Raj." Milton mentions in passing the abolition in 1914 of the "Capitulations," the trading privileges extorted from the Turks by Britain and France that enabled untaxed expatriate merchants to grow immensely rich. He glosses over the fact that their wealth did not reflect any particular entrepreneurial flair: It depended entirely on the submissive decrepitude of the declining Ottoman Empire. It is a measure of Milton's lack of understanding of the city's ethnic and social divisions that he terms the gloating of the Turks at this news "a strange reaction," and faults them for failing to "consider the many benefits the Levantines had brought to Smyrna."

<sup>1</sup> Published in the March 2010 issue of *Chronicles* (abbreviated).

During the Armenian genocide of 1915—which Milton too tactfully refers to as “deportations”—Smyrna “remained untouched” thanks to the Ottoman governor, Rahmi Bey, who appears to have been well looked after by the rich. Also in 1915, their British, French, and Italian citizenships notwithstanding, the wealthy Smyrniots were present “at a glittering party hosted by the Austrian consul” to honor the German inspector-general of the Ottoman army, Liman von Sanders. In 1916, as more than 200,000 Greeks endured the horrors of deportation from the Aegean coast to windswept inner Anatolia, “Smyrna itself was once again spared,” none of the Levantines were deported.

In 1917, “the year of Passchendaele and stagnation in the mud of Flanders,” the rich were “assembled in the Smyrna Opera House—all in black tie and tails—for the premiere performance of Verdi’s *Rigoletto*.” After the Armistice in 1918, the released Allied POWs plunged into the city’s lively nightlife; one noted that “the feminine element from the age of about thirteen overdresses like a professional.” The arrival of the Greek army in May 1919 was “a time of heady excitement” for the Levantine rich, with tennis parties, bathing expeditions, and outings by moonlight. Even when the Ottoman sultanate began to metamorphose into nationalist Turkey in 1920, “[t]he fact that eastern Anatolia had erupted into violence did not impinge on the way they lived their lives... They turned a blind eye to everything that was happening in the hinterlands of the country.” During the dark winter (for everyone else) of 1920-21, “[t]he inherent gaiety of the Levantine families continued to suggest that all was well” as the Girauds, one of the most prominent among them, “toasted the New Year at their spectacular fancy-dress ball.” Even on the eve of the disaster, the news of the Greek army’s collapse was “dismissed as idle gossip in the city’s brasseries and clubhouses.” After all, “[t]rade had picked up since the dark days of 1921 and the port was once again busy.” One week and 100,000 Smyrniot lives later, the merchant elite was safely on board Allied warships—or else providing hospitality to Mustafa Kemal and his fellow architects of the city’s disaster.

The character of the community becomes clear from its attitude during the three months between the outbreak of the war in Europe and Turkey’s fatal decision to join the Central Powers. Before the war, one British vice consul described the Levantine expatriates as “more exuberantly patriotic than we allow ourselves to appear at home”—yet only 18 young men from the passport-holding community volunteered to fight for the cause of their presumed mother country. As for the rest, “[t]he offspring of the Levantine families displayed less willingness to volunteer immediately, preferring to bide their time and see how events evolved.” Their biding went on until the war’s end. When push came to shove, the Whitalls, Patersons, Woods, Girauds, and Van der Zees showed that—far from having

“divided loyalties”—they had none, except to their own wealth, safety, and unearned privileges.

The subtitle to the book’s British edition, “The Destruction of Islam’s City of Tolerance,” is a politically correct misnomer: Milton (thankfully) does not attempt to advance any claim that Smyrna’s unique pre-1922 mix and way of life owed anything to Islam as such. He does make a feeble attempt, however, to place *Paradise Lost* in the context of the Ottomans’ supposed spirit of diversity. He approvingly quotes an “Austrian savant” who left the city in 1874 with the conviction that, “in matters of religion... [the Turks] are the most tolerant people of the Orient.” In reality, Smyrna’s prosperity and polyglot diversity were an exception to the dreary, brutal Ottoman rule. [ ... ]

The final third of *Paradise Lost* deals with the tragic week that started on September 6, 1922, as the battered remnants of the Greek army passed through Smyrna heading for the ships that would take them back to Greece. Hundreds of thousands of Greek and Armenian refugees came next. The ensuing disaster could be and was forecast, but—as Milton points out—Mustafa Kemal and his cohorts quite deliberately decided not to prevent it, while the governments of Britain, France, Italy, and the United States preferred not to get involved.

Five centuries of persecution culminated in the Christians’ final expulsion, not under a sultan-caliph, but under the founder of the Turkish republic, who abolished the caliphate and separated the mosque and state. A horrifying massacre ensued, on par in ferocity, but on a far greater scale, with that inflicted on Constantinople after its fall to the Turks in 1453. Milton’s account, while unoriginal, is comprehensive and accurate. The nobility and bravery of such individuals as Asa Jennings, which Milton reveals, were redeeming sparks in a very dark night.

The aftertaste of *Paradise Lost* is bitter. The parvenu glitter of the Levantine elite could not conceal that, to survive and prosper, the Smyrniots had to learn how to be obsequious to their political masters, insincere with each other, and unfeeling with their less fortunate coreligionists. Together with a polyglot Constantinople community of Ottoman officials, Greek and Armenian merchants, South Slav dragomans, Albanian bodyguards, and Young Turk conspirators, they formed the core of the urban “Ottoman culture” in the final decades of the caliphate. It had a certain charm, but it was neither pleasant nor creative. Its demise became inevitable when raw Turkish nationalism arose from the ruins of Ottoman collapse. The final chapters of Giles Milton’s book come across as a long-overdue indictment of the murderous character of that nationalism.

*Paradise Lost* should be treated as an historical novel rather than history. Its many faults notwithstanding, it is an easy and interesting book to read. To paraphrase Marshal Bosquet, *C’est magnifique mais ce n’est pas l’histoire*.



## BREAKING YUGOSLAVIA

### Interview with Diana Johnstone<sup>1</sup>

Diana Johnstone is the author of *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions*. She contributed a chapter to the LBF collection of essays *Kosovo: The Score, 1999-2009*.

*What was your view of Yugoslavia before its dissolution? What was admirable about it, and what was not?*

Every society has its good and bad points, and I am not qualified to make an overall judgment of such a complex society as former Yugoslavia... In Tito's lifetime it was a personal dictatorship. Tito didn't run everything, but he had the right of final decision in case of conflict. The harshest repression was reserved for communists loyal to the Soviet Union after Tito's break with Stalin in 1948. But repression is not all that is wrong with a dictatorship, a system which encourages hypocrisy and lack of recourse for unfair or unwise measures. Nevertheless, despite the undemocratic regime, it was always easy to find critical intellectuals in Yugoslavia who thought for themselves and said what they thought.

Yugoslavia's "self-managed socialism" was certainly an improvement over the Soviet model. It provided near-full employment, which is what people most acutely miss today. It is noteworthy that many former critics of the socialist system today declare that the so-called free market democracy they have now is much worse... If, in 1990, there had been a national referendum on the subject, I have little doubt that an overwhelming majority of Yugoslavs would have voted to maintain the federation. But elections were held only within the various republics, enabling the bureaucracies of Croatia and Slovenia to promote their secessionist projects.

*You argue that Western governments bear major responsibility for the wars in the former Yugoslavia by encouraging the secession of the constituent republics. Was the West not merely supporting their self-determination?*

There is nothing in international law or diplomatic practice that justifies secession from an existing state on grounds of "self-determination". There is great confusion and hypocrisy on this point. First one can point to comparisons: Why did the United States not support the struggle of the Basques against Spain, which has been going on much longer? Why did they not support Corsicans against France, Scottish nationalists against Britain, the Kurds against Turkey – a violent struggle with deep historic roots, including Western promises to Kurds after World War I? Why did they not support the separatist "Padania" movement that was growing at that time in northern Italy,

seeking separation from the poorer south of Italy – a movement that had a great deal in common with the Slovenian separatism? The answer is obvious: the U.S. does not support separatist movements in countries they consider their allies. The targets are either countries they consider rivals, like Russia or China, or countries that are too weak to resist, and where they can obtain totally dependent client states from the breakup – which is what happened with Yugoslavia.



Second there are the simple facts of the matter. History, to start with. Former Yugoslavia was not formed by conquest, but by a voluntary association after World War I as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Croats and Serbs speak essentially the same south Slavic language, and Slovenian is quite similar. This association was sought by Croatian leaders who wished to leave Austro-Hungarian rule and who actually coined the word "Yugoslavia", meaning land of southern Slavs. Since Serbia already existed as an independent country, Serb leaders were wary of this union, but accepted it under urging from the Western powers, France and Britain.

After Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia entered an extremely clumsy phase of political transition, distorted by severe economic regression caused by the debt crisis. Since Tito's method of rule had been to respond to unrest by decentralization rather than by democratization, the local Communist parties in each republic of the federal state, as well as the autonomous provinces within Serbia, enjoyed considerable autonomy. Rivalry between the bureaucracies undermined national unity. The dynamic thus tended toward dissolution rather than democratization. This trend was encouraged by outside forces (German and Austrian organizations represented by the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Otto von Habsburg, who was very active in this phase) which supported secession of the parts of Yugoslavia which had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire before World War I, Croatia and Slovenia.

Now, assuming that "self-determination" would lead to dissolution of the federation, there was the crucial issue of how this would be done. The Serbs interpreted the constitution to argue that Yugoslavia was a political union of three peoples – Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, who would have to negotiate the terms of secession. The Slovenes and especially the Croats maintained that the constituent units were the "republics" in the boundaries set for them by Tito during World War II, which left sizeable Serb populations in both Croatia (about 12%) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (a relative majority up until the 1971 census). Germany persuaded the United States and the European Union to accept the Croatian claim without ever seriously considering the Serbian argument. This was unacceptable to

<sup>1</sup> Published on March 12 by [www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca)

the Serb minority in Croatia who had been persecuted by Nazi-sponsored independent Croatia during World War II, and whose “self-determination” was thereby denied. This was the cause of the civil war in Croatia.

Both Slovenia and Croatia enjoyed full equality and autonomy within Yugoslavia. In no way could they be considered oppressed minorities. Tito was a Croat as was the last functioning prime minister of Yugoslavia, Ante Marković, not to mention a disproportionate number of senior officers in the Yugoslav armed forces. As the richest part of Yugoslavia, Slovenia’s desire to secede was based almost solely on the desire to “jump the queue” and join the rich EU ahead of the rest of the country, which it succeeded in doing. The Croatian secessionism movement was nationalistic, with strong racist overtones, and was strongly supported by a Croatian diaspora with crucial political influence in Germany and in Washington (in the office of Senator Bob Dole). In the absence of any legal justification for unnegotiated secession, nationalist leaders in both Slovenia and Croatia provoked units of the Yugoslav army stationed in their territory and used the inevitable response as their justification for seceding. This succeeded only because it was supported by Western governments and media – otherwise the Yugoslav army would have held the country together. Instead, the collapsing Yugoslav army effort to preserve the federation, as it was supposed to do, was denounced as a “Serbian invasion”. Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic handled this crisis badly, but he did not, as accused, instigate the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

*You have suggested that there are certain continuities between the policies of the German government and the objectives of the Third Reich in the Balkans. Please describe those continuities...*

Even before the Third Reich, the government of Kaiser Wilhelm and even more the democratic Weimar Republic supported self-determination of ethnic minorities, and the Federal Republic of Germany continues to do so today, for reasons of national interest and ideology. The “revenge” against Serbia, and detachment of former Austro-Hungarian territories within Yugoslavia, harks back to World War I. Of course, the Third Reich cut Yugoslavia into pieces, and on that point the 1991 German policy was more than disturbingly reminiscent, it was essentially the same. Germany has reasons for wanting to bring Slovenia and Croatia into its own sphere of influence. In a sense I am more critical of Western governments which followed the German policy without bothering or daring to evaluate the situation clearly for themselves. As this turned out to be disastrous, they had to blame the devil Milosevic for everything, in order to cover their own mistakes.

*Why did the U.S. so strongly support Bosnian secession?*

I think this support was the product of a number of factors. One, pointed out by former State Department official George Kenney, was the influence of media reports,

in turn heavily influenced by a propaganda campaign run by Ruder Finn public relations agency on behalf of the government of Croatia, and later the Bosnian Muslims, which succeeded in presenting the Serbs as “new Nazis.” This public relations campaign was hugely successful with the public and politicians alike. American foreign policy-making can be vulnerable to the propaganda of lobbies, and the Croatian lobby was active and influential. The Bosnian lobby was smaller but very well connected, notably through Mohammed Sacirbey, the American son of a colleague of Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic who chose him to be Bosnia’s ambassador to the United States...

A second element was that since Germany was emerging as the sponsor of Croatia, the United States could have its own client state by supporting the Bosnian Muslims. Some US leaders thought that siding with the Muslim party in Bosnia would make a good impression in the Muslim world, counterbalancing US support to Israel. The late influential Congressman Tom Lantos, who was chairman of the House foreign affairs committee, called US support for the Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo independence “just a reminder to the predominantly Muslim-led governments in this world” that “the United States leads the way for creation of a predominantly Muslim country in the very heart of Europe.” Support to Bosnian Muslims was strongly advocated by the pro-Israel neo-conservatives. It is hard to believe that neo-con guru Richard Perle served as advisor to Muslim leader Izetbegovic at the Dayton peace talks with no private agenda of his own. The Clinton administration found it natural to do a favor to the Afghan mujahidin (which then included Osama bin Laden), whom they had supported and used against the Soviet Union, by helping them fight the Orthodox Christian Serbs in the Bosnian civil war.

But perhaps the main cause should be seen in the main effect: to reassert United States supremacy in Europe. The August 1995 NATO bombing “marked a historic development in post-Cold War relations between Europe and the United States”, wrote Richard Holbrooke in his memoirs, citing columnist William Pfaff who alone seemed to get the point: “The United States today is again Europe’s leader: there is no other.”<sup>1</sup> By the policy of an “even playing field”, the United States created a stalemate between the Bosnian parties which allowed Holbrooke to take charge of what he called “the Bosnian end game” at Dayton. The United States was able to pose as “the indispensable nation”.

*Some have accused you of downplaying or even denying the Srebrenica massacre?*

First of all, I think these accusations are designed primarily to distract public attention from the main focus of my writing on Yugoslavia, and in particular my book, *Fools’ Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions*.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, Random House, 1998, p.101.

That focus is political. As the title indicates, my book is not about Srebrenica. It is about the historical and political background, and the deception and self-deception involved in media coverage and Western policy-making that led to the illegal NATO war of aggression in 1999. The only reason I wrote about Srebrenica at all is that I could not very well avoid the subject, but I stated from the start I was not writing about what happened at Srebrenica (on which I claim no special knowledge) but about the political uses of it. I am not a war correspondent but a political analyst. The trouble is that some people do not welcome political analysis of the Balkan conflicts, and use Srebrenica to ban it. If mothers are weeping, how can anyone engage in such a heartless exercise as political analysis? Judging complex events solely on the basis of images and emotions, which are often deceptive, is infantile. But we are living in a period of infantile regression.

For instance, the wives and mothers of the men who were killed deserve sympathy, but is their individual grief any greater if their son was one of several hundred or one of several thousand? Why this insistence on a particular number, which has not been clearly proved? Isn't it possible, and even likely, that the genuine grief of mourning women is exploited for political ends? How many people are in a position to know exactly what happened at Srebrenica? Where are the documents, where are the photographs? Yet people who know nothing are ready to consider it scandalous if someone says openly, "I don't know exactly what happened." I do know that from the very start of the Yugoslav tragedy, there were significant massacres of Serb civilians (for instance, in the town of Gospić in Croatia) that were studiously ignored in the West. But I do not care to engage in competitive victimhood.

As for Srebrenica, certainly any execution of prisoners is a war crime and deserves punishment, even if the figure of 8,000 is certainly exaggerated, since it includes men who died in ambush while trying to escape, or even men who actually did escape. But whatever the number of victims, a single massacre of military-age men while sparing women and children cannot in my opinion be correctly described as "genocide" – unless the term "genocide" is redefined to fit the single case of Srebrenica. And this is precisely what was done by the International Criminal Tribunal on former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. In order to convict General Radislav Krstić (who was not even present at the scene) of complicity in "genocide", the ICTY judges ruled in August 2001 that killing a large number of Muslim men from Srebrenica was "genocide" because of the "patriarchal" nature of their society. Women and children survivors were too insignificant in such a patriarchal society to matter! This preposterous verdict simply confirmed the fact that ICTY is working for those who set it up, choose its judges and pay its expenses: that is, essentially, NATO. It is there to justify the NATO interpretation of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, by putting the entire burden of blame

on the Serbs. Unless an Orwellian future bans free historical inquiry, I am confident that my critical appraisal of ICTY will be justified by history.

*Why did NATO carry out its bombing war against Serbia?*

The essential reason was to save NATO from obsolescence after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, whose supposed threat had been its ostensible *raison d'être*. The United States came up with a new "humanitarian mission", and the large-scale NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 served to prove that NATO could get away with it, without United Nations authorization. This was "the war to start wars". It is regularly cited by apologists as "the good war" which proves that "human rights" constitute the most efficient excuse for aggression. It was indeed a perfect little war, waged safely from the air with all the casualties on the ground, whether Serb or Albanian.

*How do you view the UK's role in the Yugoslav conflicts?*

As absolutely shameful. The British Foreign Office certainly had experts able to understand the complexities of the Yugoslav situation, and indeed the conservative government hesitated. Lord Carrington and then Lord Owen, if supported, might have brokered an early peace in Bosnia. But Tony Blair preferred to strut the stage of "humanitarian intervention," and most of the left swallowed the wild tale according to which the world's most powerful military alliance was henceforth motivated by sentimental concern for the underdog.

*What did you make of the trial of Slobodan Milošević?*

That trial actually aroused my first admiration for Milošević. He defended himself, and his country, with great courage and intelligence, and successfully disproved most of the charges against him, even though he died before the defense could make its case. The ICTY was set up largely to convict him, and would surely have found a way to do so regardless of the evidence. His death spared them that trouble. Of course, Western media failed totally to report fairly on the proceedings.

*You speak of your admiration for Milošević "defending his country" in The Hague. But is there not a wider and more fundamental sense in which Milosevic's rule was by no means beneficial for Serbia? V. P. Gagnon Jr. has written about how Milosevic used war as a tool against movements for democratic reform, by effectively changing the subject to whether people were pro or anti-Serb at any point where these movements became too strong. Karel Turza and Eric Gordy have written about the deleterious effect that Milošević's rule had on Serbian society and culture. Little of this speaks of a man worthy of admiration, even from a Serbian perspective. Was Milošević defending Serbia, or just defending his regime?*

When I said that Milošević on trial in The Hague aroused my first admiration for the man, I was obviously making the distinction between Milošević as President and Milošević as prisoner of a biased tribunal that had been set



up to convict him. However unfortunate his policies as president, he became a victim when he was illegally shipped off to The Hague, in a rather sordid deal between prime minister Zoran Djindjić, who violated Serbian law in the hope of rewards, and the NATO powers, who needed the trial in order to justify their 1999 bombing campaign.

What is meant by *democratic reforms*? Milošević did introduce a multi-party system, which is the basic democratic reform. Whatever his faults, it is by no means clear that his political adversaries in the early 1990s would have been better for the Serbian people than he was. Now that Serbia has Western-approved “democratic” governments, major industries have been sold to Western corporations, the media are more uniform than ever, and the economic situation of the majority of the population has worsened considerably.

Many people in Serbia who hated Milošević when he was in office admired his defense at The Hague. His self-defense was automatically a defense of his country, since the totally arbitrary (and unproven) charge of a “joint criminal enterprise” in effect implicated collective guilt, since the alleged enterprise had no defined limits.

*Little blame for the Balkan wars appears to attach to the Serb side in your account. Yet Bosnian Serb figures have stated publically that there was a drive for a Greater Serbia. Doubtless there have been many attempts to reduce the conflict to nothing more than a case of Serbian aggression, but while correcting for that is it not also important to still leave room for attaching the appropriate level of blame to the Serbian side?*

Testifying at the Milosevic trial, Vojislav Šešelj stated clearly that Milošević was not in favor of Greater Serbia, and that he had slandered him politically for that very reason, because Šešelj himself did favor Greater Serbia. The meaning of “Greater Serbia” is complicated, and I have dealt with it in my book, “Fools’ Crusade”. But Serbs were divided on the matter, and Milošević for one did not advocate a “Greater Serbia”. Milosevic was competing with politicians such as Vuk Drašković and Zoran Djindjić, whom the West considers “democratic”, but who were far more nationalistic than he was. No Serbian politician could be totally indifferent to Serb populations cut off from Serbia by the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, starting in 1992, Milošević signed onto a series of potential peace accords that left Serbs outside of shrinking Yugoslavia, and were incompatible with a greater Serbia.

I do not presume to attach “appropriate levels of blame” to the various Yugoslav parties. I simply point out certain facts, and the only blame that really interests me is that of the Western powers and especially of the United States. That is my responsibility as an American citizen. It is the United States that exploited the tragedy to strengthen NATO, and the people of Yugoslavia who suffered and are still suffering.

*Many of our readers will find it hard to accept your expressing admiration for Milošević. It is well understood that the West portrays its enemies dishonestly (take Saddam’s mythical WMD, for example). But to praise the “courage” of a man widely seen (including by those who are no fans of Western power) as having a lot of blood on his hands goes a good deal further than this. Is your choice of words here really appropriate?*

I am not going to change what I say because many of your readers, as you allege, have a limited capacity to understand the complexities of human character. Of course, all leaders of countries involved in wars can be said to “have blood on their hands”. The stereotype of an inhuman Milošević is a fictional propaganda creation, like the long line of ‘Hitlers’ the West keeps discovering. But supposing the man was utterly ruthless, does that preclude courage? I fear our ‘humanitarian’ age is adopting an unprecedentedly simplistic notion of what people are – either innocent lambs or savage beasts. Look at many of the heroes of ancient tragedy, who were complicated enough to be ruthless and courageous, and often displayed a mixture of good and bad qualities. If we are incapable of recognizing the humanity of our chosen enemies (and Milošević was a chosen enemy, who actually liked the United States where he had lived as a banker, and never even slightly threatened the West), then there can be no peace in the world.

*What have been the consequences for the constituent republics of becoming independent states?*

In general, secession is beneficial to the bureaucrats. Someone who was only a minor official in a large country gets to be Cabinet Minister, or ambassador. So secession was a good thing for members of the bureaucracy in each statelet. It has also been good for a minority who live off crime and corruption. For the rest of the population, it was beneficial primarily to Slovenia, whose leaders succeeded in getting into the European Union ahead of the others. Of course it was not beneficial to the small population of Yugoslavs who were not ethnic Slovenians and found themselves living in Slovenia without any civil status.

Croatia has the advantage of strong German support, but so far this has not yielded all the economic benefits hoped for. Most of the Serb population has been driven out, which is of course satisfying to the racist Croat nationalists, and does not seem to disturb the Western leftist multiculturalists. Otherwise, people who once were citizens of an independent, medium-sized European country find themselves confined in small, mutually hostile statelets, dependent on outside powers, and poorer than before. Outside intervention has served to exacerbate ethnic hatreds, and continues to do so, notably in Bosnia and Kosovo. The political situation of most of the successor states is precarious and further tragedy is almost certain.

## Beyond the Balkans

### BRUSSELS: A PRISON OF NATIONS

Srdja Trifkovic

**N**igel Farage, a British member of the European Parliament, was fined an equivalent of \$4,000 on March 2 for “insulting” the new European Union President Herman van Rompuy and refusing to apologize. In a memorable performance in Strasbourg ten days earlier, the Euroskeptic MEP told the former Belgian prime minister that he had “all the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk”:

We were told that when we had a president, we’d see a giant global political figure, a man who would be the political leader for 500 million people, the man that would represent all of us all of us on the world stage, the man whose job was so important that of course you’re paid more than President Obama. Well, I’m afraid what we got was you... The question I want to ask is: ‘Who are you?’ I’d never heard of you, nobody in Europe had ever heard of you.

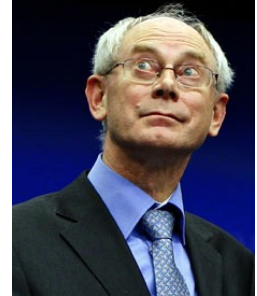
Mr. Farage’s tirade was well worth his ten days’ MEP allowance. It put some spotlight on the inner workings of a monstrous bureaucracy. It gave a welcome boost to the popularity of his UK Independence Party (UKIP), which advocates Britain’s withdrawal from the EU and opposes the Tory-Labour therapeutic-social-democratic duopoly. It provided a rare spark of rhetorical flair in an institution otherwise reminiscent of the Supreme Soviet, circa 1957.

But let us first consider Farage’s passing reference, during his response to Van Rompuy’s inaugural address, to Belgium as a “non-country,” “an artificial construction” which is “breaking up.” The *bien-pensants* were offended with that part of his statement, too, but they cannot refute the facts. Belgium was created by treaty, *ex nihilo*, by the Concert of Europe 180 years ago, mainly on Britain’s insistence as a buffer keeping the Channel ports neutral. (Germany’s violation of Belgian neutrality prompted Britain to join France and Russia in 1914, thus turning yet another European war into the first truly global affair.)

Composed of Dutch-speaking Flemings and French-speaking Walloons, the “country” is less natural and less organically integrated than Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia had ever been. Most of its inhabitants identify with their ethno-linguistic group and feel no loyalty to, or affection for, the state as such. Belgium is an entity with statehood -- albeit with limited sovereignty under the EU writ -- but without nationhood, or shared memories, myths, or epics.

It is noteworthy that the most famous Belgians in history were Eddy Merckx the cyclist, Leon Degrelle the SS *Standartenfuhrer*, and... well, as of some weeks ago, Mr. van Rompuy himself. (Of course, all those 16th and 17th century Flemish painters were as “Belgian” as Peter the

Great was “Soviet,” or Brian Boru *British*). More important is Farage’s exposure of an undemocratic nomenklatura that produces the van Rompys (r.) on demand. Their mindset was aptly summarized by van Rompuy’s own boast in the run-up to the Copenhagen climate summit that we have entered the era of “global governance”: “The climate conference in Copenhagen is another step towards the global management of our planet.” Dixit. That one sentence is the key to understanding this little man, insignificant as he is intrinsically, and grasping the agenda of those who had made him what he is. Van Rompuy owes his position to the enactment of the Lisbon straitjacket -- by hook and by crook-- and to a backroom Franco-German deal.



The European Union is run by a coalition of multicultural fanatics, post-national technocrats, neo-Marxists and crooks. They are committed to a federal superstate, no less brazenly than the Comrades east of the Wall had been committed to the Peoples’ Democracies between 1945 and 1989. In their world, only an EU freed from the obsolete shackles of national parliaments and wily electorates can guarantee the fulfillment of their ideological vision and, more importantly, the protection of their power and privileges in perpetuity.

Once hailed as a mechanism for overcoming deadly rivalries and increasing economic efficiencies, the EU, the institution Van Rompuy “heads,” has morphed into a giant tool of social and political engineering. Its now defunct Constitution pointedly excluded Christianity from the Preamble, but introduced references to “equality” and “non-discrimination,” and invoked the obligation to combat “social exclusion” and respect “diversity.” Brussels is making opposition to the ongoing demographic change of the Old Continent not only undesirable but also illegal -- to the benefit of inassimilable Muslim multitudes, filled with contempt for their host-organism that breeds the urge to conquer it. The term “Eurabia,” introduced as an intellectual concept three decades ago by Amerophobe French intellectuals, is on the verge of becoming real.

Various multiethnic states (imperial Russia, the Habsburg Monarchy, pre-World War II Kingdom of Yugoslavia) have been labeled -- often unfairly -- as “prisons of nations.” That designation applies far more aptly to the European Union. Mr. Van Rompuy may look banal -- heck, he *is* banal -- but that makes him no less dangerous, or evil, than Tony Blair or Joschka Fischer. The “grey mouse” has been blinded by the sudden light, for which all true Europeans owe a word of thanks to Nigel Farage.

# BYRONICA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE LORD BYRON FOUNDATION FOR BALKAN STUDIES

Dr. Srdja Trifković will present his latest book

## **The Krajina Chronicle:** A History of the Serbs in Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia

At:

Dinara Hall, Birmingham, UK on Saturday, May 8, 2010 – 14:00

Ravna Gora Hotel, London, UK on Friday, May 7, 2010 at 19:30

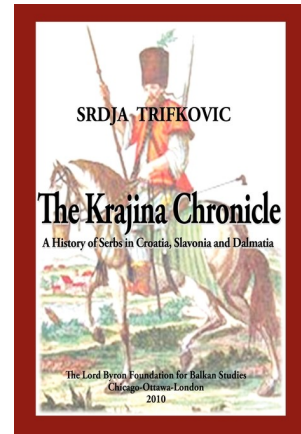
Bonnyrigg, New South Wales on Friday, April 23, 2010 at 19:30

St. Sava's, Adelaide, SA on Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at 19:00

St. George's in San Diego on Sunday, April 18, 2010 at 12:30

St. Sava's in Toronto on Tuesday, March 30, 2010 at 19:30

Holy Resurrection in Chicago on Sunday, March 28, 2010 at 12:30



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**The Lord Byron Foundation  
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*T*his newsletter is not *only* about the Balkans; it is not *only* about Western policy in that region either. It is not only about the problem of globalist *hubris*, nor is it only about the decline of Western civilization. It is about all of the above. Each problem in the equation is inseparable from the rest.

*O*ur Foundation's primary brief is South-East Europe, and its objective is to assert the essential unity of the "Latin" West and "Greek" East; but the problem of the Balkans under the neoliberal order is inseparable from the quandary of America under the Duopoly, or that of Europe "united" under Brussels. Can any meaningful unity of nations sharing European and Christian heritage be restored? To what extent, how, and why has the modern, secular, "post-Christian" West inherited the antipathy of Western Christendom to the carriers of the Byzantine tradition? The purpose of our Foundation, and of this newsletter, is to consider whether such old historical animosities, fanned by new political ambitions, can be countered by the upholders of traditional culture and morality. It monitors the role of the West along the old fault lines of Christendom in the Balkans. Such issues are not merely political. They are as much "cultural" as theological, and they have been political all along. It is on the way we deal with them today that the future of our civilization will depend.