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субота, 11 април 2009 15:30

(Global Research, April 9, 2009)

The successful demonization of the Serbs, making them largely responsible for the Yugoslav wars, and as unique and genocidal killers, was one of the great propaganda triumphs of our era. It was done so quickly, with such uniformity and uncritical zeal in the mainstream Western media, that disinformation had (and still has, after almost two decades) a field day. The demonization flowed from the gullibility of Western interests and media (and intellectuals). With Yugoslavia no longer useful as an ally after the fall of the Soviet Union, and actually an obstacle as an independent state with a still social democratic bent, the NATO powers aimed at its dismantlement, and they actively supported the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, the Bosnian Muslims, and the Kosovo Albanians. That these were driven away by Serb actions and threats is untrue: they had their own nationalistic and economic motives for exit, stronger than those of the Serbs.

Milosevic's famous speeches of 1987 and 1989 weren't nationalistic - despite the lies to the contrary, both speeches called for tolerance of all "nations" within Yugoslavia. He also never sought a "Greater Serbia," but rather tried to maintain a unified Yugoslavia, and when this failed - with the active assistance of the NATO powers - he tried, only fitfully, to allow stranded Serb minorities to stay within Yugoslavia or join Serbia, a matter of obvious "self-determination" that NATO granted to Kosovo Albanians and everybody but Serbs (for documentation on these points, see this Monthly Review article I co-authored with David Peterson in October, 2007). Biased Reporting

Many well-qualified observers of the Bosnia wars were appalled at the biased reporting and gullibility of mainstream journalists, who followed a party line and swallowed anything the Bosnian Muslim (and U.S.) officials told them. The remarkable inflation of claims of Serb evil and violence (and playing down of NATO-clients' violence), with fabricated "concentration camps," "rape camps," and similar Nazi- and Auschwitz-like analogies, caused the onetime head of the U.S. intelligence section in Sarajevo, Lieutenant Colonel John Sray, to state back in 1995 that America has not been so pathetically deceived since Robert McNamara

helped to micromanage and escalate the Vietnam War.Popular perceptions pertaining to the Bosnian Muslim government.have been forged by a prolific propaganda machine. A strange combination of three major spin doctors, including public relations (PR) firms in the employ of the Bosniacs, media pundits, and sympathetic elements of the US State Department, have managed to manipulate illusions to further Muslim goals.

Numerous others made the same point: Cedric Thornberry, a high UN official who investigated atrocities in Bosnia wrote in Foreign Policy in 1996 that By early 1993 a consensus developed - especially in the United States, but also in some Western European countries and prominently in parts of the international liberal media - that the Serbs were the only villains.This view did not correspond to the perceptions of successive senior UN personnel in touch with daily events..[and one kindly soul at UN headquarters] warned me to take cover - the fix is on.

The same point was made by Canadian General Lewis Mackenzie, who insisted that "it was not a black-and-white picture and that 'bad' buys had not killed 'good' guys. The situation was far more complex" (Globe & Mail, July 15, 2005). The same was said by former NATO Deputy Commander Charles Boyd, former UNPROFOR Commander Satish Nambiar, UN officials Philip Corwin and Carlos Martins Branco, and former U.S. State Department official George Kenney. But anybody who parted from the party line was ignored or marginalized.

When George Kenney changed his mind from anti-Serb interventionist to critic, he was quickly dropped by the mainstream media. Journalist Peter Brock, who wrote "Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press," in Foreign Policy's Winter 1993-1994 issue, which documented systematic bias and errors, was viciously attacked and driven into multi-year silence. A reporter like David Binder of The New York Times who refused to adhere to the party-demonization line was soon taken off the beat.

An important part of the fix was dishonest demonization, as with the famous August 1992 picture of Fikret Alic, an emaciated prisoner behind barbed wire in a Serb "concentration camp." But the UK journalists had pushed forward a man who was sick and quite unrepresentative: the barbed wire was around the journalists, not the camp, and it was a transit camp, not a concentration camp. Western journalists went berserk over these alleged camps, but failed to report the Red Cross finding that "Serbs, Croats, and Muslims all run detention camps and must share equal blame." John Burns' Pulitzer for 1993 was based heavily on his interview with an alleged Serb killer-rapist, Borislav Herak, who later confessed that after torture he had recited lines forced on him by his Bosnian Muslim captors.

The joint Pulitzer winner in 1993 was Roy Gutman, who specialized in hearsay evidence and handouts from Croatian and Bosnian Muslim propaganda sources. Gutman never got around to Croat and Muslim camps. His and other journalists' claims about "an archipelago of [Serb] sex-enslavement camps" were spectacular and wrong - ultimately, there were more credible affidavits of Serb than Bosnian Muslim women rape victims. (For an excellent discussion of the wild news reports versus ascertainable facts, see Chapter Five of Peter Brock's Media Cleansing: Dirty Reporting [GM Books, 2005]). All these journalists portrayed the Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic as a devotee of ethnic tolerance; none ever quoted his Islamic Declaration, which proclaimed that "there is neither peace nor coexistence between the 'Islamic religion' and non-Islamic social and political institutions." For an extensive discussion of Izetbegovic's close relations with Iran and commitment to an Islamic state, see John Schindler's Unholy Terror (Zenith Press, 2007), which I reviewed in Z Magazine.
Retaliation Another part of the fix was the failure to pay any attention to crimes that preceded brutal Serb actions. This was frequent, although there certainly were cases where the Serbs (mainly paramilitary forces) struck first. But the tit-for-tat was common and much of it, and many of the mutual fears, were traceable back to the mass murders - disproportionately of Serbs - of World War II, the Nazi occupation, and Croatian fascist Ustasha. This background of truly mass killing was blacked out in the mainstream propaganda system. Most important in recent tit-for-tat was the Srebrenica case, where the background to the Serb behavior in July 1995 was (and remains) ignored. You won't read in the U.S. press the claim by veteran British journalist Joan Phillips that by March 31, 1993, "out of 9,300 Serbs who used to live (in the Srebrenica municipality), less than 900 remain.only three Serbian villages remain and around 26 have been destroyed." ("Victims and Villains in Bosnia's War," South Slav Journal, Spring-Summer 1992 - published in 1993). Many more were destroyed after that, and a 1995 Serb monograph entitled The Book of the Dead listed 3,287 Serbs from the Srebrenica region who were killed in the three years before July 1995. Serb forensic expert Dr. Zoran Stankovic and his team uncovered over a thousand Serb bodies in the Srebrenica area well before July 1995, and General Lewis Mackenzie has stated that "evidence to date suggests that he (Naser Oric, a Bosnian Muslim commander in Srebrenica) was responsible for killing as many Serb civilians outside Srebrenica as the Bosnian Serb army was for massacring Bosnian Muslims inside the town." Stankovic and the Serb authorities could never get the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) or Western media interested in these massacres.

A microcosm of the bias of the ICTY can be seen in its treatment of Naser Oric. When a video turned up in 2005 showing an alleged Bosnian Serb execution of six Bosnian Muslims (its provenance and authenticity uncertain), this received widespread and indignant attention in the West, and was alleged to be a "smoking gun" proving the 8,000 executed at Srebrenica. But there are more clearly authentic videos that Oric showed to Toronto Star journalist Bill Schiller and Washington Post reporter John Pomfret, in which Oric brags about the Serb killings and beheadings displayed for them, and claims to have killed 114 Serbs in just one of these incidents. Pomfret had a single back page article on this, Schiller two, and otherwise silence reigned. Nobody said this was a "smoking gun" proving that Serb victimization in the Srebrenica area was massive and that the supposed "demilitarization" of

that "safe area" was a fraud. There was no comment when it took the ICTY till 2002 to indict Oric, charging him not with killing but failure to control his subordinates in six cases, and ultimately throwing out the case on a technicality. The ICTY never took evidence from Schiller or Pomfret, and failed to use the videos they had seen as part of the evidence.

The ICTY also failed to take the evidence of Ibran Mustafic, a Bosnian Muslim official in Srebrenica, who in his recent book, Planned Chaos, declares Oric to be "a war criminal without par," and describes personally observed gruesome murders by Oric. French General Philippe Morillon, was also not called, although he had testified in the Milosevic trial, claiming that Oric "took no prisoners," and that his mass killings from the "safe area" had been the key factor in explaining Serb vengefulness in their takeover of Srebrenica.

The ICTY wasn't an instrument of justice - it was a faux-judicial arm of NATO, created to service its aims in the Balkan wars, which it did in numerous ways. But a key role was to focus on, demonize, isolate and condemn Serbs, who were the NATO target. Whenever NATO needed a lift, the ICTY was there to help - indicting Karadzic and Mladic explicitly to remove them as negotiators at Dayton; indicting Milosevic in May 1999 just as NATO was starting to draw criticism for its bombing of Serbian civilian facilities (war crimes). For crushing analyses of the ICTY and its role, see Travesty by John Laughland (Pluto Press, 2007) and Michael Mandel's How America Gets Away with Murder (Pluto Press, 2004).

Inflated Killings

Inflating Serb killings was institutionalized early in the Yugoslavia conflict, crucially helped by media and liberal-left gullibility. There was huge dependence on Bosnian Muslim and U.S. officials, who lied often, but were never doubted by the press. In the case of the infamous Markale Market massacre on August 27, 1993, timed just before a NATO meeting at which bombing the Serbs was approved, key experts and observers on the scene - UK, French, Canadian, UN, even U.S. - were convinced that this was carried out by the Bosnian Muslims. But this could make no headway in the mainstream media. The Bosnian Muslims claimed 200,000 dead by early 1993 (and of course, exclusively Serb concentration and rape camps) and it was swallowed, along with the alleged drive for a "Greater Serbia."

The same inflation took place regarding Kosovo both before and after the bombing war, with an alleged pre-war genocide and a more wildly claimed bombing-war genocide (with the State Department estimating as many as 500,000 Kosovo Albanians murdered). These were

all big lies. The 200,000 (later, up to 300,000) has shrunk to 100,000, including about 65,000 civilians, on all sides in Bosnia. The prewar Kosovo toll was diminished to some 2,000 in the year before the bombing, a majority of them victims of the KLA rather than the Serbs (according to British Defense Secretary George Robertson), and the body-plus-missing total for Kosovo during the bombing war contracted to some 6,000-7,000 on all sides. But there were neither apologies nor reassessment from the mainstream media or liberal apologists for the "good war."

They still have Srebrenica. But like the other inflated or untrue elements of the demonization process, they have it by cheating. There's no doubt that there were executions at Srebrenica, but nothing like 8,000 and very possibly not any more than the number of Serb civilians killed by Naser Oric in the Srebrenica areas, as suggested by General Lewis Mackenzie (who in my opinion was conservative on this point). The morality tale rests heavily on failure to acknowledge that Srebrenica wasn't a demilitarized "safe area" but a protected Bosnian Muslim military base that had been used to decimate the local Serb population. It also rests on the failure to see that the massacre was immensely useful, like the Markale Market massacre, with the hope and expectation that it would produce a NATO military response. Bosnian Muslim leaders were crying "genocide" even before the Serbs captured Srebrenica.

It also rests on numbers manipulation. There were only about 2,000 bodies found near Srebrenica after intense searches over the next six years, not all Bosnian Muslims and those that were not necessarily executed. There had been intense fighting outside Srebrenica, but it was convenient for numbers inflation that these deaths could be ignored and any "missing" could be assumed executed.

The idea that the Serbs moved several thousand bodies en masse has never been plausible: Trucking them would have been easily caught by satellite surveillance - no such pictures have been produced - and some of the alleged new graves were closer to Srebrenica than the alleged places of removal. The belated grave findings after the year 2000 have been under the control of the Bosnian Muslim leadership, which has provided disinformation from 1992 on a very consistent basis. Their post-2000 findings and DNA identifications have been further compromised by their very unscientific handling of the body remains (in the ground five or more years), their inability to distinguish between bodies killed in fighting and executed, or those that may have died before or after 1995, and their frequent timing to reinforce political events.

The continuous publicity over Srebrenica, like its initial surge, has been hugely political - this selective and inflated victimization has political payoffs for the victims and their patrons, along

with psychological rewards in inflicting pain on longstanding enemies and targets. And in this case, the imperial rulers aren't only able to point to an allegedly justified "humanitarian intervention" to help cover over their larger plans in a global projection of power, but they have been able to transform the Balkans into a staging ground for NATO's post-Cold war expansionist order.

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