

Dr. Marko Hoare on the arrest of Ratko Mladic:

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

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

The second, and more important reason why Mladic's trial is important, is that it provides the best chance yet to prove that genocide occurred not only at Srebrenica in 1995, but in other places and at other times in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well. The judicial record on this question so far is ambiguous. Germany's courts have convicted Bosnian Serb perpetrators for offences relating to genocide carried out in parts of Bosnia outside of Srebrenica. One of these, the paramilitary leader Nikola Jorgic, was convicted of genocide in the north Bosnian region of Doboj in 1992, but appealed his conviction all the way to the European Court of Human Rights. The latter [upheld](#) Jorgic's conviction for genocide, ruling that the German courts' definition of genocide was consistent with the international legal definition. The German and ECHR rulings on Jorgic corroborate the view that genocide occurred across Bosnia from 1992, not merely at Srebrenica in 1995. On the other hand, the International Court of Justice, in the case for genocide brought by Bosnia against Serbia, acquitted Serbia of all genocide-related charges apart from failure to prevent and punish genocide. The ICJ specifically stated that genocide in Bosnia occurred only at Srebrenica in 1992, not in other places or at other times. Mladic, however, stands [accused](#) by the ICTY prosecution of systematic genocide across both western

and eastern Bosnia from May 1992. If Mladic is found guilty on all charges, the judicial record for a genocide in Bosnia that occurred across the country from 1992 to 1995 will be greatly strengthened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Slobodan MILOSEVIC participated in the joint criminal enterprise as set out below. The purpose of this joint criminal enterprise was the forcible and permanent removal of the majority of non-Serbs, principally Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, from large areas of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter referred to as "Bosnia and Herzegovina"), through the

*commission of crimes which are in violation of Articles 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Statute of the Tribunal. The joint criminal enterprise was in existence by 1 August 1991 and continued until at least 31 December 1995. The individuals participating in this joint criminal enterprise included **Slobodan MILOSEVIC**, Radovan KARADZIC, Momcilo KRAJISNIK, Biljana PLAVSIC, General Ratko MLADIC, Borisav JOVIC, Branko KOSTIC, Veljko KADIJEVIC, Blagoje ADZIC, Milan MARTIC, Jovica STANISIC, Franko SIMATOVIC, also known as “Frenki,” Radovan STOJICIC, also known as “Badza,” Vojislav SESELJ, Zeljko RAZNATOVIC, also known as “Arkan,” and other known and unknown participants.’*

However, at the time of writing, *not a single official* of Serbia, Montenegro or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – i.e. of the regime that organised the war – nor any officer of the JNA (excluding officers of the Bosnian Serb army who had previously served in the JNA) has been convicted by the ICTY of war crimes in Bosnia. The weight of ICTY punishment has, so far, fallen exclusively on the Bosnian Serbs, while the regime of Milosevic in Belgrade and the leadership of the JNA have been mostly let off the hook. Only six such officials were ever indicted: Milosevic, Stanisic, Simatovic, Perisic, Arkan and Seselj. Arkan was assassinated before he could be arrested, while Milosevic died while his trial was in progress. This leaves a maximum of four representatives of the regime who could, if the prosecution is wholly successful, receive punishment for organising the worst case of aggression and mass killing in Europe since World War II. None of these belonged to the top rank of officials responsible for organising the war in Bosnia, with the exception of Stanisic, who was head of Serbia’s State Security Service.

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

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

This extraordinary failure of international justice over Bosnia – the failure of the ICTY to indict more than a handful of the officials of the regime and army responsible for the planning and launching the war, and so far to convict a single one of them – reflects both the inability of its prosecutors to understand the war properly, as well as their poor strategy in issuing indictments. As I have indicated [elsewhere](#), a preliminary draft of a war-crimes indictment for

the leadership of the SRJ (Serbia and Montenegro) drawn up in 2001 by investigators – including the present author – aimed to indict Milosevic and other members of his regime together, including Jovic, Kostic and Adzic. But by a decision of Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, the policy was then dropped in favour of an indictment of Milosevic alone. Apart from allowing his chief collaborators to escape justice, this had the unfortunate effect – as Geoffrey Nice, who led the prosecution of Milosevic, himself [noted](#) – that when Milosevic died in 2006, his trial came to an end, and with it, the trial of his regime. This contrasts with the sensible indictment strategy pursued over Serbian war-crimes in Kosovo by del Ponte’s predecessor, Louise Arbour, who indicted five top members of the regime together, including Milosevic.

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

The break up of Yugoslavia and the wars in Croatia and Bosnia all formed part of a single process, planned by the regime in Belgrade under Milosevic’s leadership from at least the spring of 1990, with the goal of creating a Great Serbia (masquerading as a ‘new Yugoslavia’). So far as Bosnia was concerned, this ‘joint criminal enterprise’ aimed to destroy the country and kill or expel most of the Muslim or Bosniak population. Most of Bosnia, as well as large parts of Croatia, were to be annexed by Serbia, and rump Croatia was to receive some Bosnian territory as well, with the Muslims or Bosniaks, at best, being confined to an Indian reservation in between. Tudjman was an eager collaborator in this programme of genocide and aggression, whose other leading members were, in particular, the aforementioned Jovic, Kostic, Kadijevic, Adzic, Stanisic, Panic and Bulatovic. None of these has yet been punished, and most of them certainly never will be.

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

Anti-Semitism, racism and Srebrenica genocide denial

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

character assassination and racist and anti-Semitic abuse of those who speak about the genocide and the ideology that gave rise to it.

'The Jews have had a disproportionate impact'

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

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

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

The basis for the accusation was the claim that Ramic was a member of the editorial board of a Bosnian journal called ['Korak](#)

'; that has published some viciously anti-Israel articles. The articles in question were, indeed, viciously anti-Israel. But Ramic is not a member of the editorial board of the journal in question, so the accusation is totally false. The second basis for the accusation is that *Korak's* editor, Asaf Dzanic, is a member of the IRGC's board of directors. Yet, as anyone can see from the [IRGC's](#)

[website](#), its board of directors is very large and diverse, numbering over 120, and includes several eminent Jewish members, including the famous Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. Most of these members, including Dzanic, are in the capacity of an 'International Team of Experts'. The website also carries a powerful defence of the IRGC from the smears of Trifkovic and the 'Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies', written by the Israeli writer [Marjan Hajnal](#) – also a member of the IRGC's board of directors. The smearing of the entire institute as 'Jew-hating' and its director as 'jihadi' is, therefore, a desperate clutching at straws on the part of the Srebrenica deniers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thus, Trifkovic and Gorin have no problem with anti-Semitism, but do have a problem with those, like Ramic and the IRGC, that oppose Srebrenica genocide denial. Gorin’s apologia for Trifkovic’s anti-Semitism was made in the course of an [article](#) denying the genocide at Srebrenica. Again, unlike Ramic, Gorin is an unabashed anti-Albanian, anti-Croat and anti-Bosniak racist. Commenting on a recent obituary of the Croatian journalist [Chris Cviiic](#), a long-standing resident of the UK and recipient of the OBE, which stated ‘He is survived by his widow, Celia, and a son and a daughter’, Gorin [commented](#) ‘Yayyyy! More little Ustashas running rampant in the West.’ In response to a [story](#) in the British rag-sheet *The Daily Star* about the alleged activities of Kosovo Albanian immigrants in the UK, entitled ‘Kosovan squatters stole my loo’, Gorin [commented](#) ‘Ah, the Albanian specialty: invading someone’s home and stripping it bare. (See Kosovo, Serbia.) Then they get to do it again at the UK government’s expense. What the hell are they going to do with the toilet? Do they even know what it’s for?’ Racists like Gorin typify the Srebrenica deniers. Another Srebrenica genocide denier, Nebojsa Malic of Antiwar.com, has also made racist statements about Albanians, describing them as [‘medieval barbarians’](#).

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

‘This self-serving Jew’

Srebrenica genocide denial tends to go hand-in-hand with the denial of the genocidal crimes carried out by Serbian Nazi quislings and collaborators during World War II. When the Milosevic and Karadzic regimes waged their war for a Great Serbia in the 1990s, a major element in their

propaganda was the equation of the entire Croat and Bosniak nations with the Ustashas (Croatian fascists) of World War II. The reality was that the Serb, Croat and Bosniak nations during World War II were all divided between anti-fascists and quislings or collaborators. Thus, the Nazi-quisling camp included Croat Ustashas, Serb Nedivites and Ljotivites and Muslim soldiers of the SS Handzar Division, while the anti-fascist Yugoslav Partisans comprised Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks and others. But the Great Serbian nationalists of the 1990s waged a hate-campaign against Croats and Bosniaks, seeking to equate the *entire* Croat and Bosniak nations with the Ustashas.

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

Needless to say, Cohen does not in any way deny the crimes of the Croatian Ustashas against Jews, Serbs or others. But his exposure of the crimes of Serbian quislings against Jews in World War II led to his being the subject of an anti-Semitic denunciation by a Serb nationalist writer called Vasilije Todorovic, who published an [open letter](#) in 1996 claiming (falsely) that 'Cohen, this self-serving Jew, has even managed to condone the killing of 60,000 Jews in WW II, by the very Croats from whom he receives his major support. I believe you Jews call this, Chutzpah!' And 'How astonishing that for 46 years the Roman Church and its Vatican failed to recognize Israel. Now this upstart Jew, Philip Cohen, defends their actions.' Todorovic extended his attack on Cohen into a general diatribe against Jews: 'There are no Spielberg movies made about these brave Serbian families who saved Jews. At the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Serbs were totally ignored as the Museum honored a Roman Catholic woman for saving the lives of 6 Jews.' Furthermore, 'Cohen omits the documents that reveal that Jews also joined the Ustasha and the Partisans and murdered numerous loyalists Serbs. In Cohen's personal secret war against the Serbs, no mention is made that many of the Croatian Nazi officers had Jewish wives.' And so on.

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

'Philip J. Cohen is a medical doctor, a dermatologist with no background or training in history, let alone the World War II history of Serbia. Moreover, he has no knowledge of the Serbian,

Croatian, or Bosnian languages. How could he have written Serbia's Secret War, which required a detailed and exhaustive analysis and research of Serbian language documents? Such a massive undertaking would require a thorough knowledge of the historical debates and nuances involved in the issues examined. Cohen couldn't have written it. And he didn't write it. Cohen was the front, the front man in a Croatian propaganda hoax. Because Croatia was a satellite, proxy, and client state of the U.S., Cohen received U.S. support and backing. The screed buttressed the anti-Serbian U.S. infowar and propagnada war.'

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

I can personally testify that Cohen is the author of *Serbia's Secret War*. At the time he was writing it, I met him at a seminar at Yale University, where I was studying at the time, and he asked me to assist him in working on the manuscript to his book. Consequently, I read his manuscript, made comments on it, then stayed with him at his home for two or three days and helped him work through some of the documents he had yet to analyse. Although Philip did not read Serbo-Croat himself, he told me he had benefited from a lot of assistance, in translating documents, from the Croatian writer Anto Knezevic. Having spoken with him at length and seen his library and archive, I know for a fact that Savich's allegations are complete fabrications.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Agent of imperialism’

Anti-fascist Serbs, as much as non-Serbs, can become victims of racism when they oppose the activities of the Serbian extreme-right. The Serbian human-rights activist Sonja Biserko of the [Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia](#), a frequent victim of physical harassment and defamation at the hands of Serbian fascist thugs and their rag-sheets, is periodically denounced by them as a ‘lesbian’. But she has also been denounced for supposedly not being of pure Serbian racial stock. Thus, an anonymous Srebrenica genocide denier – whose genocide denial subsequently led to him being banned by the proprietor of [Modernity Blog](#) – challenged my description of her as ‘Serbian’ in the following terms: ‘Serbian, eh? Funny thing is, Sonja Biserko keeps her biographical details well hidden. A wiki page lists her as Croatian, whereas a poster on some forum claims that: *her brother was a member of Croatian troops, so called “Zbor narodne garde” and was killed in fight with Krajina Serbs.*’

The anonymous creep in question challenged me to confirm or deny the truth of his rumours. This sort of malicious gossip always puts us in a difficult position, as however unlikely it is that such rumours are true, we cannot formally deny them unless we know for certainty that they are false. Readers may recall the rumour that former Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic

recruited for the SS during World War II; no evidence has ever been produced to substantiate this claim, so we have to assume that it is false, particularly given the seriousness of the charge. But I cannot say for absolute certainty that it is untrue.

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

The idea that someone's patriotism can be called into question on the basis of their 'alien' ethnic background has been a favourite of the far right since the Dreyfus Affair. In reality, people from ethnically non-Serb or mixed backgrounds, including ethnic Croats and Bosniaks, have often become hardline Serb nationalists, or supported the Milosevic regime – examples are Emir Kusturica, Jovan Zametica, Franko Simatovic and Mihalj Kertes. The Serbian fascist leader Vojislav Seselj was frequently accused of being an ethnic Croat, on the grounds that 'Seselj' is a Croat surname – he was pathetically reduced to obtaining a certificate from the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (for which he allegedly [paid](#) a small sum in deutschmarks) to 'prove' he was 'genuinely' Serb.

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

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

Hat tip: Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Arms embargo on Bosnia was ‘the most serious mistake made by the UN’

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

Yet Sir Malcolm has had time to reconsider. Monday’s edition of *The Times* published a [powerful piece](#) by him calling for intervention in support of the rebels in Libya, in which he argues the following:

*‘First and most important should be an open and urgent supply of the necessary weapons to the insurgents so that they can fight Gaddafi on equal terms. The UN has imposed an arms embargo and some have suggested that this makes illegal any supply of weapons to either side in Libya. The UN Resolution, however, refers to a ban on arms supply to the Libyan “Jamahiriya”, which is Gaddafi’s invented name for the state he controls. It need not prevent supplies to those trying to bring him down. Otherwise, we will repeat the mistake of the Bosnian war – when the UN embargo had much less impact on the Bosnian Serbs who were, already, heavily armed. **Having been Defence Secretary at that time I have, in retrospect, felt that that was the most serious mistake made by the UN.**’ [emphasis added]*

Indeed, there had likewise been no legal obligation on the part of UN member states to enforce the arms embargo against Bosnia, since [UN Security Council Resolution 713](#) had been imposed on the state of Yugoslavia, not on the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those enforcing the embargo against Bosnia did so because they wanted to, not because they were legally obliged to. So it is with the Libyan rebels today.

As Jesus said, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Former US president Bill Clinton has similarly [admitted](#) his error in failing to intervene to stop the genocide in Rwanda: ‘I feel terrible about it because I think we could have sent 5,000, 10,000 troops there and saved a couple hundred thousand lives. I think we could have saved about half of them. But I’ll always regret that Rwandan thing. I will always feel terrible about it.’

One wonders whether Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton will one day regret the shameful policy they are pursuing toward Libya today.

NB As The Times operates a paywall, non-subscribers are unable to read Sir Malcolm's article.

The bizarre world of genocide denial

I get older, they stay the same age – as someone once said in another context. It's one thing I like about Bosnia genocide-deniers. When I first started taking them on at the age of nineteen, their arguments were already easy to refute, and I was hampered only by the limits of my own knowledge. Now, nearly two decades on, I know a lot more, but I still periodically find myself repeating the same old refutations of the same old canards – canards that sound increasingly silly as time goes by. Evidence that Germany 'encouraged' Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia, or that the Western media was 'biased' against the Serb side in the war, or that Bosnian forces shelled their own civilians to provoke Western military intervention against the Serb rebels, has proven as elusive as the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The steady gathering of forensic evidence has made the Srebrenica massacre the most well-documented genocidal crime in history. Yet like lambs to the slaughter, new waves of deniers step forward to sacrifice any reputations they might have in the service of a long-discredited cause.

I say 'like' because it makes the job of the historian wishing to refute their propaganda very easy. But it's also extremely boring. A couple of years ago I sacrificed a couple of days of my life to writing a review that catalogued the numerous falsehoods and distortions contained in the sensationalist anti-Muslim propaganda tracts about the Bosnian war written by Christopher Deliso and John Schindler. Since then, I have never seen either of those books cited by any reputable author. If my review contributed to this happy state of affairs, then writing it was a worthwhile use of my time. But it's a chore rather than a pleasure; I'd rather devote this time to historical research or writing.

Consequently, it has been with a certain inner groaning that I've become aware of the latest regurgitations of the old denialist narrative. One such regurgitation is David N. Gibbs, *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2009). To give a foretaste of what you can expect of this book, Gibbs has this to say about the Srebrenica massacre: 'Certainly, the murder of eight thousand people is a grave crime, but to call it "genocide" needlessly exaggerates the scale of the crime.' (p. 281).

Needless to say, Gibbs has no academic expertise on the former Yugoslavia or the Balkans and does not read Serbo-Croat. He hasn't bothered to engage with the existing literature, but simply ignored all the existing works that undermine his thesis. He has not tackled the evidence presented by Daniele Conversi, myself and others, that the Milosevic regime and the Yugoslav People's Army deliberately engineered the break-up of Yugoslavia; or the work of Michael Libal and Richard Caplan, exploding the myth that Germany encouraged Croatia to secede from Yugoslavia; or the work of Brendan Simms, demonstrating that Britain's intervention in Bosnia actually shielded Karadzic's Serb forces from hostile international intervention. Instead, Gibbs has cherry-picked a few odds and ends in order to present the same old revisionist story, only

with a larger number of endnotes than the previous versions written by Diana Johnstone, Michael Parenti et al. Yet he must know very well that his book will not survive a critical review by a genuine specialist in the field, that it will be ignored by all serious scholars and that it will serve only to confirm the views of the small, dwindling minority already committed to the revisionist narrative.

Dear readers, I promise I will get round eventually to doing a demolition job on Gibbs's sorry little propaganda pamphlet. For the time being, I mention him because he practices the old denialist trick in relation to the Srebrenica massacre, of describing the military actions of the Bosnian military commander in the Srebrenica region, Naser Oric – involving attacks on Serb villages around Srebrenica and atrocities against Serb civilians – while neglecting to mention the incomparably larger-scale Serbian offensives that preceded Oric's actions, and to which the latter were a response. Gibbs writes:

'The Srebrenica safe area had an especially brutal history, and it was besieged by Serb forces throughout the war. It is important to note, however, that Muslim troops also behaved brutally. Especially problematic was the Muslim commander Brigadier Oric, who based his forces inside Srebrenica and conducted forays against Serb villages in the surrounding region. One UNPROFOR commander later described Oric's activities as follows: "Oric engaged in attacks during Orthodox holidays and destroyed [Serb] villages, massacring all the inhabitants. This created a degree of hatred that was quite extraordinary in the [Srebrenica] region... [etc.]"' (pp. 153-154).

Anyone reading this who didn't know better would be left unaware that, prior to Oric's offensives, Serb forces had massacred and expelled Muslims across the whole of East Bosnia – at Bijeljina, Zvornik, Visegrad, Foca, Bratunac, Srebrenica itself and elsewhere; that 94.83% of the civilians from the Podrinje (East Bosnia) region killed during the war were Muslims and only 4.87% were Serbs (according to the figures of the Research and Documentation Centre); or that more Muslims from Podrinje were killed in 1992 than in the year of the Srebrenica massacre. The military actions of Oric's forces against neighbouring Serb villages were those of defenders of a beleaguered enclave whose inhabitants were threatened with massacre, rape, torture and expulsion already inflicted on other towns all over East Bosnia. That Gibbs lays such stress on Oric's atrocities while wholly neglecting to mention the incomparably greater-in-scale Serb atrocities in the same region that preceded them is distortion of the most blatant kind; equivalent to writing of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising without bothering to mention the Holocaust. No doubt the sort of bone-headed ultra-left activist who would turn to Gibbs's book for information on the Bosnian war, instead of to a serious work, is easily and happily deceived.

Those wishing to read the history of the genocidal massacres of Muslims in East Bosnia in 1992 that don't find a place in books like *First do no Harm* are recommended Edina Becirevic's splendid *Na Drini genocid*, soon to appear in English translation, which demonstrates that the Srebrenica massacre was not an aberration but the culmination of a genocidal policy that began in East Bosnia in 1992. In addition, an excellent case study of the background to the Srebrenica genocide by Daniel Toljaga has recently been published on the website of the Bosnian Institute,

entitled *Prelude to the Srebrenica Genocide*. Toljaga's knowledge of the history of the Srebrenica genocide is unrivalled, and he traces the grim story: the summoning of local Serb-nationalist leaders to meet with Milosevic's agent Mihalj Kertes in Belgrade in early May 1991; the killing of the first Muslim civilians in the Bratunac municipality on 3 September 1991; the killing of the first Muslim civilians in the Srebrenica municipality on 15 April 1992; and the deployment of the Yugoslav People's Army around Srebrenica by April. As Toljaga recounts:

'Following the takeover of Bratunac, the Serb forces began the attack on Srebrenica on 18 April 1992, firing around 5000 mortar shells on the town and the surrounding Bosniak villages. There was no resistance. The same day, Serbs entered the town, looting Bosniak property, setting houses on fire and killing Bosniak residents who were unable to flee into nearby woods. The Serb occupation of the town of Srebrenica lasted until 8 May, the day when Serbs burned to death 23 Bosniak civilians in the downtown Srebrenica. The victims died in excruciating pain. From April 17 to May 8, a total of 74 Bosniak civilians were killed in the occupied Srebrenica. The youngest victim was the 12-month-old boy Nezir Suljic whose charred body was still lying in his cradle. His father Huso, his mother Muška, and his brother Nisvet were burned to death in the same room. Nezir's nine-year-old sister Sanela survived by jumping through a window and hiding in nearby woods.'

Anyone reading Becirevic and Toljaga cannot pretend, as Gibbs does, that the 'extraordinary hatred' in the Srebrenica region began with Oric's counteroffensives, which occurred subsequent to the Serbian attack on the region. Or can they? The evidence suggests that revisionist authors of the kind under discussion here simply disregard all inconvenient evidence and go on repeating old falsehoods in their books and articles, which consequently have no scholarly credibility but which are nevertheless eagerly seized upon by their ideological fellow travellers. In his book, Gibbs touches on the question of Rwanda in 1994, which he avoids describing as a genocide. Complaining of the 'asymmetrical focus on specific conflicts, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, or more recently, Darfur, and the 'emotionalism' that this involves, he advances the bizarre thesis that the massacres in Rwanda were caused by a fall in the price of coffee (pp. 219-220)! Needless to say, this thesis is not borrowed from a genuine scholar of the Rwandan genocide; it is taken from an article by Michel Chossudovsky, a conspiracy theorist who has likewise argued that break-up of Yugoslavia was engineered by German imperialism as part of a 'long Western efforts to undo Yugoslavia's experiment in market socialism and workers' self-management and to impose the dictate of the free market.'

Gerald Caplan, in tackling Edward Herman and David Peterson, two Srebrenica genocide deniers who have mutated into Rwanda genocide deniers, has written of 'a tiny number of long-time American and Canadian genocide deniers', who disregard the copious work of genuine scholars that undermines their denialist thesis, but 'who gleefully drink each other's putrid bath water. Each solemnly cites the others' works to document his fabrications'. Indeed, as I recently wrote, the Srebrenica deniers simply will not stop digging, and are applying their same methods – already discredited over Srebrenica – to the if anything even more monumental task of trying to deny the Rwandan genocide.

In his latest response to Herman and Peterson, Adam Jones has noted:

‘Like Herman & Peterson, the deniers cherry-pick a few useful factoids and declamations from serious scholarship on Rwanda (or halfway serious, like Davenport & Stam), while dismissing the vast bulk of the scholarly and human-rights literature as hopelessly corrupted by nefarious (western/imperialist) interests. This has the additional advantage of cutting down on what would otherwise be an onerous reading list, since the literature on Rwanda is now so extensive, detailed, and utterly contrary to Herman & Peterson’s formulations. I confess I wondered, when preparing my first response to Herman & Peterson, whether their depiction of events in Rwanda in 1994 resulted from ignorance and incompetence, rather than actual malice. Their latest post rules this out, I’m afraid.’

Readers are strongly recommended to read Jones’s article, to confirm again – if any further confirmation is needed – what happens when genocide-deniers come up against a genuine genocide scholar.

This brings us back to the question of why genocide-deniers will devote so much time to writing texts that cannot withstand scholarly scrutiny, and that merely succeed in covering the deniers with infamy in the eyes of everyone outside their tiny denialist circle. These are the activities of a sect that needs its own myths to feed its followers so as to perpetuate itself. Bosnia and Rwanda are not treated as subjects for genuine scholarly enquiry, but merely episodes to be incorporated into the mythical narrative. So long as the sect’s followers continue to imbibe the myths, it does not matter if the rest of the world despises the sect and its myths.

In this context, the task of genuine genocide scholars is not to struggle to de-programme the sect’s followers – a generally impossible task – but merely to ensure that their poison is kept out of mainstream discourse on genocide.

[“Bosnia-Herzegovina and International Justice: Past Failures and Future Solutions”](#)

Dr. Marko Attila Hoare,

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Three different international courts have determined that genocide took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992-1995: the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Yet paradoxically, there has been virtually no punishment of this genocide, while the punishment of lesser war crimes of the Bosnian war has been very limited. The ICTY has convicted only one individual, a lowly deputy corps commander, of a genocide-related offence. The ICJ acquitted Serbia, the state that planned and launched the assault upon Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, of

genocide and related offences, finding it guilty only of failure to prevent and punish genocide. Although Serb forces were responsible for the overwhelming majority of war crimes, the ICTY prosecution has disproportionately targeted non-Serbs in its indictments and, among Serbs, has disproportionately targeted Bosnian Serbs, with no official of Serbia or Yugoslavia yet convicted of war crimes in Bosnia. This article argues that the meagre results of the international judicial processes vis-à-vis the crimes of the Bosnian war must be sought in the structural failings, poor decision making, and political influences that affected the international courts. It argues that the international courts have failed either to deliver justice to the victims of the war crimes or to promote reconciliation among the peoples of the former Yugoslavia and suggests measures that could be taken to rectify the situation.