



INSTITUTE FOR THE RESEARCH OF GENOCIDE  
CANADA

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To: The Editor of Foreign Policy magazine

As a Canadian based human rights organization, the Institute for Research of Genocide, Canada is deeply concerned about Michael Dobbs' blatant justification of the genocide committed by the Serbs on the Bosniak population during the 1992 to 1995 conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In his blog entry, "In Defense of the Serbs." Mr. Dobbs legitimizes the aggression and genocide committed by Serbs by using the minority rights argument, completely disregarding the fact that the rise of Serb ultra-nationalism and the plan to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina down the middle between Croatia and Serbia were the real reasons for the aggression and genocide committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The fact that Mr. Dobbs defends the Serbs, it demonstrates that there he has no respect for the victims of genocide and he is clearly not informed about the rise in Serb nationalism in the region.

In his latest blog entry "Michael Dobbs should apologize" he claims that he is on the side of the victims however he does not believe that "one side should be blamed for all the evil inflicted by the war." Interestingly enough, he does not bother to mention what the evils committed by the Serbs are and the effect of those 'evils' on the victims. Turning back to "In Defense of the Serbs", the complete blog entry explains why the Serbs committed atrocities against the Bosniaks and Croats. Firstly, he states that Serbs had perfectly legitimate concerns for doing what they did in which he refers to the atrocities committed by the Croatian Ustashe against the Serbian population in Croatia. This could have been a reason for Serbs wanting succession in Croatia but in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was a high level of multi-ethnicity as well as tolerance until Milosevic's rise in nationalist rhetoric. Therefore he uses the Ustasha atrocities as an excuse, that was also used by Serb leaders and the Serbian Orthodox Church to instill fear in the Serbian population, so that the ultimate goal of Milosevic's greater Serbia can occur. It is disappointing that Dobbs rejects what so many scholars have already proven and instead uses the same excuses as the current Serb nationalists and genocide deniers.

More comical is Dobbs' argument about minority rights. He argues that since the West supported the breakup of Yugoslavia than the West should have supported the succession of the Serb minority from Croatia and Bosnia for the war not to occur. However this argument is more complicated than he makes it seem. From a human rights perspective, if succession was granted to Serbs in Bosnia than the same would have to be granted to the Croat minority and the Roma population since Bosnia was the most multi-ethnic state in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the Serb and Croat population was not concentrated in one region of Bosnia thus succession of Croats and Serbs would have left the Bosniaks without a state. Lastly, minority rights cannot be granted to certain groups and not others therefore if the West granted succession to Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia than the West would have to grant Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sandzak – all regions in

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Serbia – succession. Regardless if the Serbs were a minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the Geneva Conventions and international criminal law, there is no justification for killing, raping, torturing, committing inhumane and degrading treatment and imprisoning civilians in concentration camps. Thus Dobbs’ attempt at justifying the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the Bosniak and Croat civilian population through minority rights is irrelevant.

Even after all the atrocities, the West rewarded the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Republika Srpska – land that is soaked in the blood and filled with mass graves of innocent Bosniaks. Many Bosniaks who have survived have not returned to what is now known as Republika Srpska because their property has been taken over by Serb families. Those who have returned face discrimination and injustice. Students in Srebrenica schools must fight the denial of the Srebrenica genocide that is in the current Republika Srpska curriculum. Victims of rape, torture, genocide and other forms of inhumane treatment have not seen justice because many war criminals are working in public sector jobs. These are all serious human rights abuses committed by the Current Republika Srpska government that Dobbs completely chooses to ignore.

Dobbs’ justification of the Serb atrocities is disappointing and disrespectful to all the victims who have suffered at the hands of the Serbs. On behalf of the victims and witness of the Bosnian genocide the Institute of Research of Genocide calls on Mr. Dobbs to better investigate the events that occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina before protecting the perpetrators. Attempting to legitimize the war crimes committed by the Serbs not only encourages the Serb community to continue to deny the genocide but also supports the growing Serb nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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