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Brian Lamb, C-Span

NO EXCUSE FOR SERBIAN-AMERICANS

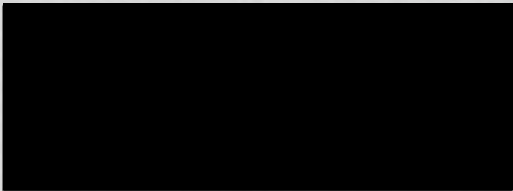
Unlike Serbs in their homeland, where their access to truth is limited by the Milosevich-controlled media, Serbs living in America have access to the numerous books and reports detailing the murderous behaviour of the psychopathic killers recruited for the Serbian special squads doing the dirtiest work of the genocide against non-Serbs. The authors are responsible people from a variety of backgrounds, so it is ridiculous to characterize the exposes as anti-Serbian propaganda.

Half a century ago, patriotic Germans supported Hitler's aims and his war, not fully realizing the horrors of the extermination camps and the cruelties inflicted on the helpless civilians in conquered lands. When all was revealed for the world to see, decent Germans recoiled in disgust and shame, and have since worked hard to restore a civilized and just society. True, a few never repented, or denied the truth, but generally these were on the lowest rungs of the intellectual order.

Serbian-Americans should take note of the murderous behaviour of Milosevich's minions, and demand the the restoration of a just and civilized government in Belgrade, instead of knee-jerk resentment of NATO's campaign to defang Milosevich. The behaviour of the Croats 50 years ago, or 5 years ago, or of the Muslims 500 years ago, is no excuse for supporting savagery today. Better to act now to correct evil than be embarrassed by the evil when eventually it becomes undeniable.

Unfortunately, I know my Serbs well enough to expect most to ignore the reports of the world's journalists, and to cling to their ill-informed prejudices. I can expect angry phone calls that display blind mind-set without any interest in knowing more than their cherished myths tell them, enhanced by the highly

colored (and grossly untruthfull) propaganda of the Milosevich machine. One can be sure that no Serbian-American journal would dare to publish anything counter to ingrained Serbian prejudice by exposing the barbarism perpetrated in Bosnia and now in Kosovo, nor would any politician depending on Serbian-American votes. Unfortunately, like the genocide of the Armenians and the Jews, most of the witnesses to atrocities are dead. But we can know enough today that ignorance is no excuse for defending the indefensible, and for not demanding just and democratic Serbian leadership.



NATO recognition for Kosovo

WILLIAM PFAFF

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The objective of NATO's attacks on the former Yugoslavia has been described as "to kill enough Serbs and destroy enough of their war machine to prevent the defeat of a much less powerful rebel force, but not so many that the rebels will be emboldened to press for victory themselves." If that is the objective, failure is the likely outcome.

The political rationale NATO and Washington have offered is that the attacks will force President Slobodan Milosevic to accept the Rambouillet plan and allow NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo. This assumes that he will decide that the guerrilla war in Kosovo and NATO's bombing are a greater threat to his power than giving up Kosovo would be. That assumption is unconvincing.

Continued Serbian defiance is widely expected to leave NATO with a choice between ground intervention and failure. No NATO government wants ground intervention – certainly not the United States, with its restless Congress and the public's unwillingness to accept casualties.

There is, however, another course for NATO. It would present Milosevic with a much more dangerous threat than the bombing campaign. This is a threat to recognize the independence of the Kosovo Republic – proclaimed in 1991 and ratified by popular referendum – and to provide the Kosovo Liberation Army with the equipment, training, and air support necessary to defend its independence.

A reasonable argument can be made that the Serbian army and police in Kosovo could eventually be defeated by a continued insurrection – conducted by increasingly well armed and well-trained guerrillas – operating within a population that is hostile to the Serbs and enjoying NATO strategic and tactical air support.

This means the burden of achieving victory, a heavy one, would lie upon the Kosovars. But they are the ones who want freedom. Until now the Western governments have wanted Kosovo to remain part of Serbia. Unless Milosevic accepts the Rambouillet plan or NATO concedes defeat, that is no longer an available solution. Long before this crisis, the KLA was planning for an insurrection that could go on for years, even decades.

A Western policy of supporting Kosovo independence is politically sustainable. Western nations will accept it. It is politically coherent because it responds to the reality that, for the Kosovars, their independent republic already exists: They proclaimed it, ratified it, and have respected its clandestine authority for nearly a decade, pursuing their underground government's program of nonviolent resistance to the Serbs until last year.

Such a NATO policy would have a plausible claim to represent international legality. Much has been said in re-

cent days about NATO's attacking a sovereign Serbia. Serbia is indeed a sovereign state, but its claim to sovereignty over Kosovo is controversial.

Kosovo was an autonomous province of the pre-1991 Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Its autonomy was acknowledged in the federal constitution proclaimed in 1974.

The right of the members of this federation to secede was conceded in 1991 and 1993, when four of them – Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia – did so. They were granted international recognition and admittance to the United Nations.

The Socialist Federal Republic thereby ceased to exist. Its surviving republics, Serbia and Montenegro, united in 1992, calling themselves the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (dropping "Socialist" from the name). They claimed legal succession to the former Yugoslav republic. The international community refused to accept that claim. The new Federal Republic has been excluded from the UN.

This new union was ratified by popular vote in Serbia, Montenegro, and the formerly autonomous province of Vojvodina. It was not ratified in Kosovo, where the referendum was all but boycotted. It was boycotted because Serbia had, in the meantime, illegally and forcibly usurped the autonomy conferred on Kosovo by the 1974 constitution of the old Yugoslavia.

It may therefore be argued that the oppressive control Serbia has imposed on Kosovo has no juridical basis, either in legitimate succession to the old Yugoslavia or in popular ratification within the new Federal Republic.

The Kosovar Albanians' overwhelming popular ratification of their own proclamation of an independent republic in 1991 is arguably the sole legal and democratic source for political authority and sovereignty in Kosovo.

As the historian of Yugoslavia, Paul Garde has argued that there is no reason why the international community should not recognize the Kosovo Republic, which fulfills the same criteria Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia fulfilled in order to be recognized – save one.

The one criterion yet to be met is undisputed control over its own territory. It has for a decade attempted to achieve that through nonviolent measures. It has now turned to armed resistance. By attacking Serbia, NATO has already lent support to the Kosovars' struggle. It should recognize the significance of what it has done and accept the consequences.

Unless Serbia ceases its attacks upon the Kosovars and accepts the reasonable compromises provided in the Rambouillet plan, which the Kosovars have accepted, the NATO nations should recognize the 1991 Kosovo Republic and reinforce their support for the Kosovars' struggle to be free of Serbian aggression, as the UN Charter entitles them to do.

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Some of the factors the White House should have considered before deciding on action!