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# Srebrenica and the London Bombings: The 'Anti-War' Link

By Marko Attila Hoare, 23rd July 2005

At Srebrenica on 11 July 1995, Christian Serb fascists - Chetniks - massacred about eight thousand Muslim men and boys. A few days before the tenth anniversary of the massacre, British Islamic fascists massacred over fifty people in London. Both groups of extremists - Chetniks and Islamofascists - were motivated by the same type of violent sectarian hatred for 'infidels' and for the values of the West; a West that they accuse of various bizarre conspiracies against the Serb nation and Islamic world respectively. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, although Islamic extremists from the Arab world and Christian extremists from Serbia, Greece and Russia fought nominally on opposite sides, yet they were united in their hatred for the interreligious coexistence that had characterised Bosnian society for centuries. Some

observers, such as the former Bosnian Army Chief of Staff Sefer Halilovic, have even suggested that the Bosnian Muslim hardliners who imported the *mujahedin* into Bosnia were doing official Serbia's bidding, by aiding and abetting the polarisation of the communities of Bosnia, hence the country's partition. But the Chetniks and Islamofascists have something else in common: the same friends in the West.

The genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina of the 1990s provoked horror among true Western democrats and anti-fascists, and with it a sense that it should be opposed. Among a fringe but vocal minority, however, the genocide provoked a very different reaction: solidarity with the perpetrators. This minority was not 'anti-interventionist', for it was very ready to support the UN arms embargo that hampered Bosnian resistance. Rather, its position could euphemistically be described as 'anti-war' - selectively so, for while it had no problem with Serbian military aggression, it did have a problem with military action by the Western alliance. 'Anti-war', therefore, refers to a belief that it is perfectly acceptable for Milosevic's Serbia or Saddam's Iraq to bomb and kill civilians in foreign countries, but wrong for the West to do anything about it.

At first, the West's diplomacy was in keeping with the precepts of the 'anti-war' camp, for John Major's Britain and Francois Mitterand's France fought hard to appease Milosevic, while the Clinton Administration tried its best to avoid offending its European allies over the issue. Yet the constant stream of horror stories emanating from Bosnia stretched the 'anti-war' argument to breaking point. Consequently, the 'anti-war' camp resorted to what can best be described as the Balkan-war equivalent of Holocaust denial: they claimed that the Serbian atrocities reported by the Western media were 'invented' by reporters in order to 'demonise the Serbs', in turn to justify 'Western military intervention' against them. Why exactly the Western leaders - who were trying so hard to appease Serbia and avoid military action - should have wanted to 'demonise the Serbs', and how exactly they could have persuaded so many professional journalists and reporters to participate in the conspiracy, was never explained by the 'anti-war' people. Yet theirs was not a rational position, but a gut, emotional reaction to unwelcome reality; a way

of justifying an otherwise discredited position. For it was the weakness of the 'anti-war' argument that led its proponents to resort to an ever more desperate denial of the reality of the Bosnian genocide.

The Srebrenica massacre was the point at which the 'anti-war' argument was lost in the US; Clinton's hands-off policy was revealed as bankrupt; and in under two months, NATO air-strikes coupled with Croatian and Bosnian victories on the ground had brought an end to Bosnian Serb recalcitrance, leading rapidly to the Dayton Peace Accord. Hardly surprising, then, that Balkan genocide denial has centred its efforts on the Srebrenica massacre ever since. Recently, a 'Srebrenica Research Group' has been established by one of the most virulent of the deniers, Edward S. Herman - a left-wing radical dinosaur left over from the Cold War era. This organisation's sole purpose is to propagate the idea that the Srebrenica massacre was a 'hoax' invented by Western propaganda. According to Herman: 'The "Srebrenica massacre" is the greatest triumph of propaganda to emerge from the Balkan wars'; one of a series of Western 'claims and outright lies' that, in Herman's view, include just about every Serbian war-crime. The 'Srebrenica Research Group' has received much support and publicity from contributors to 'ZNet' - a website representing the unreconstructed neo-Stalinist left in the US.

On the other extreme of the political spectrum, the far-right website 'Antiwar.com', run by Justin Raimondo - a protege of the anti-immigrant Republican politician Pat Buchanan - was launched in opposition to NATO intervention in Bosnia. The website still provides a forum for Balkan genocide denial on the part of its regular Balkan columnist, the Bosnian Serb emigre Nebojsa Malic, who like other emigres of his kind has forgotten nothing and learnt nothing, but continues to fight the Great Serb nationalist corner behind the fig-leaf of an 'anti-war' position, writing of 'the "genocide" that purportedly took place in Srebrenica'.

The arguments of the 'anti-war' people about the Balkans have been refuted time and time again; readers are referred to the excellent website ['Balkan Witness'](#); and to my own article on the subject, ['The Left Revisionists'](#). Rather than wade through the gutter of their lies again, my intention here is

merely to make some observations about what unites this disparate group:

1) They all represent political traditions that, in the present age, are self-evidently bankrupt, defeated and irrelevant.

Herman clings to the last rags of Third Worldist anti-Western radicalism. During the 1970s, he and Noam Chomsky wrote an infamous article minimising the crimes of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge ('Distortions at Fourth Hand', *The Nation*, June 25, 1977), which were allegedly being exaggerated by the Western media, much as the crimes of Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic are, in Herman's view, being exaggerated by the Western media today. Herman's defence of Serb war-criminals represents an ever more desperate attempt to scrape a worthy cause from the bottom of the increasingly empty barrel of 'anti-imperialism'; to perceive some 'progressive' content in the succession of anti-Western Red monsters that his generation of left-wing radicals misspent their lives defending: Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Ceausescu, Mugabe and now Milosevic.

Raimondo looks back nostalgically to an eighteenth-century republican 'Golden Age' in America, in which even the presidents owned black slaves, where women could not vote and where Americans were free to hunt buffalo and native Americans to their hearts' content - and without paying much in the way of taxes. Although the American Republic achieved its independence through the military assistance of the French, Spanish and Dutch - who fortunately did not adopt an 'anti-war' position - this is somewhat selfishly forgotten by American right-wingers of Raimondo's ilk, who have made a religion out of opposing US military assistance to foreign nations. The war to which these right-wingers most object, retrospectively, is Lincoln's war to crush the Southern slave-owners' separatist revolt in the 1860s - everything has really been going wrong since then, they feel; Roosevelt's war against Hitler and Bush's war to oust Saddam were simply further steps in the wrong direction. Their retrospective support for the 'states' rights' of Southern slave-owners against Lincoln translates seamlessly into support for the 'national sovereignty' of Saddam, Milosevic and other anti-Western tyrants against Bush and Blair.

Malic repeats the same tired propaganda that Serb nationalists have been repeating *ad infinitum* since time began (or so it often feels like to some of us): Albanians are 'medieval barbarians' (his words); Croats are Ustashas; and the whole world is against the Serbs. Rather than condemn Serbian war-crimes - as one might expect from a genuinely anti-war columnist - Malic's entire efforts consist of condemning anyone who actually opposes these crimes: Western journalists who report them; Serbian human-rights activists who campaign against them; the Hague Tribunal which prosecutes them. For Malic, the problem is not that 8,000 Muslim men and boys were massacred at Srebrenica, but that the perpetrators are being prosecuted. Since the cause of a Great Serbia has been utterly defeated and discredited, it is left to Malic to vent his rage at the West that is supposedly responsible for this, while exhibiting the usual Great Serb self-pity and adulation of martyrdom. He expresses this in endlessly recycled and largely unreadable rants against what he calls the 'Hague Inquisition' - as if the war-crimes suspects at the Hague were being punished for their beliefs rather than for their actions, and as if they were being tortured to confess.

2) The second observation to make about the 'anti-war' people is that they are not actually interested in the Balkans and their peoples, either in their past or in their future.

Not a single respectable work of scholarship has been produced by any member of this political category in the West, though they have produced an enormous quantity of what can most charitably be described as extended political tracts, based entirely on English-language sources; indeed, largely on other political tracts by other Balkan genocide deniers. Scholarly laziness, it should be said, is not a charge that can be levelled against actual Serb nationalist historians, many of whom have written excellent books based on serious research; though I disagree with their political views, I respect their scholarship. By contrast, the 'anti-war' people in the West write propaganda rather than history about the Balkans; necessarily so, since they believe Yugoslavia was destroyed by a Western or German imperialist conspiracy, and this is not a viewpoint that anyone who actually does research on the subject can sustain. The average MPhil student here at Cambridge would be

embarrassed to produce the sort of rubbish churned out by Michael Parenti, Diane Johnstone, Kate Hudson and other ill-informed genocide deniers, whose sole purpose is to confirm other lefties in their anti-Western prejudices. Not one of these people has visited an archive, or consulted the Serbo-Croat-language press, or examined any former-Yugoslav historical documents, or carried out a series of extended interviews with participants in the conflict.

The best (or perhaps worst) example of this phenomenon is the 'journalist' Neil Clark, an obsequious admirer of Milosevic from a 'socialist' (read 'neo-Stalinist') perspective, who describes himself as a 'British-based writer and broadcaster specialising in Middle Eastern and Balkan Affairs'. Clark has no qualifications in journalism or in Balkan or Middle Eastern studies, knows none of the Middle Eastern or Balkan languages, has never reported from either region, has little first-hand knowledge of either, and has never conducted original research or published a book or scholarly article on either. He apparently visited Belgrade in the 1990s and mistook the splendid former imperial metropolis for an example of the achievements of a socialist planned economy. Yet this amateur armchair enthusiast's 'anti-war' views have earned him brownie points with 'anti-war' editors, enabling him to write about the Balkans for *The Guardian*, *New Statesman* and *Antiwar.com* - an indication of how much the editors in question care about the region.

Perhaps the most revealing fact of all, however, is that the Balkan genocide deniers, while ready endlessly to condemn, never actually say what they support. Those of us who campaigned against Milosevic's genocide, did so on the basis of support for the self-determination and self-defence of Croats, Bosnians, Kosovars and other threatened Yugoslav peoples; in support of the principle of multiethnic and multi-religious coexistence. By contrast, you will search in vain for the opinions of the 'anti-war' people on Kosovo's status, or on the Bosnian question, or on the meaning of Serb self-determination, or on the Balkans' relationship to the European Union. In other words, theirs is an entirely negative tendency with nothing constructive to offer.

At one level, this simply represents their embarrassment, despite themselves, at the Serb fascists that most of them cannot quite bring themselves formally to endorse. Yet at a deeper level, this represents their profound lack of interest in the future of the Balkan peoples. Just as the more reactionary Cold War warriors in the West were uninterested in the citizens of Third World states, but only in whether their dictators were pro-American or pro-Soviet, so the 'anti-war' people - left-wingers and right-wingers alike - are uninterested in the rights or aspirations of Serbs, Croats, Muslims or Albanians, but only in who is 'pro-Western' or 'anti-Western'.

This is, of course, sheer moral opportunism. In an appeal to right-wingers to unite with the left against the neoconservatives, Clark disclaimed: 'I have never understood why a belief in the mixed economy, where transport, the utilities, and the coal mines are publicly owned and run for the benefit of the whole community also entails assenting to same-sex marriages, an open door immigration policy, and free abortion on demand.' It would appear that, for the 'socialist' Clark, left-wing principles are dispensable in the 'higher cause' of opposing the West. Raimondo praises the neo-Communist Russian butcher Vladimir Putin as a 'patriot' while condemning the neo-Communist Uzbekistani butcher Islam Karimov as a 'mass murdering tyrant' - simply because, he says, the neoconservatives oppose Putin and support Karimov.

The corollary of this opportunism is that the 'anti-war' people condemn or apologise for atrocities according to who perpetrated them. This brings us back to the London bombings. In their efforts at denigrating Milosevic's Bosnian Muslim and Kosovar victims, the 'anti-war' people demonised them as 'Islamists' and 'terrorists'; their efforts at self-defence a worse crime than Milosevic's assault on them in the first place. This despite the fact that Bosnian President Izetbegovic maintained a secular state in which churches remained open and women were involved in all walks of public life, while members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) never blew themselves up on Belgrade buses or otherwise targeted the civilians of Serbian cities. Yet when the real Islamists slaughter British civilians, the 'anti-war' people suddenly discover they have much more sympathy for Islamist terrorism than their Islamophobic diatribes against the Bosnians and Kosovars might



suggest.

One example is Tariq Ali, a former sixties radical for whom being 'on the left' boils down to visceral anti-Americanism plus a softness for Communist dictatorships. Ali managed to sit through the whole of the 1991-95 war in the Balkans without condemning Milosevic's aggression, even though Serbia attacked Croatia and Bosnia without the authorisation of the UN Security Council. Demonstrations against the war in Bosnia were notable by Ali's absence. Yet when NATO belatedly intervened against Milosevic in Kosovo in 1999, Ali suddenly discovered his opposition to war in the Balkans. He published an 'anti-war' collection of essays as a response to the Kosovo War: 'Masters of the Universe' (Verso, London, 2000). None of the contributors to this volume expressed any appreciation for the factors that might have driven Kosovars to join the KLA; nor did any point out that the whole Kosovo crisis could have been avoided if Serbia had simply respected the right of Kosovo's people to self-determination. Indeed, none of the contributors even bothered to discuss what the Kosovars' fate might have been if NATO had followed Ali's advice and ended its bombing campaign unconditionally: the dispossession of an entire nation is, apparently, a price worth paying for a small victory over 'Western imperialism'.

When Islamist terrorists blew up dozens of innocent Londoners, however, Ali showed remarkably more sympathy for their motives than he had for those of the Kosovar rebels: 'it is safe to assume that the cause of these bombs is the unstinting support given by New Labour and its prime minister to the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.' Ali advises 'immediately ending the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine'. So in Ali's eyes, Kosovo Albanians - despite their secular politics and refusal to engage in suicide bombings of Serb civilians - had no justification for fighting against the Serbian military and police oppression of their homeland, but fundamentalism and indiscriminate civilian bombings are an understandable response on the part of unoccupied, non-oppressed British Muslims to events on the other side of the world.

Robert Fisk, a champion of the Arab-nationalist cause and another

selectively 'anti-war' writer, responded to the genocide of the Bosnian Muslims in 1992 by publishing lurid stories of Croatian Ustasha atrocities against Serbs in World War II, in a transparent effort to whitewash a contemporary genocide by highlighting one that was half a century old. While talking of Croat fascists in World War II, Fisk did not see fit to mention the anti-British activities of Arab fascists at the time - the Palestinian fascist Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini, was - like the Croat fascist Ante Pavelic - an enthusiastic ally of Hitler, a parallel that, mysteriously, is rarely drawn in Fisk's articles.

Fisk subsequently campaigned against the Kosovo war in a series of articles in *The Independent*, which somehow managed to get published despite the 'anti-Serb Western media bias'. Now, in response to the London bombings, Fisk argues: 'It was crystal clear Britain would be a target ever since Tony Blair decided to join George Bush's war on terror'. He quotes bin Laden as saying: 'If you bomb our cities, we will bomb yours'. Fisk's response is: 'There you go, as they say'. Fisk could just as easily have written: 'It was crystal clear Serbia would be a target ever since Slobodan Milosevic decided to expel the Albanian population of Kosovo'. He could have quoted Western leaders as saying to Milosevic: 'If you attack the Kosovo Albanians, we will attack you.' When NATO began bombing Serbia following its rejection of the Rambouillet accord, Fisk could have commented: 'There you go, as they say.' But for Fisk, apparently, double standards are only objectionable when held by Western leaders.

The 'anti-war' people's sole political *raison d'être* is hatred of the modern liberal-democratic order in the West. This hatred they share with the fascists and terrorists for whom they apologise - be they Serb or Islamic. Their apologies for the London bombers, like their apologies for the Srebrenica killers, represent a continuous howl of rage at a modern world that has left them and their politics behind. It is a hatred by which they justify their own hypocrisy, cynicism and double standards: denigrating the resistance of moderate Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo to genocide and dispossession, while apologising for the pampered fundamentalist brats who bombed the London underground for reasons of abstract ideology. For those of us in the

West who oppose fascism and fundamentalism and support liberty and democracy, whether we campaign over the Balkans or the Middle East or both, the domestic opponents we face are the same.

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