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The Guardian, Noam Chomsky and the Milosevic Lobby

By Marko Attila Hoare, 4th February 2006

Sometimes facts are stranger than fiction. On 31 October 2005, *The Guardian* published an [interview with Noam Chomsky](#), prophet of coffee-table anti-imperialism and verbal conjuror extraordinaire, carried out by the journalist Emma Brockes, which was highly embarrassing to him. The interview exposed him as having revisionist views in relation to the Srebrenica massacre, which he described as ‘probably overstated’ and which he has minimised at various times and in various ways. The interview also cited him as saying that reports of Serb concentration-camps were ‘probably not true’, and that claims that these camps had been deliberately invented by the Western media to demonise the Serbs were ‘probably correct’. Despite being a self-proclaimed champion of freedom of speech, Chomsky decided

that in this instance, the right to free speech was not applicable. Brockes made one small error of detail, in her claim that ‘Chomsky uses quotation marks to undermine things he disagrees with and, in print at least, it can come across less as academic than as witheringly teenage; like, Srebrenica was so not a massacre.’ For while Chomsky has indeed been highly ambiguous in his references to the Srebrenica massacre, he has never actually put the term in quotation marks; Brockes’s sentence accurately reflected Chomsky’s ambiguous view of Srebrenica, but erred as to the form in which this ambiguity was manifested. By homing in on this error of detail, while not disputing the accuracy of the rest of the interview, Chomsky claimed that Brockes had falsely represented his views on Srebrenica. He therefore successfully pressurised *The Guardian* to repudiate the interview and remove it from its website. Having been stabbed in the back by her editors, Brockes was now subject to an unparalleled campaign of vilification by Chomsky’s supporters. Yet though both Chomsky and *The Guardian* thereby hoped to put the lid on this unfortunate incident, they have failed to do so, and the debate over *The Guardian*’s so-called [‘correction’](#) of the Brockes interview continues to reverberate. Those Bosnian genocide-survivors who have spoken out on the matter, have universally condemned both Chomsky and *The Guardian*. Yet the latter have received support from an expected, but perhaps not entirely welcome source, in the form of members of two interconnected lobbies - the [‘International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic’](#) and the [‘Srebrenica Research Group’](#), which exists to deny the Srebrenica massacre. Furthermore, we have evidence to suggest that Chomsky is in close contact with members of both groups, who keep him informed about their efforts to defend him - from the charge that he is one of them! You couldn’t make it up!

To understand how Britain’s leading liberal paper should have found itself in such a position - of being denounced by Bosnian genocide-survivors but defended by lobbyists for Slobodan Milosevic - some additional background is needed. Having once decided to capitulate to Chomsky, presumably out of terror at the prospect of libel action, *The Guardian* now bent over backward to apologise, not only to Chomsky, but to another, much more overt Srebrenica revisionist, Diana Johnstone, who is on record as a denier of the

massacre, and whom - as Brockes described in her interview - Chomsky had supported. *The Guardian*, in an orgy of self-abasement, accepted Johnstone's false claim that she had not denied the Srebrenica massacre, and Chomsky's equally false claim that his support for Johnstone 'related entirely to her right to freedom of speech', not because he agreed with her views on Srebrenica (Why precisely Chomsky should have been so concerned to disassociate himself from Johnstone's views on Srebrenica, when she supposedly has not denied the massacre after all, is just one of the many paradoxes of this case). *The Guardian* repudiated not only Brockes's interview, but a [letter it had published by Kemal Pervanic](#), a survivor of the Serb concentration-camp Omarska, condemning Chomsky for his views on Srebrenica and on the Serb concentration-camps. Chomsky falsely claimed - and *The Guardian* upheld his falsehood - that Pervanic's letter concerned only the revisionist views on Srebrenica that Brockes had falsely attributed to him, and that Pervanic's accusations were therefore unfounded and should not have been published. In reality, Pervanic condemned Chomsky above all for his views on the Serb camps, the accuracy of whose portrayal by Brockes Chomsky has made no attempt to dispute.

In the face of this travesty of correct journalistic practice, a group of several Bosnian genocide-survivors, academics, journalists and others with a specialisation on the subject of the Bosnian war - the present author included - resolved to write a letter to *The Guardian* to protest at its legitimisation of genocide revisionism. We pointed out that a) Johnstone had indeed denied the Srebrenica massacre; b) Chomsky had not merely defended her right to free speech, but endorsed her views; c) Chomsky's own statements on Srebrenica have been highly ambiguous, so that Brockes's presentation of them was therefore essentially fair; d) *The Guardian*, in its apology to Chomsky, had misrepresented Pervanic and insulted his intelligence; and e) both Chomsky and Johnstone have denied genocide took place in Bosnia, despite the conviction of a Bosnian Serb general, by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), a UN court, for aiding and abetting genocide. We called upon *The Guardian* to retract its 'correction' to the Brockes interview and to apologise unreservedly to both Brockes and Pervanic. The letter, which was emailed to *The Guardian* on 8

December, can be read at the [following link](#), along with its stellar cast of signatories.

Our letter coincided with a much longer and more detailed refutation of *The Guardian*'s 'correction', written by Oliver Kamm, Francis Wheen and David Aaronovitch, which was sent to *The Guardian* at about the same time and which remains unpublished. These two letters were what *The Guardian* readers' editor Ian Mayes, author of the original 'correction', meant when [he referred to](#) 'an extraordinary storm of opposing passions' that his 'correction' had provoked. This created a certain pressure on *The Guardian* to acknowledge the extent to which its 'correction' was being called into question by expert opinion. Our letter had been sent from the present author's email, and I received on the same day a telephone call from *The Guardian*'s Deputy Editor, Georgina Henry, who informed me that *The Guardian* would be willing to publish our letter, but that at nearly 950 words, it was too long in its present form. Would we be willing to shorten it to no more than 450 words? I responded that we would. We duly produced a shortened version of the letter, which we sent to *The Guardian* on 9 December. Ms Henry thanked me for this, and informed me that *The Guardian*'s lawyers would be examining our letter before publication. At the request of Siobhain Butterworth, head of *The Guardian*'s legal department, I submitted on the same day supporting evidence for the claims we had made in our letter.

At this point, however, there appears to have been a change of heart at *The Guardian*. Butterworth did not merely examine the letter and suggest changes, but rewrote it in her own words, divesting it of most of its original meaning and weakening it to the point of tepidity. The following is the text of our abridged letter:

Sir,

We wish to protest at *The Guardian*'s 'correction' of 17 November, relating to Emma Brockes's interview with Noam Chomsky (31 October),

Chomsky's support for Diana Johnstone, and the Bosnian concentration-camp survivor Kemal Pervanic's letter to *The Guardian* (2 November). This 'correction' unjustly besmirches Brockes, misrepresents and insults Pervanic, and legitimises attempts to deny the Bosnian genocide and minimise the Srebrenica massacre:

1) It is untrue that Johnstone has never denied the Srebrenica massacre. In her book *Fools' Crusade* (2002), Johnstone puts the term 'Srebrenica massacre' in quote marks; denies 8,000 Muslims were killed, claiming that most of these merely 'fled Srebrenica' and 'made it to safety in Muslim territory'; and admits only the Serb 'execution' of 199 Muslims.

2) It is untrue that Chomsky's support for Johnstone was limited to her 'right to free speech'. An open letter signed by Chomsky states: 'We regard Johnstone's 'Fools' Crusade' as an outstanding work, dissenting from the mainstream view but doing so by an appeal to fact and reason'. Elsewhere, Chomsky describes the book as 'quite serious and important... Johnstone argues - and, in fact, clearly demonstrates - that a good deal of what has been charged has no basis in fact, and much of it is pure fabrication.'

3) It is untrue that Chomsky has been unambiguous in recognising the Srebrenica massacre. Chomsky has described Serb forces as having 'apparently slaughtered' Muslims in Srebrenica; the thousands of dead as mere 'estimates'; the killings as Serb 'retaliation' for alleged Muslim crimes against Serbs; Serb behaviour at Srebrenica as better than US behaviour in Iraq; and the crime of Srebrenica as 'much lesser' than the Indonesian massacre of 5-6,000 civilians in East Timor in 1999.

4) It is untrue that Pervanic's letter to *The Guardian* of 2 November 'addressed a part of the interview which was false'. In the interview, Chomsky described Ed Vulliamy's reports on Serb concentration camps as 'probably not true' and Living Marxism's claim that the character of these camps was deliberately misrepresented by Western reporters as 'probably correct' - even though this claim was proven false in a British court. Chomsky has never claimed that, on this issue, Brockes misrepresented his

position. Pervanic's letter condemned Chomsky primarily on this point.

5) Both Johnstone and Chomsky reject the term 'genocide' in reference to Serb actions at Srebrenica or in Bosnia as a whole, despite the conviction, by a UN war-crimes tribunal, of a Bosnian Serb general for aiding and abetting genocide at Srebrenica.

We call upon *The Guardian* to withdraw its 'correction' of 17 November; to apologise unreservedly to Brockes for unjustly impugning her professional reputation; and to apologise unreservedly to Pervanic for misrepresenting his argument and insulting his intelligence.

Yours faithfully,

The following is Butterworth's version of our letter:

Sir,

We wish to protest at *The Guardian*'s 'correction' of 17 November, relating to Emma Brockes's interview with Noam Chomsky (31 October). This 'correction' legitimises attempts to deny the Bosnian genocide and minimise the Srebrenica massacre:

1) We disagree with the statement that Johnstone has never denied the Srebrenica massacre. In her book 'Fools' crusade' (2002), Johnstone puts the term 'Srebrenica massacre' in quote marks; denies 8,000 Muslims were killed, claiming that most of these merely 'fled Srebrenica' and 'made it to safety in Muslim territory'; and while she acknowledges that 2,631 bodies were exhumed in the region she admits only the Serb execution of 199 Muslims.

2) In our view Chomsky has been ambiguous in his recognition of the

Srebrenica massacre. While Chomsky says that the Serbs ‘trucked out all the women and children, they kept the men inside and apparently slaughtered them. The estimates are thousands of people slaughtered’, he also characterises the killings as Serb ‘retaliation’ for alleged Muslim crimes against Serbs; and the crime of Srebrenica as ‘terrible but much lesser’ than the Indonesian massacre of 5-6,000 civilians in East Timor in 1999.

3) Despite the conviction, by a UN war-crimes tribunal, of a Bosnian Serb general for aiding and abetting genocide at Srebrenica Chomsky maintains that the term ‘genocide’ is ‘generally overused’, not just in relation to Srebrenica and Bosnia but also in relation to East Timor and elsewhere. His view is that the terms should be reserved for the Holocaust and Rwanda and ‘maybe a few other cases’. Johnstone rejects the term ‘genocide’ in reference to Serb actions at Srebrenica’.

Yours faithfully,

The reader will note that our letter, already reduced to just under 450 words at Henry’s request, was now further reduced to 265 words. Butterworth removed the demand for an apology to Brockes on the grounds that Brockes accepted the correction - whether or not Brockes was free to do otherwise, given that her bosses had already decided to repudiate her, and whether or not the head of *The Guardian*’s legal department is the most objective judge of this matter, are moot points. Butterworth similarly removed the demand for an apology to Pervanic, repeating the claims made in *The Guardian*’s ‘correction’ and by Chomsky, that it addressed a part of the article about which Chomsky had complained and to which the correction referred - even though, as our letter specifically pointed out, the best part of Pervanic’s letter was not concerned with Chomsky’s views about Srebrenica (and even the part that was did not repeat Brockes’s error about quote marks). Whereas Butterworth might, perhaps, have felt that our presentation of the views of Chomsky and Johnstone needed to be reworded to avoid possible libel action by either of the latter, this would not explain why she felt it necessarily to

delete parts of our letter that were solely concerned with *The Guardian's* incorrect treatment of Brockes and Pervanic.

Whatever her reasons, this slaughtering of our letter amounted, in our view, to a rejection, and I informed Butterworth that we should be publishing it elsewhere. She warned me that this would be at our own risk. [Our letter](#) was published online by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), which, to date, has not been the object of legal action by either Chomsky or Johnstone.

Among the signatories of our letter are three survivors of the Srebrenica massacre: Emir Suljagic, Hasan Nuhanovic and Nihad Salkic. A fourth signatory, Nerma Jelacic, is a refugee who was driven from her home in Visegrad by the Serb ethnic-cleansers. Pervanic himself likewise informed me that he felt *The Guardian* owed him an apology. Another refugee from Srebrenica, the blogger Alan Kocevic, has similarly expressed his [anger and disgust](#) at Chomsky's genocide-denial over Srebrenica and at his support for Johnstone - an opinion derived not from Brockes's disputed interview, but from Chomsky's more recent statements on Bosnian television. These, then, are the people who are not convinced by Chomsky's or Johnstone's protestations of the respectability of their views on Bosnia and Srebrenica. But what of the people who take the side of Chomsky and Johnstone?

Last month (January), BIRN received an [open letter](#), in response to our open letter, which it likewise posted on its website and which sought to defend Chomsky and Johnstone. It referred to Brockes's interview as a 'deliberate effort to smear both Prof Chomsky and Ms Diana Johnstone over issues related to the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.' However, the signatories declared themselves satisfied with *The Guardian's* correction, and dismayed at our attempts to challenge it, so that they 'felt compelled to urge those responsible to use their common sense and not let this sad affair go any further'. The signatories wrote of Johnstone: 'Ms. Johnstone's work, epitomised in her book *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions*, is a model of humanity, insight and impeccable scholarship. We cannot understand how anybody who has read this book could find it

anything but admirable’. Furthermore: ‘The scholarly contributions of Diana Johnstone and Noam Chomsky need no defence from us. They are capable of standing on their own. We write only to oppose the attempts to carry out a kind of Inquisition in matters of the Balkan Wars that aims to root out as heresy and apostasy any challenges to the prevailing orthodoxy, no matter how well-reasoned the arguments or how solid their evidential foundation.’ The letter then went on, precisely, to question whether 8,000 Muslims really had been killed at Srebrenica; to question whether genocide really had taken place; and to question the legitimacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). So who are these people who leap to the defence of Chomsky and Johnstone, who support *The Guardian’s* ‘correction’ to the Brockes interview, and who repeat *The Guardian* readers’ editor’s plea - indeed actually quoting him - that ‘a line should be drawn under the matter’? The authors of this open letter were unable to find a single established scholar of former-Yugoslav or Balkan history to endorse their views on Srebrenica; their signatories were of a different type.

Second on the list of signatories in support of Chomsky and Johnstone is Christopher Black, whom the letter describes only as a ‘Canadian lawyer dealing with human rights issues’. This is a somewhat euphemistic way of describing a man who is Vice-President of the International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic. Further down the list we find David Jacobs, described as a ‘lawyer practising on human rights, defence council before ICTR’. Again, a somewhat selective description of a man who is a member of the legal committee of the ICDSM. Several other signatories (Vera Vratusa, George Szamuely, Nebojsa Malic) are also signatories of the [ICDSM’s petition](#), which appeared after Milosevic had been arrested by the Serbian authorities, but before he had been deported to the Hague. The petition reads as follows: ‘We the undersigned demand that the Serbian authorities immediately release Slobodan Milosevic and all other Serbian patriots from jail... We demand an end to the arbitrary kidnapping, arrest, harassment and persecution of Yugoslav leaders and soldiers and ordinary people whose crime was to set an example to the world by resisting NATO aggression. Free Slobodan Milosevic at once! End persecution [sic] of Mr. Milosevic and all Yugoslav patriots and soldiers at once! Jail the real war

criminals: the NATO leaders who committed crimes against humanity and against Yugoslav sovereignty and who continue to commit those crimes today.’

Several of the other signatories of the letter in support of Chomsky and Johnstone are members or supporters of the Srebrenica Research Group: Ed Herman, Philip Corwin, Milan Bulajic, Jonathan Rooper, Tim Fenton, Philip Hammond, Michael Mandel, George Bogdanich and George Szamuely (note that Szamuely is both a member of the SRG and a signatory of the ICDSM’s petition). The SRG is a campaign group set up to deny the Srebrenica massacre. At its [press conference](#) on 12 July 2005, the SRG claimed that **‘The premise that Serbian forces executed 7,000 to 8,000 people “was never a possibility”... at least 38,000 Srebrenica residents survived out of a population of 40,000 before the capture of the enclave. Around 2,000 Muslims who fled with the 28th division were killed, most by fighting, but also hundreds executed by paramilitary units and a mercenary group.’** (emphasis in original). Thus, those leaping to defend Chomsky and Johnstone from accusations of Srebrenica revisionism include people who openly and unambiguously claim that only ‘hundreds’ were ‘executed’ at Srebrenica, that only about 2,000 were killed, and that most of these were killed in combat. One of these people, George Bogdanich, is the director of a film entitled ‘Yugoslavia: The avoidable war’, which was used by [Milosevic himself](#) as evidence in his defence at the ICTY.

Other signatories of the letter in support of Chomsky and Johnstone include George Kenney, who is [on record](#) as claiming that only 25-60,000 were killed in Bosnia; and Louis Dalmas, editor of the ‘Balkans Infos’ website, which follows the same political line as the ICDSM and SRG and that advertises literature written by [Milosevic himself](#). Dalmas’s website [carries articles](#) by Michael Parenti, head of the US section of the ICDSM and author of a book for which Milosevic wrote the foreword, and by Kosta Cavoski, head of the ‘International Committee for the Truth about Radovan Karadzic’, a lobby set up to defend the fugitive former Bosnian Serb leader and indicted war-criminal.

Such are the eminent individuals who have spoken out in defence of Noam Chomsky and Diana Johnstone - essentially the same people who have spoken out in defence of Slobodan Milosevic and/or who have unambiguously denied the Srebrenica massacre. Of course, this does not mean that Chomsky and Johnstone really are associated with these people. Or does it? In his article [‘The Politics of the Srebrenica Massacre’](#), SRG leader Ed Herman thanks a number of individuals for their help and advice, including Diana Johnstone, ICDSM signatory Vera Vratusa and a certain George Pumphrey. Of the last of these, Herman writes ‘George Pumphrey’s Srebrenica: Three Years Later, And Still Searching’, ‘is a classic critique of the establishment Srebrenica massacre narrative’. George Pumphrey has actually described Srebrenica as a [‘hoax’](#) and holds views that are [borderline anti-Semitic](#); his denial of the reality of anti-Semitism and neo-Nazi violence against Jews resembles his denial of the Srebrenica massacre.

Pumphrey wrote his own letter in support of Chomsky and Johnstone, which he sent to the BIRN, *The Guardian*, the American left-wing journal ‘Counterpunch’, Diana Johnstone and Noam Chomsky, and which has consequently been circulating around the internet, although it does not appear to have been published anywhere. When Pumphrey’s text found its way to me, and I saw to whom it had been addressed, I immediately wrote to BIRN, urging that they publish it, though my advice was not followed (I would, however, be happy to forward it to anyone who is interested). It is a straightforward claim that the Srebrenica massacre never happened, not essentially different from his published article making this claim. More interesting is the fact that Pumphrey appended to his article sections of an email correspondence that had occurred between his circle of fellow travellers, discussing their possible response to our own open letter, and which I reproduce below. The reader should note in particular the list of recipients of the third email reproduced below, sent by SRG member David Peterson to Diana Johnstone, Noam Chomsky, George Pumphrey and others. Chomsky’s email address appears directly before that of Tiphaine Dickson, attorney of the ICDSM.

-----[First Email]-----

From: Diana Johnstone [mailto:DianaJohnstone@compuserve.com]

Sent: Wednesday, December 28, 2005 6:16 PM

To: Blind.Copy.Receiver@compuserve.com

Subject: Guardian bis

Could someone please forward this to Michael Mandel? I don't have his email! address where I am now. I had hoped to move onto other matters, but I am going to have to defend myself from this new assault. Diana.

-----[Second Email]-----

From: "Ed Herman"

Dear Friends: I wonder whether it wouldn't be advisable to do what the "anti-revisionists" do here, namely, put up a letter signed by an equal number of us "revisionists" contesting their attack, rather than leaving Diana Johnstone to defend herself alone? An impressive feature of this attack, that I think should be featured, is the use of "revisionism" (and "denial") to put down any contesting views to an institutionalised truth that they espouse. This is in line with their performance from the early 1990s in viciously attacking all dissenters, including Peter Brock and George Kenney, who challenged the party line already fixed. The party liners' behavior then and now is hostile to debate and has a strong element of ad hominem as well as appeal to unchallengeable truth, along with a minimal appeal to fact. They also continually misrepresent the positions of the "revisionist" targets. I like the statement in Freebairn's summary below that the genocide in Bosnia has been "legally established." As Michael Mandel has suggested, this ICTY claim is itself a nice case of "revisionism," but meeting the party line demand it ceases to be revisionism and becomes truth. What do you think about this?
Ed Herman.

-----[Third Email]-----

From:davidepet@comcast.net [mailto:davidepet@comcast.net]

Sent:Thursday, December 29, 2005 11:01 AM

To: Ed Herman; chomsky2@mit.edu; Tiphaine Dickson;
IntPressIntl@aol.com; 'PhillipCorwin'; Vera Vratusa-Zunjic;
AvoidableWar@aol.com; dianajohnstone@compuserve.com;
hammonpb@sbu.ac.uk; Jonathan Rooper; milan bulajic;
Petokraka78@aol.com; Sanjoy Mahajan; tim@tjfenton.plus.com; 'george
pumphrey'; 'george Szamuely'; 'michael mandel'

Cc: davidepet@comcast.net

Subject:RE: Guardian bis

Dear Ed: Very good idea. Whenever I encounter use of the terms 'revisionism' and 'revisionist', immediately I know that the Truth in this instance is too important for it not to be true. The collective who signed onto this particular letter employ "Bosnian genocide" and "Srebrenica massacre" both as touchstones of Truth, and as whips for disciplining deviant views. Only a totalitarian mentality works like this. If they were concerned about the historical accuracy of a person's work, they would challenge it on grounds that it is wrong. But the use of the accusations revisionism and denial work on a wholly different plane: Namely, political discipline. Thus to resort to these accusations is to resort to a species of the charge of heresy. In what sense can one's work revise the historical record, and its producer be guilty of some egregious crime for doing so? In the sense that it deviates from the doctrine of the faithful. Only a totalitarian mentality employs a charge like revisionism. Furthermore, what should we call a collective that refuses to emend its body of accepted knowledge in the face of evidence to the contrary? Sincerely Yours,DavidPetersondavidepet@comcast.net

-----[End of emails]-----

Further comment on the character of this circle would be superfluous. But how closely do the views of Johnstone and Chomsky mirror those of their correspondents? Johnstone has challenged the accepted view of the Srebrenica massacre in her book *Fools' Crusade*: 'Six years after the summer of 1995, ICTY forensic teams had exhumed 2,631 bodies in the region, and identified fewer than 50. In an area where fighting had raged for years, some of the bodies were certainly of Serbs as well as of Muslims. Of these bodies, 199 were found to have been bound or blindfolded, and must reasonably be presumed on the basis of the material evidence to have been executed.' I have interpreted this to mean that Johnstone admits the Serb 'execution' (what the rest of us call 'massacre') of 199 Muslim victims, and that as this reduces the massacre to less than 2.5% of its accepted death-toll, Johnstone has effectively denied the massacre. Some of her defenders, such as [Brian Leiter](#), have suggested that Johnstone's mention of the 2,631 exhumed bodies shows that she has not necessarily reduced the Srebrenica massacre toll to only 199; presumably, they feel, she leaves open the possibility that the death toll may have been over two and a half thousand, or less than a third of the accepted figure of 8,000 (though she does imply that some or most of those 2,631 may have been killed in fighting, and some may have been Serbs). Since Johnstone does not actually explicitly draw any conclusion about the scale of the Srebrenica massacre from the evidence she puts forward, readers are left to draw their own. Yet the Srebrenica Research Group, which explicitly thanks Johnstone for her contribution to their work and whose members praise her book, has explicitly stated its belief that only 2,000 Muslims were killed at Srebrenica, that most of these were killed in combat, and that only several hundred were 'executed'. So there are two possible interpretations: that Johnstone and the SRG are in agreement, and that Johnstone has indeed reduced the Srebrenica massacre death-toll to a figure in the hundreds, as I believe; or that Johnstone perhaps believes that the SRG is wrong and that the death-toll may be as high as two and a half thousand or so, but for some reason neglects to spell this out, as Leiter appears to believe. Readers are free to decide whose interpretation is more plausible.

So far as Chomsky is concerned, he cannot of course be held responsible if a group of Milosevic supporters and unambiguous Srebrenica deniers should happen to include his name on a mailing list of people coordinating their action to defend him from the charge that he is one of them, even if he does also regularly write for the [same website](#) as they do; even if he did tell Brockes that he believed the Srebrenica massacre was 'probably overstated'; even if he has [described Johnstone's book](#) as 'an outstanding work, dissenting from the mainstream view but doing so by an appeal to fact and reason, in a great tradition'; even if he has [described the Srebrenica massacre](#) as 'much lesser' than the Indonesian massacre of 5-6,000 people in East Timor in 1999; and even if he has in the past joined with SRG leader Ed Herman to [minimise the atrocities of the Pol Pot regime](#). It is possible that he entirely disapproves of their wicked activities, but has simply neglected ever to say this openly - readers are again free to draw their own conclusions.

In his [open letter to *The Guardian*](#), Chomsky claimed that 'with five minutes research on the internet, any journalist could find many places where I described the massacre as a massacre, never with quotes.' In my last article on the subject, I mentioned that I had failed to find a single web-page where Chomsky does indeed describe the Srebrenica massacre as a massacre. Since then, various people have pointed me to a sum total of [ONE web-page](#) where Chomsky does indeed refer in passing to the 'Srebrenica massacre', without putting it in quotes. This dates back to 2002, the year of the appearance of Johnstone's book, which appears to have influenced Chomsky's perception of Srebrenica. Thus, his subsequent references to the latter have been more ambiguous, up until the controversy with Brockes, since when he appears to have come back down off the fence so far as Srebrenica is concerned - though not about Bosnia in general, as his statements about Omarska and the Serb concentration-camps show.

Indeed, where Bosnia atrocity-denial is concerned, Chomsky has - to borrow a quip from David Lloyd George - sat on the fence for so long that the iron has entered into his soul. Bosnian Muslim victims remain for him and his circle 'unworthy victims' - to borrow a well-known Chomskyite concept - as are Croats, Albanians, Israelis, Iraqi Kurds and Iraqi victims of suicide

bombings, whereas Palestinians, Turkish Kurds, Serbs, East Timorese and Iraqi victims of American air-strikes are ‘worthy victims’, whose death-toll figures are never subject to the same demands for forensic evidence as are the Srebrenica victims. When was the last time an anti-American radical complained that the figure of one million victims of US air-strikes in Cambodia, or 250,000 East Timorese victims of Indonesia, is too neat and round and has not been backed up with the evidence of an equivalent number of corpses, appropriately examined to determine the cause of death of every single one?

The questions of whether the Srebrenica massacre really did happen, and what its death toll was, have already been extensively addressed by others. Readers should look [here](#) for the evidence for a death-toll of 8,000; [here](#) for a breakdown of the forensic and other evidence collected by the year 2000; [here](#) for the Bosnian Serb government’s own recognition of the massacre; and [here](#) for the most extensive survey yet of the massacre, carried out by a Dutch team of experts, which refers to the ‘mass murder’ of Muslims at Srebrenica - a term which you will not find Johnstone, Chomsky or their friends using in this context.

There remains the question of freedom of speech. Chomsky has [gone on record](#) to denounce ‘Britain’s outrageous libel laws, denounced as scandalous worldwide by everyone concerned with the right of freedom of expression’, yet it was probably thanks to the existence of these laws that Chomsky was able to win his unethical victory over *The Guardian*. The facts are that a journalist’s interview with Chomsky was driven off *The Guardian*’s website for the crime of portraying the great prophet in a negative light, and that the journalist in question was then subject to an unprecedented campaign of vilification. She has been accused of everything, from being a tool of *The Guardian*’s conspiracy to defame Chomsky (by [Chomsky himself](#)), to being an [apologist for Ariel Sharon](#). An [entry for Wikipedia](#) was created for her that refers exclusively to her interview with Chomsky and her repudiation by *The Guardian*. Apparently, *The Guardian* has been the subject of a campaign aimed at her dismissal for the crime of her interview. Leiter [virtually salivates](#) at the thought of Brookes’s fall:

‘Perhaps Ms. Brockes, having now been publically [sic] humiliated with the total [sic!] repudiation of her work in this case, will do better in the future; or perhaps she will find a different profession, where she can conduct herself more honorably.’ Two supporters of the Henry Jackson Society - myself and Oliver Kamm - have been vocal critics of Chomsky’s behaviour in this affair. Consequently, Richard Symonds of the ‘Cyril Joad Society’ held a ‘Christmas lecturette’ to ‘mark Noam Chomsky’s 77th birthday (and to counter the Henry Jackson Society)’, the flyer for which Symonds forwarded unsolicited to me – a week after the ‘Christmas lecturette’ had already occurred. The flyer claimed: ‘There is now an orchestrated attempt to silence the voice of Noam Chomsky - especially by THE HENRY JACKSON SOCIETY.’ Symonds is apparently unable to distinguish between criticising Chomsky and attempting to silence him. The signatories of the open letter in defence of Chomsky and Johnstone, described above, have accused myself and the other defenders of Emma Brockes and Kemal Pervanic of being ‘inquisitors’ - for daring to expose the dishonesty of their gurus; the same people for whom Milosevic is a ‘Serbian patriot’ describe Srebrenica survivors and Bosnian refugees as ‘inquisitors’, naturally. Chomsky himself [accused](#) *The Guardian* editors of ‘lies and deceit’ over the Brockes interview, alleging a conspiracy to defame him, and humbly comparing his own treatment by *The Guardian* to the murder of El Salvadorean dissidents by US-backed death-squads in the 1980s. Such is the Chomskyite tolerance of criticism.

It should be crystal clear which side in this debate is the enemy of freedom of speech. Let us be absolutely clear on this point: anyone has the right publicly to deny the Srebrenica massacre, or the Holocaust, or Pol Pot’s genocide, because we believe in democracy, where everyone has the right to say what they think. But equally, the rest of us have the right to expose and condemn those who do this. It is one thing for Holocaust-deniers and other conspiracy-theorists and crackpots to have the freedom to disseminate their views, and another for a respectable newspaper like *The Guardian* to endorse them. Of course, *The Guardian* is free to endorse whatever views it likes, but let us be clear about the consequences: this is the thin end of the wedge; first the Srebrenica massacre is dismissed as a ‘hoax’ of ‘Anglo-Saxon imperialism’,

and before you know it, the Holocaust-deniers' 'challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy' will be taught to our children in schools as a respectable 'alternative' to the 'mainstream' viewpoint. Far fetched? Already the fashionable 'anti-war' current embraces - along with the usual Chomskyites and Guardianistas - Islamists who routinely denigrate Jews and deny the Holocaust. The Chomsky-Brockes controversy is, so far as we are concerned, about our right to expose genocide-denial in all its forms; to counter the spread of this poison - not through censorship, but through our pens. This is why we shall not do what both *The Guardian* and the Milosevic lobby want, and draw a line under this affair.

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