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The Anatomy of a Needless War

by Bob Allen

July 1999



CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

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ISBN # 0-88627-963-1

Layout: Shannon Daub
Thanks to Ed Finn for editing the paper.

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After more than two months of bombing, NATO's war against Yugoslavia has come to an end. NATO leaders and the mainstream media have hailed the war as a moral crusade in which western countries defended the innocent Kosovo Albanians from the genocide and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Serbian army and police under the direction of Yugoslav President Milosevic. Indeed, the war was taken to mark the beginning of a new world order in which humanitarian values will take precedence over national sovereignty.

A review of the situation, however, shows that this characterization is biased and propagandistic. While many Albanians have been expelled from Kosovo by Yugoslav security forces, the Albanians are scarcely more admirable than the Serbs in either intentions or actions. American policy is directed as much or more by great power motives as by humanitarian ones. Western countries bear a heavy responsibility for the collapse of Yugoslavia, of which the Kosovo war was the final phase, and, indeed, for the breakdown of the talks at Rambouillet, which precipitated the war.

NATO's conduct of the war raises serious moral questions: The bombing campaign caused so many civilian deaths and such widespread destruction in Kosovo and the rest of Yugoslavia that NATO leaders may also be guilty of war crimes. Heaping all the blame for the war on President Milosevic is a convenient way for western countries to evade their responsibility for the diastorous turn of events, but is not consistent with the historical record, as will be shown.

There are three views about the causes of the current conflict.¹ The first corresponds to the NATO line repeated in the mainstream media: The Serbs were aggressors and their neighbours were innocent victims. The solution was to beat the aggressor until he stopped. This view has

been the basis of American foreign policy since the breakup of Yugoslavia. Often there is a tendency to shift the focus from the Serbs to “Milosevic.” This is a natural move in American thought, since a moral crusade is simpler if there is a single devil.

Moreover, singling out Milosevic exonerates the Serbs, so the Americans can 1) feel they themselves are not using ethnic stereotypes, 2) say they have no fight with the Serbian people, and 3) say the problem is an evil dictator so that ethnic conflict can be stopped by bringing democracy to Serbia.

These statements about Milosevic and democracy are hard to square with the popularity of ethnic nationalism in Serbia and the other parts of the former Yugoslavia, but they correspond to the American concept of “rogue states” that are run by dictators and violate international law.

The second view, which is more common in Europe, sees today’s ethnic conflict as the latest outbreak of hostilities that have gone on for centuries. Since ethnic hatred pervades society, the fundamental problem is not a single individual like Milosevic, nor are the Serbs particularly to blame since there is a long record of hatred among all groups. The communists suppressed these passions but did not extirpate them; they have been passed on from generation to generation like a primordial sludge from the Middle Ages.

With the advent of democracy, the old hostilities have resurfaced. Removing Milosevic will not solve the problem; some other nationalist leader will simply take his place. Democracy is not a solution either, since ethnic hatreds are so widespread. The problem is how to separate the groups so they will not kill each other. While the Americans have been anxious to reverse “ethnic cleansing” since realizing it would “reward aggression,” the European view has tended, perhaps cynically, to accept a partition of the populations as necessary to end the violence.

The third view attributes the outbreak of ethno-nationalism to the economic collapse that began in the 1980s. The decline in ethno-nationalism in Yugoslavia after the Second World War was not solely the result of communist repression, but a response to the rapid economic development of the country. People left the countryside for the city, received an education, earned more than their parents, and lived in a society that guaranteed them economic and social security.

The Albanian population had the same advantages, but started from a lower level and made less progress and so did not distance itself as much from its feudal past. Beginning in the 1980s, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank imposed various macro economic reforms and structural adjustment programs on the country that first checked economic expansion and after 1990 led to widespread collapse and unemployment. The end of socialism removed the

economic security Yugoslavs had come to expect and made them receptive to ethno-nationalist rhetoric.

These three views highlight the themes to explore—the history of ethno-nationalism and its relationship to economic development and decline. The American view that ethnic conflict could be solved by bombing Milosevic, reversing aggression, and introducing a democratic constitution is hard to square with the facts. Ethnic conflict has a long history in the Balkans, and the current conflicts can be regarded as one more swing of the pendulum. Economic development moderated ethnic tensions, but economic collapse since the late 1980s has intensified them. While today's ethnic violence is similar to earlier outbreaks, there are also differences since economic development has refined the primordial sludge of medieval prejudice into more concentrated spirits that are at least as deadly.

Early History of Serbia and Kosovo

The history of ethno-nationalism must start in the Middle Ages, since the significance of Kosovo derives from that period. The Serbs regard Kosovo as the original site of their nation. Slavs migrated into the Balkans in the sixth century CE. The Serbs in Kosovo and Montenegro were a tribal society until the 1160s when Stefan Nemanja founded the first Serb royal dynasty. It expanded until the death of Tsar Dusan in 1355. The monarchy was centred in Kosovo, and a distinctive feature of this period was the endowment of monasteries that remain Serbian national monuments to this very day.

After 1355, the Serbian state began to disintegrate. The decline is usually attributed to the Turkish expansion into the Balkans. The Turks first defeated the Serbs at the Battle of Maritsa in 1371, and again in the fabled battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389. The Serb kingdom lingered on as a vassal to the Turks until it was finally overrun in 1459. Serbia ceased to exist as an independent political entity until 1815, but the glories of medieval Kosovo were celebrated in epic poetry and were preserved in the many monasteries.

While Turkish expansionism undoubtedly played a role in the demise of the Serbian state, the process also reflected internal factors—geography, demography, and economics—that still exert an influence. The Serb ascendancy coincided with very high and growing populations across Europe. Population pressure increased settlement in inhospitable mountainous areas like Kosovo, and shifted its agriculture away from livestock towards grain. As elsewhere in Europe, the population pressure generated an agricultural surplus that supported feudal states, cathedrals, and monasteries.

This wave of expansion came to an abrupt end in 1348/9 with the Black Death, which slashed populations everywhere. In marginal regions like Kosovo, the population dropped precipitously, not only due to plague mortality but also because people emigrated to take up vacant farms in more fertile areas. Agriculture in Kosovo reverted to pastoralism, which was insufficient to support a nobility. So the state collapsed, and the region remains poor to the present, as will be seen.²

After the conquest of Serbia, the Turks advanced through Bosnia into Slovenia and Croatia. They were driven out of the latter provinces by the Habsburg armies in 1683-99, and the frontier between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires was stabilized along the present border between Croatia (which remained Austrian) and Bosnia (which was Ottoman).

Kosovo remained predominantly Serbian through the 16th century, but the Serb population declined thereafter. Serb rebellions against the Turks in 1689 and the 1730s were crushed and led to mass emigrations of Serbs. The Great Migration of 1690 ended in the Serb settlements north of the Danube in what became the autonomous province of Vojvodina. In addition, many Serbs left Kosovo to settle on the Croatian side of the Habsburg-Ottoman border where the Habsburgs gave them land and self-government in exchange for military service against the Turks. A large Serb population remained on the Krajina (literally “border area”) until 1995, when hundreds of thousands were driven out by the Croatian and Bosnian armies. The final flight was precipitated by NATO air strikes.

The outflow of Serbs from Kosovo in the 17th and 18th centuries opened it to settlement by Albanians. In the 19th century, Kosovo had a mixed population of Serbs and Albanians, and was a particularly impoverished region.

The Balkans in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

In 1800, the Balkans were divided between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, with Croatia and the lands north of the Danube belonging to the former, while Bosnia, Serbia and lands further south belonged to the latter. By 1913, the Ottoman presence had been eliminated, and Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Albania had become independent. The Austrian Empire, in contrast, had extended its territory by taking over the administration of Bosnia Hercegovina in 1878.

Independence of the Balkan peoples was only accomplished through vicious warfare that set the pattern for the recent war in Bosnia and the current Kosovo conflict. Extreme ethno-

nationalist traditions and national histories were cultivated to justify these policies. Modern ethnic cleansing is a direct descendant of these conflicts and is fuelled by the recollections of past atrocities and the forced relocations of populations. The idea that ethnic groups have traditional homelands from which they have been uprooted only in recent years is hard to sustain in view of the historical record.

The Serbs were the first nationality to wrest some independence from the Ottoman Empire. A series of revolts beginning in 1804 finally won for Serbia the status of an autonomous province in 1815, and by the 1830s it had acquired a hereditary prince and enlarged boundaries. The middle years of the 19th century were important for the collection and transcription of the peasant epic poetry about the battle of Kosovo Polje. These stories were reworked by Serbian intellectuals and contributed to the ideology that Serbia's "manifest destiny" (to use an American term) included Kosovo and all of the lands inhabited by people speaking Serbian.

Since essentially the same language was spoken across Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Croatia, the potential country was large. Ethnic identity—whether one was a Serb, a Croat, a Muslim, or, more recently, a Yugoslav—was up for grabs. Was it based on language (if so, when did a dialect become a language?), religion, or the alphabet (Latin or Cyrillic)? The possibilities were delimited by ethnographers, linguists, politicians, and ideologues for nationalist reasons.³ Divisive definitions of ethnicity and their indoctrination by schools and the mass media is the 20th century culmination of the 19th century literary nationalism.

Between 1875 and 1913, the Turks were finally expelled from the Balkans. The process started in 1875 as Christian peasants in Bosnia and Herzegovina rebelled, and Serbia and Montenegro went to war against the Turks: "This time we have to avenge Kosovo."⁴ The war unleashed a very modern wave of violence. Sir Arthur Evans, the noted archaeologist, was crossing Bosnia at the time and reported that "nearly 3,000 Bosnian and Herzegovinian villages are blackened ruins and over 200,000 Christian refugees are starving among the inhospitable ravines of the Dalmatian Alps."

He observed that "the burning of villages and the exodus of the defeated population is a normal and traditional incident of all Balkan wars and insurrections. It is the habit of all these peoples. What they have suffered themselves, they inflict in turn upon others."⁵ About two million people (half Orthodox and half Muslim) were driven from their homes. These included about 250,000 Serbs driven from Kosovo.⁶ This was a large segment of Kosovo's population (under one million), and this displacement, therefore, contributed in a significant degree to the Albanianization of the province.

The 1875-8 war resulted in independence for Bulgaria, minor increases in the territories of Serbia and Montenegro, and the occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina by the Austrians; but the Ottoman Empire remained in possession of much of the Balkans. In 1912, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria attacked the Turks and drove them back to Constantinople. Serbia and Greece expected to partition Albania, which had been part of the Ottoman Empire, but that was prohibited by the Great Powers (shades of NATO!) and the Albanian state was created. Bulgaria then went to war against Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro. There was ethnic cleansing by all sides. The Serbs brutally put down a revolt by Albanians in Kosovo. According to the 1914 report of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:

Houses and whole villages were reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred en masse, incredible acts of violence, pillage and brutality of every kind—such were the means which were employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery, with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians.

Military advance led to population flight throughout the Balkans. “Since the population of the countries about to be occupied knew, by tradition, instinct, and experience, what they had to expect from the armies of the enemy...they did not await their arrival, but fled.” The advancing troops burnt the empty villages. “The population, warned by the glow of these fires, fled in all haste. There followed a veritable migration of peoples.” An estimated half million people were displaced.⁷

Population exchanges were continued after the First World War through treaties and inter-governmental agreements. Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece agreed to exchange their minority populations, and millions of people moved as a result in the 1920s. In the 1950s and 1960s, Yugoslavia sent 175,000 Muslims—ostensibly Turks but including many Albanians—to Turkey. Turkey wanted Turks to fill the lands left vacant by the departing Greeks (and perhaps for lands taken from Kurds). These agreements might be denounced as legalized ethnic cleansing today, but have resulted in more ethnically homogeneous and stable states than would have otherwise existed.

Savage fighting broke out periodically between Albanians and Serbs at critical junctures during this century. A famous case was during the First World War. Austria’s occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina had been fateful for the whole world, for it blocked Serbia’s annexation of those Serb-speaking provinces. On 28 June, 1914—the 525th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje—Gavrilo Princip, a Serb nationalist, assassinated the Austrian Archduke Franz

Ferdinand in Sarajevo and unleashed the events that led to World War I. In 1915, Serbia was occupied by the Germans, Austro-Hungarians, and Bulgarians. In an extraordinary act, the Serbian King, the General Staff and hundreds of thousands of troops “retreated” to the Adriatic, where they were evacuated by the British. The route lay across Kosovo, and gave the Albanians their revenge.

“The Albanians killed those who had become isolated, chopping their heads off with axe blows. Then they seized the uniform of the dead man and, disguised as Serbian soldiers so as to allay any suspicion, they killed other unhappy men by luring them into ambushes.”⁸

The same tactics are used today: “Each day the [Serb] security forces wear different-colored ribbons tied to different parts of their uniforms, to try to discover rebels disguised in Serbian uniforms.”⁹

The violence continued in the Second World War. Relations between Serbs and Albanians had been strained even before the War. Rebecca West records a conversation between an Albanian cab driver and his friend:

They both agreed that they would thoroughly enjoy another war if only it would give them the chance of shooting a lot of Serbs. They held up their left arms and looked along them and twitched their right thumbs against their left elbows and said ‘Boom! boom! A Serb is dead!’ I said, ‘But what have you against the Serbs?’ They said, ‘After the war they ill-treated us and took our land from us.’¹⁰

Yugoslavia was crushed by the Germans in 1941 and the country was divided among Germany, Bulgaria, a semi-independent fascist government ruling an enlarged Croatia, and Italy, which received Kosovo and added it to Albania, which it already controlled. The immediate result was an Albanian rampage against Kosovo Serbs. About 100,000 were driven out and replaced with Albanians. An Italian official wrote at the time: “The Albanians are out to exterminate the Slavs.” Village burnings and massacres were the norm: “Not a single house has a roof; everything has been burned down...There are headless bodies of men and women strewn on the ground.”¹¹ After Italy’s surrender in 1943, the Germans occupied Kosovo and recruited Albanians into an SS division named after a medieval Albanian hero. It fought the Serbian partisans. When Kosovo was reunited with Yugoslavia after the War, there were Albanian riots in protest.

Post-War Developments

After World War II, Yugoslavia was recreated under Tito's leadership. A federal model was adopted in which four republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro) had majorities of three leading ethnic groups, as well as large minority populations, while two (Bosnia and Macedonia) had mixed populations with no group in majority. The treatment of Kosovo was exceptional. With its Albanian majority—in 1948 it was about two-thirds Albanian and one-third Serb—it would have qualified as a republic except that it held such a central place in Serb tradition that the Serbs would not accept that. Indeed, it has been claimed that in 1946 Tito told the Albanian Communist leader Hoxha that “Kosovo and other Albanian regions belong to Albania and we shall return them to you, but not now because the great Serb reaction would not accept such a thing.”¹²

Instead, Kosovo remained part of Serbia, but it became an autonomous province in 1974 with most of the rights of a republic. Tito dealt with the long history of inter-ethnic strife by prohibiting political appeals, even references, to it. Class would displace ethnicity and all Yugoslavs would advance together in socialist solidarity. Economic development would be the material basis of multiculturalism: prosperity, urbanization, and education would lead Yugoslavs to forget the hatreds and superstitions of their peasant ancestors.

Certainly, economic development was needed, for Yugoslavia was one of the poorest countries in Europe. Two-thirds of its population was dependent on agriculture, and its 1947 per capita GDP of \$1,324 (in 1990 prices)¹³ put it only a bit ahead of the poorest countries in Asia and Africa—India's income was \$641 per head in the same year—and far behind the rest of Europe, as well as North and South America. Average UK income at the time was \$6,306 and average American income \$8,896 per person, while Spanish income was \$2,270. There had been only modest development in the 20th century: In 1921, per capita income was \$1,054 and 79% of the population was supported by agriculture.

There were very large differences in income between the Yugoslav republics. Slovenia, Croatia, and Vojvodina (another autonomous province in Serbia) were the richest, while Kosovo was the poorest part of the country. In 1947, GDP per head in Kosovo was about \$651, and thus on a par with India's. Slovenia, in contrast, was the republic with the highest average income (about \$2,161), which was like that of Spain.¹⁴

Indeed, the Kosovo economy was backward by all standards. In 1948, 83% of its population derived its income from agriculture, and figures for 1952 show that 71% of the population 10 years of age and over had no schooling—a far higher percentage than elsewhere in Yugoslavia.¹⁵

Yugoslavia's development problem was particularly acute in Kosovo. This was no surprise. As noted earlier, the medieval Serb Kingdom collapsed after the Black Death as the population left Kosovo for more fertile land. It remained an extremely poor district until after World War II.

Yugoslavia embarked on a program of rapid economic and social development based on its unique system of labour-managed firms and market socialism. In many ways the program was a great success. By 1986, per capita GDP had increased to \$6,262. The proportion of the population dependent on agriculture dropped to about one-quarter in both Yugoslavia as a whole and in Kosovo. Unfortunately, inter-regional differences in income increased as the prosperous north grew faster than the poor south. In 1986, GDP per person in Kosovo¹⁶ had increased by a factor of 3.5 to about \$2,254, while Slovenia had achieved a more than five-fold increase to reach a level of \$11,207.

At the same time, the per capita income of Serbia proper (excluding Kosovo and Vojvodina) increased by a factor of 4.4, from \$1,331 to \$5,885. The Yugoslav government addressed these imbalances through massive inter-republic transfer payments. Kosovo was a primary beneficiary, but the prosperous republics resented the transfers and thought they were frittered away providing public sector jobs for the otherwise unemployable graduates of Pristina University.

The slower growth of income in Kosovo was not so much due to slow growth in GDP—Kosovo did lag slightly behind the rest of the country—but mainly due to faster population growth.¹⁷ This, in turn, was due to the high fertility of the Albanian population, who are probably the last group in Europe to embark upon the fertility transition. In pre-modern societies, the average woman gives birth to six or more children, which implies a birth rate in excess of 40 births per 1,000 people per year. Most East European populations had such high fertility regimes in the 9th century. The birth rate in Serbia was over 43 per 1,000 in the 1880s,¹⁸ but it had dropped to 28 in 1950 and reached 13 per thousand in 1987, at which time the average Serbian woman had less than two children.¹⁹

In contrast, the birth rate in Kosovo was 46 per 1,000 in 1950 and had declined to only 30 in 1987. The average Albanian woman in rural parts of Kosovo still gave birth to almost seven children. Fertility reduction was confined to the towns, where the average woman has less than three children.²⁰ With such a high fertility regime, a reduction in the death rate unleashes a population explosion, and that is what has happened in Kosovo as rising incomes, public health, medical care, and vaccination programs have cut mortality. In 1987, Kosovo had the lowest death rate (5.6 per 1,000) of any part of Yugoslavia. High population growth has increased unemployment and damped the rise in per capita income, as well as tipping the ethnic balance in favour of the Albanians.

The ethnic balance has been changing over the last century. Reliable figures are hard to come by before the Communist period, but an Austrian military map showing the ethnic pattern of settlement late in the 19th century suggests that Kosovo was half Serb and half Albanian at the time.²¹ If true, Kosovo probably had a Serbian majority before the Albanians drove out a quarter of a million Serbs in 1878. These figures are only conjectures, however. The first reliable figures are those of 1948 and indicate that two-thirds of the population was Albanian, while most of the rest were Serb.

By 1981, the Albanian proportion had increased to 78%. It has gone higher, but the figure of 90% that is frequently cited as the Albanian proportion immediately before the current war is only a guess, since the Albanians boycotted the 1991 Yugoslav census.²² Quite likely, the Albanian number was less than 90% in 1998 in view of the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Albanians in the 1990s and the immigration of many Serbs driven out of Bosnia and Croatia.

The steady increase in the Albanian share of the population has underpinned the movement for independence. From 1946 to 1989, Kosovo always had some degree of autonomy within Serbia and some of the privileges of a republic, but the details varied from constitution to constitution. In 1968, Albanians demonstrated in Kosovo for status as a republic in Yugoslavia. Instead, they got an Albanian language university in Pristina. In the early and mid-1980s, there were more demonstrations in favour of higher wages and republican status.

From 1974 to 1989, Kosovo (along with Vojvodina) enjoyed a special status as an autonomous province in Serbia, and the Kosovo government was run by Albanians. American accounts that blame Milosevic for ethnic conflict do not inquire into the performance of the Albanian administration, but it was resented by Serbs, who felt themselves persecuted. In 1986, 60,000 Serbs petitioned for protection, perhaps with some cause. While events in Kosovo at that time were not covered widely by the Western press, the **New York Times** reported that—

ethnic Albanians in the government have manipulated public funds and regulations to take over land belonging to Serbs...Slavic Orthodox churches have been attacked, flags have been torn down. Wells have been poisoned and crops burned. Slavic boys have been knifed, and some young ethnic Albanians have been told by their elders to rape Serbian girls...In one incident, Fadil Hoxha, once the leading politician of ethnic Albanian origin in Yugoslavia, joked at an official dinner in Prizren last year that Serbian women should be used to satisfy potential ethnic Albanian rapists. After his quip was reported this October, Serbian women in Kosovo protested, and Mr. Hoxha was dismissed from the Communist Party.²³

Rape—the threat, the fear, the act—have been political weapons in the Balkans long before the 1990s.

It was in the context of such incidents that Milosevic made his famous speech in April, 1987, at the site of the battle of Kosovo Polje. “You shouldn’t abandon your land just because it’s difficult to live, because you are pressured by injustice and degradation.” He told Serb demonstrators who were clashing with the (mainly Albanian) police that “No one should dare to beat you.”²⁴ This remark propelled him to the leadership of Serbia.

The rising ethnic tensions were not just the re-emergence of old hatreds, but were closely tied to the unravelling of the Yugoslav economy. The rapid economic growth of the 1960s and 1970s had been fuelled, in part, by foreign borrowing, and by 1980 the country had a significant foreign debt. Tight money policies in Western countries forced up interest rates and triggered a debt repayment crisis for Yugoslavia, as for many developing countries. Yugoslavia appealed to the IMF and World Bank for assistance, which was granted—on condition that Yugoslavia undertake “reform.”

The reforms of the 1980s were mainly macroeconomic and required the country to follow the tight money, high interest rate policies of the leading capitalist countries. These policies cut the rate of economic growth in Yugoslavia to zero by the end of the decade. The growth slowdown led to unemployment. The crisis was particularly acute in Kosovo, where the unemployment rate—always high—leaped up in the mid-1980s.²⁵ It seems likely that the deteriorating economic situation was a factor underlying the Albanian protests of the time.

Slow growth meant that the debt crisis got worst rather than better. Negotiations for further loans from the IMF and the World Bank required more reforms, including the dismantling of socialism. Aside from freezing wages and depreciating the currency, five key reforms were undertaken in 1989 and 1990. First, government spending was cut and federal transfers to the republics and autonomous regions were suspended. Instead, the government revenues were used to repay foreign debt. Second, the banking system was dismantled and replaced by a new system featuring profit-oriented private banks instead of the socially owned institutions. Third, Yugoslavia’s distinctive labour-managed firms were converted into capitalist enterprises run by their private, profit-oriented bank creditors. Fourth, a bankruptcy program was introduced to shut down insolvent enterprises. Fifth, foreign trade was deregulated.²⁶

The reforms have had a devastating impact on Yugoslavia. The ending of transfers from Belgrade to the republics and autonomous regions eliminated the major instrument for addressing the problem of uneven development. The deregulation of trade led to a surge in imports

(itself financed by the IMF credits) that reduced the demand for Yugoslav manufactures. The privatization program and bankruptcy law led to widespread plant closings, unemployment, and a collapse in production.

Exact figures are hard to come by, since the United States has blocked the (now shrunken) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from membership in international organizations, but U.S. Central Intelligence Agency estimates suggest that per capita GDP in 1997 was \$2,043, down from a 1986 level of about \$5,711 level for Serbia and Montenegro.²⁷ The decline of 64% reduced the level of income to that prevailing in the late 1950s. The CIA suggested that GDP fell by half in 1992/3.

The economic reforms had their greatest negative effects in the poorest regions of the old Yugoslavia—including Kosovo, in particular. The ending of cash transfers from Belgrade to Kosovo in 1990 removed a major gain that Kosovo had received from federation with the rest of Yugoslavia and thus provided an economic rationale for secession. Plant closures were extensive in Kosovo. The Kosovar Pristina Economic Institute estimated that earnings from regular employment dropped from 49% of total Kosovo income in 1988 to 10% in 1996. The unemployment rate (presumably in urban areas) was estimated at 70% in the mid-1990s. These legions of unemployed Albanians have supplied the manpower for the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Aside from small-scale agriculture and some public activity, most Kosovo residents were supported by remittances from abroad and illicit “emerging market” activities. Emigration (even before the current refugee crisis) was huge—350,000 people left Kosovo between 1990 and 1995. Structural adjustment imposed by the IMF acts as an important, if generally neglected, background factor to the current crisis.²⁸ Since Western-imposed economic restructuring destroyed the Kosovo economy 10 years ago, it is unlikely that many of today’s refugees would chose to go back if they had the chance to go anywhere else.

Yugoslavia collapsed under the impact of the IMF’s structural adjustment program. Budget cuts meant that the federal government could no longer provide everyone with economic and social security, and so allegiance to Yugoslavia defaulted to allegiance to republics and national communities. The freely contested elections of 1990 exacerbated this tendency, for they took place only at the republic level and not at the national level. The national government lacked any democratic legitimacy and was not capable of advocating the national perspective. Instead, republic leaders responded to the insecurity of their citizens by advancing the interests of the republics vis-a-vis other republics and the country as a whole.

Since Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro had majorities of Slovenes, Croats, and

Serbs, the republic perspective slipped easily into the ethno-nationalist perspective. Tito's boundaries for Croatia and Serbia were not well aligned with the interspersed settlement patterns of Croats and Serbs, so ethno-nationalism immediately raised the question of how to align states with populations.

The independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina made the question acute, for it consisted only of minorities—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims—the first two of which had counterparts in other republics. The absence of any Bosnian or national authority and intervention by Croatia and Serbia led to war. The absence of a strong, democratic Yugoslav government able to articulate a national vision, combined with the structural adjustment program that destroyed the economic base for national union, led to ethnic warfare among the republics.

The internal weaknesses of Yugoslavia were exacerbated by the irresponsible actions of Western governments in recognizing the independence of the breakaway republics instead of working to preserve the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. Western recognition validated the slide into ethno-nationalism. At the very least, Western recognition should have been dependent upon agreement among the successor states as to their borders and the treatment of minorities.

The effects of the structural adjustment program are still being felt, for implementing the economic reforms played a role in the most notorious action of the Serbian government against the Albanian residents of Kosovo (at least in the American telling)—namely, the revocation of autonomy in 1989. This is usually portrayed as a prejudiced act directed against Albanians, but the autonomy of Vojvodina was also revoked at the same time. What autonomy had meant was that both provinces could veto actions of the Serbian government, and that meant that it was impossible to implement the structural adjustment program.

“The pressures from the IMF and the banking consortium organized by the U.S. State Department to recentralize monetary control and create more effective economic administration” were “a primary reason for the Serbian constitutional revision reducing its provinces’ autonomy.”²⁹ Albanians saw the end of autonomy exclusively as a plot against them, but it had an economic cause, as well.

Economic growth may have moderated ethnic hostility from 1950 to 1985, and subsequent economic collapse may have revived it, but the question remains of why the reversion to ethno-nationalism was so swift. The spread of mass education was an important feature of the development process. In Kosovo, for instance, the share of the adult population without any schooling fell from 71% in 1952 to 28% in 1981; in Serbia proper, the decline was from 45% to 19%.³⁰ One might have thought that education would have reduced ethnic nationalism by making people

more broadminded and able to see both sides of a question. However, mass education may have strengthened ethnic identity rather than weakening it.

Modern ethnic identity is not the same as the notions of 19th-century Serbian and Albanian peasants. Intellectuals reworked the peasant folklore to create the ethnic stereotypes and national histories that animate people today.³¹ Mass education indoctrinates the whole population in these ideas by making the “national literature” the basis of the school curriculum. The effects are reinforced by ethnically-based political structures, which create public holidays to celebrate the events of the national histories invented by the intellectuals. The mass media recycle the same myths.

Without a strong central government to promote multiculturalism, economic development (including mass education and the mass media) carried on in a federation decentralized along ethnic lines will promote ethnic nationalism rather than overcome it. Thus, while one might have expected mass education to have had an irreversible effect in combatting ethnic prejudice among all ethnic groups, the benefits were swamped by using education to indoctrinate school children with nationalistic literatures.

The end of Kosovo’s autonomy was a great spur to the Albanian nationalist movement. In May, 1990, all of the Albanians resigned from the provincial government of Kosovo and in July proclaimed the province’s independence. In September, 1990, they organized a semi-secret referendum in which close to one million people participated and which overwhelmingly supported independence. In 1992, a Parliament was elected and it chose Ibrahim Rugova as president. He is attractive in the West for his signature scarf, his Sorbonne Ph.D., and his adherence to non-violence. It is impressive that this secessionist activity was accomplished without any interference from the Serbian police.

The Albanians have tried to live their independence as well as asserting it. They have turned their backs on Serbia and Yugoslavia, boycotting both the 1991 census and elections.

As a result, Kosovo’s seats in the Serbian legislature (42 out of 250) have been filled by the small number of Serbian voters, and the incumbents include some of the worst Bosnian war criminals, such as Arkan (Zeljko Raznjatovic). Had the Albanians participated in these elections, they could have won all of the seats, and that would have been enough to deprive President Milosevic of his majority. Yugoslav policy might then have developed very differently.

Furthermore, withdrawing from Yugoslav society reinforced the stereotype that Albanians were foreigners within the country. While seemingly noble and authentic, the Albanians’ with-

drawal from Yugoslav national life has been short-sighted and counterproductive. Québec separatists who send Bloc Québécois MPs to Ottawa show more political savvy.

The revocation of Kosovo's autonomy transferred decision-making to Belgrade and brought reverse discrimination to the Albanian majority in Kosovo. Many Albanian street names were changed to Serbian names and written in the Cyrillic alphabet. (One wonders how much of this was a reversion to pre-1974 names.) Education and health care have also been contentious.

A remarkable feature of the 1990s was the emergence of parallel institutions in Kosovo. The "Republic of Kosovo" imposes a 3% tax on all Kosovo Albanians in the province and abroad. In 1990, there was a rumour that the Serbian health service was inoculating Albanian children with poisoned vaccines, a scare that has since led to a large-scale boycott of the state health system. A parallel system has been set up and financed out of the 3% tax. An equally complex boycott developed in the educational system after Albanian teachers refused to teach the Serb curriculum. (Previously, they had taught the Albanian curriculum, which promoted Albanian nationalism.) A parallel education system has also been established.

While non-violence has not been characteristic of Albanian-Serb relations, it was given a chance in the early 1990s in the hope that Western countries would recognize Kosovo as they had the breakaway republics from Yugoslavia. The failure to achieve an immediate result, along with the deepening economic crisis, encouraged a return to violence in the form of the Kosovo Liberation Army, formed in 1993. It aimed to free Kosovo from Yugoslavia, expel the Serbs, and recreate the greater Albania of the Second World War. Kosovo Albanians bragged that the KLA was their equivalent of the Irish Republic Army. It recruited members from the unemployed youth of Kosovo. In 1997, one million guns disappeared in Albania, and Albanian weapons have been turning up in Kosovo.

The movement financed itself from remittances from Kosovo Albanians working abroad, Islamic fundamentalist groups, drug dealing and gun running into western Europe. It is impressive that the KLA has muscled the Turks out of the European heroin trade, so that drug addicts in Paris and Berlin are paying for the Kosovo Albanian parallel health and education systems. Until recently, the KLA was branded as a terrorist group by the Americans, but it has been re-baptised as a group of freedom fighters.³²

In 1996, the KLA embarked on an assassination campaign. Thirty-one Serb officials and Albanian "collaborators" were killed. The total increased to 55 in 1997. Eleven police stations were attacked in September, 1997. In the first two months of 1998, 66 people were killed as the KLA announced that the battle for unification with Albania had begun. In March, 1998, the Serb

police crackdown began with attacks on the KLA bases in the Drecina region.³³ Fifteen hundred Albanians were killed and several villages supporting KLA fighters were destroyed.³⁴ These were the actions that were denounced as ethnic cleansing and genocide, and that triggered the present crisis. From the Yugoslav point of view, they were fighting terrorists.

The view that there was not a campaign of ethnic cleansing or genocide directed against Albanians in Kosovo before the NATO bombing is supported by German Foreign Office intelligence reports. These reports contradict the public pronouncements of the German Foreign Office, which portray NATO bombing as a response to an already existing humanitarian crisis. For instance, a report to the Administrative Court of Trier, dated Jan. 12, 1999, states:

Even in Kosovo an explicit political persecution linked to Albanian ethnicity is not verifiable. The East of Kosovo is still not involved in armed conflict. Public life in cities like Pristina, Urosevac, Gnjilan, etc. has, in the entire conflict period, continued on a relatively normal basis...[The] actions of the security forces (were) not directed against the Kosovo-Albanians as an ethnically defined group, but against the military opponent and its actual or alleged supporters.

Intelligence reports advancing such conclusions were prepared throughout 1998 and, indeed, through March, 1999.³⁵

The Serb response to the KLA assassinations was brutal and extreme. However, before adopting too high a moral tone in condemning Serbian policing, Canadians might reflect on how their own governments would respond to such a situation. The October crisis is a good starting point. On Oct. 5, 1970, the Front de la liberation du Quebec kidnapped James Cross, the British Trade Commissioner. The FLQ, a small group dedicated to Quebec independence through violence, began its activities in March, 1963, by planting bombs in mail-boxes in Westmount, an English-speaking suburb of Montreal. The kidnapping of Mr. Cross was followed by that of Pierre Laporte, the Quebec Minister of Labour and Immigration on Oct. 10. The official reaction was severe. On Oct. 16, the federal government declared a state of "apprehended insurrection" under the War Measures Act, suspended the civil liberties of all Canadians, and ordered the army into Quebec. Over 450 people were arrested. Laporte was murdered, but eventually the FLQ was broken up and Cross released.

The October crisis was minor compared to KLA activities in Kosovo. Suppose that, instead of two people being kidnapped, 200 federal employees and federalist politicians and civil servants from Quebec had been assassinated, as in Kosovo. Suppose further that FLQ groups

were collecting weapons in Quebec villages, where they were warmly supported. How gentle would the Canadian response have been?

The Rambouillet Accords

The situation in Kosovo was tense, and Bosnia was a precedent to be avoided. A political settlement was desirable. The result was the Rambouillet negotiations, convened by the Contact Group (the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia). The Albanians were delighted that at last there seemed to be Western support for their independence bid, while independence was the one thing the Serbs sought to prevent in view of the central position Kosovo holds in Serbian historical tradition. In March, after some dithering, the Kosovo Albanians signed the Rambouillet accords, while the Yugoslavs refused. That refusal was the immediate pretext for the bombing campaign.

The Rambouillet accords³⁶ are presented in the media as a document that any reasonable person would sign, since they restore autonomy to Kosovo, require Serbian police and the Yugoslav military to leave the province, and replace them with NATO troops who will keep the peace. Who could argue with that?

In fact, the Rambouillet accords are objectionable on many grounds. The great weakness of Kosovo is the existence of two linguistic communities with scarcely any common life. This is entrenched and strengthened by the accords. While a province-wide elected legislature and government are created and while local communes are elected, most public activities will be carried out by “national communities.” Everyone is assigned to a “national [i.e., ethnic or linguistic] community,” and those communities administer educational and social services in their own languages and to their own members and, indeed, can prescribe their own laws of inheritance and family life.

The Albanian parallel health and education systems would thereby acquire official standing. Everyone will be an Albanian, or a Serb, or whatever—there is no allowance for anyone to be a Yugoslav. The accord provides no support for trans-ethnic organizations, or for the promotion of any common cultural life or for the members of one ethnic group to learn the language or appreciate the culture of any other. Indeed, devolving cultural and educational policy to the national communities will only promote ethnic nationalism. The experience of more successful multiethnic states like Canada might have suggested some possibilities, but the Contact Group lawyers who drafted the accords preferred apartheid (separate development) as a social model.

In addition, the funding arrangements of national communities will strengthen the position of Albanians at the expense of other groups. Since the programs of the national communities will be financed by taxes imposed on their members, the scope of services that each community can provide will be influenced by its size. Albanians will be the only group with the resources to provide a full range of cultural and educational services, particularly those like universities which have high fixed costs or, indeed, primary schools which require a minimum enrolment. It is hard to see how Serbian educational, cultural, and social services will be offered in more than a few locations. The agreement, if implemented, would undoubtedly accelerate the emigration of Serbs from Kosovo.

In addition to reservations along these lines, the Rambouillet accords are objectionable as infringements of legitimate Serbian and Yugoslav interests. First, the agreement ignores the interests of Serbs and Yugoslavs outside of Kosovo in the preservation of, and access to, monasteries and other Serbian national monuments. The agreement limits interest in such monuments to the Serbian national community within Kosovo.

Second, while no secret is made of the fact that NATO will occupy Kosovo, the Rambouillet accords in fact go much further and provide for NATO's indefinite occupation of the whole Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

“NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia], including associated airspace and territorial waters. This shall include, but not be limited to, the right of bivouac, manoeuvre, billet, and utilization of any areas or facilities for support, training, and operations.” (Appendix B, Article 8).

NATO is explicitly granted “the use of airports, roads, rails, and ports without payment of fees, duties, dues, tolls, or charges” (Appendix B, Article 11). Neither NATO nor its personnel are subject to any Yugoslav court. Furthermore, the Yugoslav government—

“shall facilitate, on a priority basis and with all appropriate means, all movement of personnel, vehicles, vessels, aircraft, equipment, or supplies, through or in the airspace, ports, airports, or roads used. No charges may be assessed against NATO for air navigation, landing, or takeoff of aircraft, whether government-owned or chartered. Similarly, no duties, dues, tolls or charges may be assessed against NATO ships... (Article B, Appendix 10)

Third, contrary to the common media claims that the Rambouillet accords provide for Kosovo autonomy within Yugoslavia, the accords define the path to Kosovo independence. The official title of the accords is an “Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo.” The accords require that an international conference be held within three years to decide on the future status of Kosovo, including whether it should be independent. The views of the Kosovo population will be a decisive factor. Since they are in favour of independence, the conclusion is foregone: The Rambouillet accords, in other words, are Kosovo’s declaration of independence.

It is difficult to imagine a text less acceptable to a Yugoslav leader. The words of the agreement call into question the claims of Canadian and other politicians that they tried negotiation, and it failed. Lord David Owen, the British negotiator in the Bosnian War, described western negotiating at Rambouillet as “bungled” and suggested that a satisfactory agreement could have been negotiated and war avoided.³⁷ Indeed, the agreement is so one-sided that one must wonder whether failed negotiations were not the aim all along.

While many western politicians claim—probably sincerely—that they never wanted war, Madeleine Albright, the U.S. Secretary of State, has pushed for a war against Yugoslavia for a long time. The Yugoslav rejection of the Interim Agreement—and it should be stressed that Yugoslavia had accepted the autonomy provisions and the presence of international inspectors, but balked at occupation by NATO³⁸—was the pretext for the bombing campaign, and a contrived pretext at that.

In a background briefing at Rambouillet, a senior U.S. official told the press, “We intentionally set the bar too high for the Serbs to comply. They need some bombing, and that’s what they are going to get.”³⁹ While Milosevic is usually awarded a black hat for not signing the Rambouillet accords, he should pass it on to Mrs. Albright.

The Bombing Campaign and the Refugee Crisis

The bombing campaign was launched because Yugoslavia refused to sign the Rambouillet accords. Bombing has precipitated multiple disasters, among them the refugee crisis. Something like three-quarters of a million refugees were pushed out of Kosovo, and there were many displaced people within the province. Nothing like this was happening before the bombing began, which indicates that the NATO air attack was the initiating factor. Responsibility for this crisis must be shared between NATO and the Serbs. The refugee crisis has three causes.

First, the NATO position is that these refugees are entirely the product of Serb ethnic cleansing. It is certainly true that many people were driven from their homes by Serb security forces and paramilitaries immediately after the bombing started. It is difficult to know whether this was a spontaneous outburst of long-standing hatreds or whether it was orchestrated from the top as a “final solution” to the “Albanian problem” in Kosovo. The Rambouillet accords, with their stipulation that the final resolution of Kosovo’s status would depend on the will of the majority, provided a strong incentive to Serb nationalists in and out of the Yugoslav government to change that majority. Indeed, both the American Central Intelligence Agency and Carl Bildt, the one-time Swedish mediator in Bosnia, predicted that bombing would unleash the worst passions among the Serbs and result in the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanians.

John Bruton, the former Irish prime minister, said that “the present refugee crisis was not only foreseeable, it was foreseen. It is profoundly dishonest to pretend otherwise.”⁴⁰ While the Serbs who perpetrated these expulsions warrant prosecution as war criminals, NATO also bears some responsibility for the expulsions, since they were a predicted consequence of NATO’s air offensive.

Second, the KLA had planned an insurrection for some time, and the NATO bombing was undoubtedly taken as a sign to begin. The Yugoslav army fought back brutally. Mao-Tse Tung likened guerrilla forces to fish swimming in a sea of peasant supporters, and the anti-guerrilla strategy of colonial powers has been to drain the sea. The British in Malaya and the Americans in Vietnam did this by removing the rural population to armed encampments, so that they could not shelter or supply the guerrillas. Along the Albania border where the KLA could be resupplied from Albania, the Yugoslav army “drained the sea” of KLA supporters by forcing the Albanian population across the border. In the course of these military operations, many Albanians were ordered from their homes by security forces. As a result, western Kosovo was largely depopulated.

Third, the NATO air attacks have also forced many people to leave. Serbs, gypsies, and even Albanians have fled to Serbia itself. It would be extraordinary if the bombing and the fighting between the Yugoslav army and the KLA had not forced many Albanians to flee: Such a case would be the first time in history that civilians have not fled military action.

It is very difficult to form an accurate assessment of the relative importance of the various factors causing the refugee exodus. Western news reports from refugee camps that focus only on Serb atrocities are misleading due to 1) manipulation by NATO to support its moral role, 2) intimidation of witnesses by the KLA, which is known to murder “collaborators,” and 3) the willing participation of some Albanian refugees in the propaganda war against the Serbs.

Evidence collected by war crimes investigators is unrepresentative in that they only want to catalogue atrocities that can provide the basis of prosecutions, not to document the role of NATO bombing in forcing people to flee. The evidence from inside Kosovo is mixed. On the one hand, there were clearly atrocities. On the other hand, there are examples of the police ordering people to leave the areas of military operations and of people fleeing bombing. There are examples of Albanian villages destroyed by Serb paramilitaries and of Albanian villages where the Serb police treated everyone with courtesy.

Paul Watson, a Canadian in Kosovo writing for the **Los Angeles Times**, reports no massacres in Pristina, but a population terrified of aerial bombing. As a result, people of all ethnic groups have been leaving in large numbers. Albanians who fled into the woods report that they are fleeing “the situation,” including ground warfare and bombing, as well as police or paramilitary attacks. Watson concludes that NATO must bear a large responsibility for the refugee crisis.⁴¹

The Bombing Campaign and the Destruction of Yugoslavia

The bombing campaign has led to other terrible outcomes. On the political plane, there have been four casualties. The first was the anti-Milosevic, pro-democracy movement in Yugoslavia, which has succumbed to patriotism. The second was the moderate Kosovo Albanian leadership. Rugova denounced the bombing and has been displaced by the KLA. The third was good relations with the Russians, who feel threatened and who are marginalized despite being the only party able to negotiate with Yugoslavia. The fourth was international law and international organizations like the United Nations. The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia violated the UN charter and undermined the authority and role of international organizations that Canada has long supported.

On the material plane, there is the death and destruction caused by the bombing itself. NATO claims that the bombing was only directed against “military targets,” but that term was used very broadly and included the industrial, transportation, and communication sectors of the Yugoslav economy. Thus, while some aircraft attacks were directed against Yugoslav troops and tanks, many raids blew up bridges, office buildings, factories, oil refineries, railroads, and television stations. This bombing necessarily entailed the deaths of many civilians. Intimidation of the Yugoslav population became an objective of the bombing campaign.

Furthermore, the bombing showed itself to be highly inaccurate. “Smart” bombs are not so smart. While some catastrophes have been reported in the mass media, the extensive damage to

farms and urban housing has been infrequently reported, since there were so few western reporters in Yugoslavia. More people were killed by NATO bombs than were killed by Yugoslav security forces in Kosovo in the year before the bombing campaign. The reports of Paul Watson recount indiscriminate damage that terrorized the population of the province.

The Peace Agreement

In defense of the bombing campaign, NATO and the western media claim that it forced the Yugoslavs to capitulate and accept an agreement for Kosovo that was inferior—from their perspective—to the Rambouillet accords. That interpretation is unwarranted, however, for the Ahtisaari/Chernomyrdin agreement is a significant improvement on the Rambouillet accords, from the Yugoslav point of view. In particular, the new agreement 1) restricts NATO's occupation to Kosovo rather than all of Yugoslav, 2) makes no mention of future independence for Kosovo, 3) places the United Nations in command of the occupying forces, rather than NATO, 4) provides for Russian participation in the occupation, 5) provides for UN, rather than NATO, control over the return of refugees, 6) recognizes a Serbian national interest in Serbian historical and cultural sites, and 7) provides for the demilitarization of the KLA.

Rather than Yugoslavia capitulating, it looks as though NATO backed down. The most extraordinary feature of the Ahtisaari/Chernomyrdin Peace Agreement is its similarity to the conditions that Yugoslavia was prepared to accept **before** the bombing. The real question is: Why did NATO feel it necessary to wage war instead of accepting those conditions in March?

Why the bombing?

By any measure, the bombing campaign has been a disaster. How could such a misguided policy be undertaken? It was either the result of bad intentions or poor thinking.

In the case of Canada, poor thinking is probably the explanation. The Canadian government wanted to “prevent another Bosnia” and thought that doing something—bombing—was better than doing nothing. Lloyd Axworthy, the Minister of External Affairs, claimed to be greatly surprised at the ensuing disaster, although it had been predicted. The only question is whether Canada was left out of the loop or was so concerned to curry favour with the Americans that all critical judgment was suspended.

American motives are less clear-cut. While no doubt there was a concern to “prevent

another Bosnia,” presidential and great power objectives are at play, as well. The presidential objectives include Bill Clinton’s need to end his term on a high note, perhaps by doing what no man has done before: resolving the Albanian Question. The great power objectives include, **first**, the extension of American power into Eastern Europe, accomplished in the North by adding Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO, and accomplished in the Balkans with the war against Yugoslavia; **second**, undermining the authority of international organizations like the UN that have thwarted U.S. objectives in the past; **third**, justifying continued military spending and finding a new role for NATO; and **fourth**, sending a threatening message to any world leader who might challenge American directives.

The last point is elaborated in the secret American study Essentials of Post-Cold War Deterrence, which says that the U.S. should portray itself as “irrational and vindictive if its vital interests are attacked...The fact that some elements” of the U.S. government “may appear to be potentially ‘out of control’ can be beneficial to creating and reinforcing fears and doubts within the minds of an adversary’s decision-makers.”⁴² The United States should act like a “madman” so that foreign leaders will worry that their countries will be destroyed if they cross American interests. By this logic, the destruction of Yugoslavia is not policy gone wrong but policy gone right, since it sends a message to potential American adversaries. (Do Canadians want to send the same message?)

A Just War or a Crime?

NATO leaders have defended the bombing campaign as a “just” war. In an address to the Canadian parliament, Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, advanced the view that, “If one can say of any war that it is ethical, or that it is being waged for ethical reasons, then it is true of this war.” NATO countries were motivated by a concern with human rights rather than their national interests. Havel thinks this is a harbinger of the future, where a world-wide civic society will become more important than the nation state.⁴³ While Havel’s vision of the future may be a desirable goal, an examination of the record shows that he is wrong about this war. There are three problems.

First, while some states like Canada and the Czech Republic may have been motivated by ethical reasons, they do not explain American actions, and Americans were the main instigators of the war. It is well known that Americans do not, in general, intervene to end humanitarian catastrophes, and, in fact, often abet them. U.S. support for the Indonesian annexation of East Timor and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of East Timorese is but one example of such support. The decisive factor is the general American attitude to the government in question.

Thus, the United States enforces a “no-fly zone” in northern Iraq to protect Kurds there from ethnic cleansing, while it supports the Turkish government’s massive ethnic cleansing across the border. As argued earlier, great power motives underpin American strategy.

Second, Havel’s analysis ignores the West’s role in causing the war and its terrible results. This role began with the IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programs in the 1980s that ruined the Yugoslav economy and laid the groundwork for the resurgence in ethno-nationalism. Western responsibility continued with the recognition of the independence of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia in advance of any agreement among these countries and Yugoslavia as to their borders or to the treatment of minorities.

Western governments precipitated the war by taking a calculatedly intransigent position at Rambouillet, where they insisted on an agreement that they knew the Yugoslavs would not accept. The refugee crisis has been caused by NATO bombing and warfare between the Yugoslav army and the NATO-backed KLA, as well as by Yugoslav security forces and Serb paramilitaries driving people from their homes. Under these circumstances, it is incorrect to lay all the blame for the war or its disastrous results on President Milosevic. The West must bear some of the responsibility.

Third, bombing was an inappropriate—possibly criminal— response to a difficult diplomatic problem. Some bombing was directed against the Yugoslav military and could be justified as protecting Kosovo Albanians, but much of the bombing was directed against Yugoslav civilian targets in the hope that the population would overthrow the government or force it to surrender. Such a strategy is inconsistent with the rules of war. As a result, numerous complaints have been sent to the International War Crimes Tribunal charging Western leaders with criminally attacking the civilian population of Yugoslavia in their bombing campaign.

One complaint by Prof. Michael Mandel and other members of the Osgoode Hall Law School specifically charges Jean Chrétien, Lloyd Axworthy, and Art Eggleton with these crimes.⁴⁴ If international organizations have the right to intervene in a country to protect the population from the depredations of its government, then they also have the right to protect the civilian population of one country from sustained bombardment by another. “Humanitarian interventionism” becomes a contradiction in terms when it is carried out by a posse of great power vigilantes to serve great power interests.

Notes

1. See Susan L. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War, Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 1995, pp. 1-20.
2. Little is known about Balkan demographic history. This paragraph is the scenario suggested by the history of better documented parts of Europe.
3. For a full discussion, see Victor Roudometof, "Invented Traditions, Symbolic Boundaries, and National Identity in Southeastern Europe: Greece and Serbia in Comparative Historical Perspective (1830-1880)," East European Quarterly, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, Winter, 1998, pp. 429-468.
4. Tim Judah, The Serbs: History, Myth & the Destruction of Yugoslavia, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 66.
5. As quoted by Judah, pp. 82, 74.
6. Ibid., pp. 87-8.
7. Ibid., pp. 85, 88.
8. Ibid., p. 100.
9. Steven Erlanger, "Diplomat Says Serbs Want Some Albanians in Kosovo," New York Times, 25 April, 1999, p. 14.
10. Judah, p. 131.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 132.
13. Except as noted, all per capita GDP figures are in 1990 Geary-Khamis dollars and are from Angus Maddison, Monitoring the World Economy, 1820-1992, Paris, OECD, 1995. Agricultural share of the population from Socijalisticka Federativna Republika Jugoslavija, Savezni Zavod za Statistiku, Jugoslavija, 1918-1988: Statisticki Godisnjak, Beograd, 1989, p. 39.
14. GDP per capita in the republics and autonomous regions is computed by multiplying GDP per capita in Yugoslavia as a whole from Maddison by the ratio of provincial or regional social product per capita (drustveni proizvod po stanovniku) to the Yugoslav average. Social product per capita from Savezni Zavod za Statistiku, Jugoslavija, 1945-1985: Statisticki Prikaz, Beograd, 1986, p. 205.
15. Ibid., p. 199.
16. Relative GDP per capita in the republics and autonomous regions in 1986 is taken from Harold Lydall, Yugoslavia in Crisis, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 188-9. These figures are adjusted for differences in the price level between republics. The adjusted figures do not differ greatly from the unadjusted figures published by the Yugoslav government.

17. Jugoslavija, 1945-1985, p198, 204-5.
18. G.G. Chisholm and W.R. Morfil, "Servia," Encyclopaedia Britannica...With American Revisions and Additions, 8th edition, Chicago, The Werner Company, 1895, Vol. XXI, p. 687.
19. Except as noted, all vital rates are from Jugoslavija, 1918-1988, p. 42.
20. International Crisis Group, Kosovo Spring Report, March 20, 1998, p. 13. The International Crisis Group is a think tank that describes itself as "a private, multinational organization committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to understand and respond to impending crises." Its board is highly connected in business and government circles and includes many former politicians from around the world, including such Canadians as Allan MacEachen and Barbara McDougall. The ICG receives funding from Western governments and sends them reports and recommendations. A casual review of the recommendations relating to Kosovo suggests that they influence Western policy. While Kosovo Spring contains much valuable information, it evinces a pro-Albanian bias. This is perhaps related to the report's not seriously treating either the history of Serb-Albanian conflict or the economic context in which the conflict has developed. If NATO is going to base its bombing campaigns on social science reportage, it might at least purchase first class social science and history.
21. The map has been published on the Internet:
www.bib.sanu.ac.yu/Ist_Institute/main.html
 by the Historical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and analyzed by its director Dr. Slavenko Terzic.
22. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, p. 34.
23. The New York Times November 1, 1987, Sunday, Late City Edition, Section 1, Part 1, Page 14, Column 1, as circulated by Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting. See www.zmag.org/
24. Kosovo Spring, p. 11.
25. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, p. 51.
26. Michael Chossudovsky, "Dismantling Former Yugoslavia, Recolonizing Bosnia," is available at www.zmag.org/
27. The CIA, World Fact Book, 1998 (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/sr.html) indicates a per capita GDP of \$2280 for 1997. Deflating that by the U.S. GDP deflator produces the value of \$2,043 1990 dollars. GDP deflator from OECD, National Accounts: Main Aggregates, 1960-1997, Paris, 1999, Vol. I, p. 155.
28. Kosovo Spring, p. 36.
29. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, p. 382. See also pp. 65, 78, 84, 94-5, 97, 120.

30. Jugoslavija, 1945-1985, p. 199.
31. The touchstone is The Invention of Tradition, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983. See also, Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 1992, and Adrian Hastings, The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997. It is remarkable how many leaders of ethnic communities today are writers, social scientists, or literary scholars: Rugova, the Kosovo Albanian leader, was a professor of language and literature; Tudgman, the President of Croatia, was a historian; Cosic, the President of Yugoslavia, was a novelist; Seselj, the leader of the extreme Serbian Radical Party, was the youngest Ph.D. in Yugoslavia. Among the Bosnian Serb leadership, Karadzic was a psychiatrist and poet, and Koljevic was Yugoslavia's foremost Shakespeare scholar. Plasovic was, however, a biologist. See Judah, pp. 133, 157, 166, 187.
32. Kosovo Spring, pp. 39-40.
33. Diana Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem and the International Community," at www.zmag.org
34. Kosovo Spring, p. 23.
35. See "Important Internal Documents from Germany's Foreign Office Regarding Pre-Bombardment Genocide in Kosovo," available at www.zmag.org/germandocs.htm
36. The accords are available on the Internet at www.monde-diplomatique.fr/dossiers/kosovo/rambouillet.html
37. As It Happens, CBC radio, June 7, 1999.
38. Freedom & Accuracy in Reporting, "Fair Action Alert: Was a Peaceful Kosovo Solution Rejected by U.S.?" April 13, 1999 (www.zmag.org/fair_action_alert.htm).
39. FAIR Media Advisory, "What Reporters Knew About Kosovo Talks—But Didn't Tell," June 2, 1999, www.fair.org/press-releases/kosovo-talks.htm
40. Peter Goodspeed, "CIA Predicted Bombing Would Cause Mass Exodus," National Post, April 7, 1999, p. A1.
41. Interview with Paul Watson on "As It Happens," CBC radio, April 13, 1999. A transcript of the interview has recently been added to the www.zmag.org site. See his columns in the **Los Angeles Times** as well. They are available at: www.latimes.com/home/news/reports/yugo/dispatch
42. As quoted by Noam Chomsky, "Rogue States," Z Magazine, April 1998, p. 24. I have also taken two of Chomsky's phrases without explicit quotation.
43. The address has been published as Vaclav Havel, "Kosovo and the End of the Nation-State," New York Review of Books, Vol. XLVI, No. 10, June 10, 1999, pp. 4-6.

44. The complaint is available at:
www.jurist.law.pitt.edu/icty.htm
See also the complaint of Glen Rangwala of Cambridge University at:
ban.joh.cam.ac.uk/~maicl/index.htm