

Using War as an Excuse for More War: Srebrenica Revisited

By [Diana Johnstone](#)

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Last summer, almost the entire political spectrum in the Western world joined in a chorus of self-flagellation on the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre. The dominant theme was “nostra culpa”: “we” let it happen, “we” didn’t want to know about it, and “we” mustn’t let it happen again.


Dear reader, who are “we” in this case? How in the world could “we” (you and I) have known or done anything about this at the time? And in fact, how much do “we” really know about it now? We know what we read in the newspapers or see on television. But how precise and accurate is that information? How do we know now that we are much better informed than we were before the event?

Such questions are virtually taboo. Srebrenica has become a sacred symbol of collective guilt, and to raise the slightest question is to be instantly condemned as an apologist for frightful crimes, or as a “holocaust denier”.

A left that retains any capacity for critical thinking should regard the lavish public breast-beating over “Srebrenica” (the quotation marks indicate the symbol rather than the actual event) with a certain skepticism. If mainstream media commentators and politicians are so extraordinarily moved by “Srebrenica”, this is because it has become an incantation to justify whatever future foreign war the U.S. government and media decide to sell under the label of “humanitarian intervention”.

The Uses of a Massacre

Aside from the probable future use of “Srebrenica”, there is the way it has already been used. Indeed, it was perhaps being used even before it happened.

From the the U.N. Secretary General’s 1999 Report on Srebrenica, it emerges that the idea of a “Srebrenica massacre” was already in the air at a September 1993 meeting in Sarajevo between Bosnian Muslim president Alija Izetbegovic and members of his Muslim party from Srebrenica. On the agenda was a Serb proposal to exchange Srebrenica and Zepa for some territories around Sarajevo as part of a peace settlement.

“The delegation opposed the idea, and the subject was not discussed further. Some surviving members of the Srebrenica delegation have stated that President Izetbegovic also told them he had learned that a NATO intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina was possible, but could only occur if the Serbs were to break into Srebrenica, killing at least 5,000 of its

people.” (1)

Izetbegovic later denied this, but he is outnumbered by witnesses. It is clear that Izetbegovic’s constant strategy was to portray his Muslim side in the bloody civil war as pure helpless victims, in order to bring U.S. military power in on his side. On his death bed, he readily admitted as much to his ardent admirer Bernard Kouchner, in the presence of U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke. Kouchner reminded Izetbegovic of a conversation he had had with French President Mitterrand in which he “spoke of the existence of ‘extermination camps’ in Bosnia.”

You repeated that in front of the journalists. That provoked considerable emotion throughout the world. [...] They were horrible places, but people were not systematically exterminated. Did you know that?

Yes. I thought that my revelations could precipitate bombings. I saw the reaction of the French and the others-I was mistaken. [...] Yes, I tried, but the assertion was false. There were no extermination camps whatever the horror of those places. (2)

Like the Bosnian Serbs, the Muslims also herded their adversaries into “horrible” camps at the start of the civil war, on the way to expulsion. Unlike the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Muslims enjoyed the services of high-powered U.S. public relations experts in the Washington-based Ruder Finn agency who knew how to “spin” the Bosnian conflict in order to equate the Serbs with the Nazis-the quickest and easiest way to win public opinion over to the Muslim side. The news media and political figures were showered with press releases and other materials exaggerating Serb atrocities, whereas Muslim atrocities (such as the decapitations of Serb prisoners, fully documented) remained confidential. To the public, this was a one-sided conflict between a Serbian “fascist aggressor” and innocent victims, all unarmed civilians.

The general public did not know that Srebrenica, described as a “safe area”, was not in fact simply a haven for refugees, but also a Muslim military base. The general public did not know what Lord Owen knew and recounted in his important 1995 book, *Balkan Odyssey* (p.143), namely that in April 1993, Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic was extremely anxious to prevent Bosnian Serb forces from overrunning Srebrenica. “On 16 April I spoke on the telephone to President Milosevic about my anxiety that, despite repeated assurances from Dr. Karadzic that he had no intention of taking Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serb army was now proceeding to do just that. The pocket was greatly reduced in size. I had rarely heard Milosevic so exasperated, but also so worried: he feared that if the Bosnian Serb troops entered Srebrenica there would be a bloodbath because of the tremendous bad blood that existed between the two armies. The Bosnian Serbs held the young Muslim commander in Srebrenica, Naser Oric, responsible for a massacre near Bratunac in December 1992 in which many Serb civilians had been killed. Milosevic believed it would be a great mistake for the Bosnian Serbs to take Srebrenica and promised to tell Karadzic so.”

Thus, many months before the July 1995 “Srebrenica massacre”, both Izetbegovic and Milosevic were aware of the possibility and of its potential impact-favorable to the Muslim cause, and disastrous for the Serbs.

A few other indisputable facts should not be overlooked:

Shortly before the Bosnian Serb attack on Srebrenica, the Muslim troops stationed in that

enclave carried out murderous attacks on nearby Serb villages. These attacks were certain to incite Serb commanders to retaliate against the Srebrenica garrison.

Meanwhile, the Muslim high command in Sarajevo ordered the Srebrenica commanders, Oric and his lieutenants, to withdraw from Srebrenica, leaving thousands of his soldiers without commanders, without orders, and in total confusion when the foreseeable Serb attack occurred. Surviving Srebrenica Muslim officials have bitterly accused the Izetbegovic government of deliberately sacrificing them to the interests of his State.

According to the most thorough study of Srebrenica events, by Cees Wiebes for the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation report, the Bosnian Serb forces set out in July 1995 to reduce the area held by Bosnian Muslim forces on the outskirts of Srebrenica, and only decided to capture the town itself when they unexpectedly found it undefended.

“The VRS [Republika Srpska Army] advance went so well that the evening of July 9 saw an important ‘turning point’ [...] The Bosnian Serbs decided that they would no longer confine themselves to the southern part of the enclave, but would extend the operation and take the town of Srebrenica itself. Karadzic was informed that the results achieved now put the Drina Corps in a position to take the town; he had expressed his satisfaction with this and had agreed to a continuation of the operation to disarm the ‘Muslim terrorist gangs’ and to achieve a full demilitarization of the enclave. In this order, issued by Major General Zdravko Tolimir, it was also stated that Karadzic had determined that the safety of UNPROFOR soldiers and of the population should be ensured. Orders to this effect were to be provided to all participating units. [...] The orders made no mention of a forced relocation of the population. [...] A final instruction, also of significance, was that the population and prisoners of war should be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention. On July 11 all of Srebrenica fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.”

In testimony to a French parliamentary commission inquiry into Srebrenica, General Philippe Morillon, the UNPROFOR officer who first called international attention to the Srebrenica enclave, stated his belief that Bosnian Serb forces had fallen into a “trap” when they decided to capture Srebrenica.

Subsequently, on February 12, 2004, testifying at the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, General Morillon stressed that the Muslim commander in Srebrenica, Naser Oric, “engaged in attacks during Orthodox holidays and destroyed villages, massacring all the inhabitants. This created a degree of hatred that was quite extraordinary in the region, and this prompted the region of Bratunac in particular—that is the entire Serb population—to rebel against the very idea that through humanitarian aid one might help the population that was present there.”

Asked by the ICTY prosecutor how Oric treated his Serb prisoners, General Morillon, who knew him well, replied that “Naser Oric was a warlord who reigned by terror in his area and over the population itself. I think that he realized that these were the rules of this horrific war, that he could not allow himself to take prisoners. According to my recollection, he didn’t even look for an excuse. It was simply a statement: One can’t be bothered with prisoners.”

Morillon recounted how “the Serbs took me to a village to show me the evacuation of the bodies of the inhabitants that had been thrown into a hole, a village close to Bratunac. And this made me understand the degree to which this infernal situation of blood and vengeance

[...] led to a situation when I personally feared that the worst would happen if the Serbs of Bosnia managed to enter the enclaves and Srebrenica.”

“I feared that the Serbs, the local Serbs, the Serbs of Bratunac, these militiamen, they wanted to take their revenge for everything that they attributed to Naser Oric. It wasn’t just Naser Oric that they wanted to revenge, take their revenge on, they wanted to revenge their dead on Orthodox Christmas.”

* * *

In short, Srebrenica, whose Serb population had been chased out by Muslim troops at the start of the civil war in 1992, was both a gathering point for civilian Muslim refugees and a Muslim army base. The enclave lived from international humanitarian aid. The Muslim military did not allow civilians to leave, since their presence was what ensured the arrival of humanitarian aid provisions which the military controlled.

When the Bosnian Serb forces captured the town on July 11, 2005, civilians were clamoring to leave the enclave, understandably enough, since there was virtually no normal economic life there. Much has been made of the fact that Serb forces separated the population, providing buses for women, children and the infirm to take them to Tuzla, while detaining the men. In light of all that preceded, the reason for this separation is obvious: the Bosnian Serbs were looking for the perpetrators of raids on Serb villages, in order to take revenge.

However, only a relatively small number of Muslim men were detained at that point, and some of them are known to have survived and eventually been released in exchange for Serb prisoners. When the Serb forces entered the town from the south, thousands of Muslim soldiers, in disarray because of the absence of commanding officers, fled northwards, through wild wooded hills toward Tuzla. It is clear enough that they fled because they feared exactly what everyone aware of the situation dreaded: that Serb soldiers would take vengeance on the men they considered guilty of murdering Serb civilians and prisoners.

Thousands of those men did in fact reach Tuzla, and were quietly redeployed. This was confirmed by international observers. However, Muslim authorities never provided information about these men, preferring to let them be counted among the missing, that is, among the massacred. Another large, unspecified number of these men were ambushed and killed as they fled in scenes of terrible panic. This was, then, a “massacre”, such as occurs in war when fleeing troops are ambushed by superior forces.

Counting the victims

So we come to the question of numbers. The question is difficult, both because of the uncertainty that surrounds it, and because merely pointing to this uncertainty is instantly denounced as “revisionism” and lack of respect for the victims. This reproach is not logical. Victims are victims, whether few or many, and respect is not in proportion to their numbers.

The question of numbers is complex and has been dealt with in detail by others, recently by an independent international Srebrenica research group which will soon publish its findings in book form. (3)

Suffice it here to note the following:

1. The sacralization of the estimated number of victims. In many if not most disasters, initial estimates of casualties tend to be inflated, for various reasons, such as multiple reports of the same missing person, and are subsequently corrected downwards. This was the case for the World Trade Center disaster, where initial estimates of up to 10,000 victims were finally brought down to less than 3000, and there are many other examples. In the case of Srebrenica, the figure of 8,000 originated with September 1995 announcements by the International Committee of the Red Cross that it was seeking information about some 3,000 men reportedly detained as well as about some 5,000 who had fled to central Bosnia. Neither the Bosnian Serbs nor the Muslims were ever forthcoming with whatever information they had, and the "8,000" figure has tended ever since to be repeated as an established total of "Muslim men and boys executed by Serb forces". It can be noted that this was always an estimate, the sum of two separate groups, the smaller one of prisoners (whose execution would be a clear war crime) and the larger one of retreating troops (whose "massacre" as they fled would be the usual tragic consequence of bitter civil war). Anyone familiar with the workings of journalism knows that there is a sort of professional inertia which leads reporters to repeat whatever figure they find in previous reports, without verification, and with a marked preference for big numbers. This inertia is all the greater when no truly authoritative figures ever emerge.

The number of bodies exhumed.

Despite unprecedented efforts over the past ten years to recover bodies from the area around Srebrenica, less than 3,000 have been exhumed, and these include soldiers and others-Serb as well as Muslim-who died in the vicious combats that took place during three years of war. Only a fraction have been identified.

2. The political desire for the largest possible number. Aside from the journalistic inertia mentioned above, the retention of the unproven high figure of massacre victims in the case of Srebrenica is clearly the result of political will on the part of two governments: the Bosnian Muslim government of Alija Izetbegovic and, more importantly, the government of the United States. From the moment that Madeleine Albright brandished satellite photos of what she claimed was evidence of Serb massacres committed at Srebrenica (evidence that was both secret, as the photos were shown in closed session to the Security Council, and circumstantial, as they showed changes in terrain which might indicate massacres, not the alleged massacres themselves), the U.S. used "Srebrenica" for two clear purposes:

to draw attention away from the U.S.-backed Croatian offensive which drove the Serb population out of the Krajina which, as much as Srebrenica, was supposed to be protected by the United Nations;

to implicate Bosnian Serb leaders in "genocide" in order to disqualify them from negotiating the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina. (The U.S. preferred to replace them at Dayton by Milosevic, whose eagerness to end the war could be exploited to get concessions the Bosnian Serbs might refuse.)

Exploitation of "Srebrenica" then helped set the stage for the Kosovo war of 1999:

by blaming the United Nations (whose failure to defend Srebrenica was in reality the inevitable result of the unwillingness of the United States to give full support to U.N. ground forces), NATO emerged as the only agent capable of effective "humanitarian intervention".

by falsely identifying Milosevic with the Bosnian Serb leadership and by exploiting the notion that Srebrenica killings were part of a vast Serb plan of “genocide” carried out against non-Serbs for purely racist reasons, Madeleine Albright was able to advocate the NATO war against Yugoslavia as necessary to prevent “another Srebrenica” in Kosovo, where the situation was altogether different.

To use “Srebrenica” as an effective instrument in the restructuring of former Yugoslavia, notably by replacing recalcitrant Serb leaders by more pliable politicians, the crime needed to be as big as possible: not a mere war crime (such as the United States itself commits on a serial basis, from Vietnam to Panama to Iraq), but “genocide”: “the worst atrocity in Europe since the Holocaust”. That arouses the Hitler image, which is always good for the image of the United States as saviour from across the seas, and implies a plan decided at the highest levels, rather than the brutal behavior of enraged soldiers (or paramilitaries, the probable culprits in this case) out of control.

But what plan for genocide includes offering safe passage to women and children? And if this was all part of a Serb plot to eliminate Muslims, what about all the Muslims living peacefully in Serbia itself, including thousands of refugees who fled there from Bosnia? Or the Muslims in the neighboring enclave of Zepa, who were unharmed when the Serbs captured that town a few days after capturing Srebrenica? To get around these common sense obstacles, the ICTY prosecution came up with a sociologist who provided an “expert” opinion: the Srebrenica Muslims lived in a patriarchal society, therefore killing the men was enough to ensure that there would be no more Muslims in Srebrenica. This amounts to shrinking the concept of “genocide” to fit the circumstances.

It was on basis of this definition that in August 2001 the Tribunal found Bosnian Serb General Radislav Krstic guilty of “complicity in genocide”. Although he neither ordered, participated in or was even aware of any executions, the judges ruled that he took part in what the ICTY calls a “joint criminal enterprise” simply by capturing Srebrenica, since he must have been aware that genocide was “a natural and foreseeable consequence”. This is the ruling that established “genocide” as the official description of events at Srebrenica.

Why such relentless determination to establish Srebrenica as “genocide”? A December 27, 2003, Associated Press dispatch provided an explanation by U.S. jurist Michael Scharf, one of the designers of the ICTY who has also coached the judges for the trial of Saddam Hussein: On a practical level, if the court determines Srebrenica does not fit the legal definition of genocide, it would be very difficult to make the charge stick against Milosevic, said Michael Scharf, a professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

“And it is crucial that he be convicted of genocide,” Scharf said. If Milosevic can’t be convicted, “then who can you convict of genocide in the modern age?” he asked.

The legal definition of genocide could also come into play in an Iraqi war-crimes tribunal, which has vowed to follow international legal precedent.

It is striking that from the very start, the effort of the United States and of the Tribunal in The Hague—which it mainly finances, staffs and controls—has been to establish what it calls “command responsibility” for Serb crimes rather than individual guilt of actual perpetrators. The aim is not to identify and punish men who violated the Geneva conventions by executing prisoners, but rather to pin the supreme crime on the top Serb leadership.

The office of the ICTY prosecutor has chosen to rely heavily on a single confessed participant in the Srebrenica massacre. This person is one Drazen Erdemovic, a petty criminal of Croatian nationality who was hospitalized in Serbia in March 1996 after a near-fatal brawl in a bar in Novi Sad. Quite possibly in order to escape further threats from his personal enemies, Erdemovic confessed to Western news media to having taken part in mass murder in Bosnia. He was arrested by Serb authorities who then, at his request, turned him over to the Hague Tribunal.

From then on, the prosecution has used Erdemovic repeatedly as its star witness, using the U.S. procedure of “plea bargaining” by which a confessed criminal gets off lightly by incriminating somebody else the prosecution wants to convict. He has told his story to the judges at his own brief trial, where he was exempted from cross examination thanks to his guilty plea, as well as at a hearing incriminating Karadzic and Mladic (in the absence of any legal defense) and at various trials whenever “Srebrenica” comes up.

His story goes like this: after briefly serving in the Bosnian Muslim army, Erdemovic joined an international mercenary militia unit that seems to have been employed by the Bosnian Serb command for sabotage operations on enemy territory. On July 16, 1995, his unit of eight men executed between 1,000 and 1,200 Muslim men near the village of Pilice, some 40 kilometers north of Srebrenica. From around 10:30 in the morning to 3 o’clock in the afternoon, these eight mercenaries emptied bus load after bus load of prisoners and lined them up to be shot by groups of ten.

Now in fact, it seems that a serious crime was indeed committed in Pilice. Subsequent forensic investigators exhumed 153 bodies. One hundred and fifty-three executions of prisoners of war is a serious crime, and there is material evidence that this crime was committed. But 1,200? According to the manner of execution described by Erdemovic, it would have taken 20 hours to murder so many victims. Yet the judges have never questioned this elementary arithmetical discrepancy, and Erdemovic’s word has consistently been accepted as gospel truth by the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague. (4)

Why this insistence on an implausibly higher number than can be supported by material evidence? Obviously, the Tribunal wants to keep the figures as high as possible in order to sustain the charge of “genocide”. The charge of “genocide” is what sharply distinguishes the indictment of Serbs from indictments of Croats or Muslims for similar crimes committed during the Yugoslav disintegration wars.

In August 2000 after not quite four and a half years in jail, the self-confessed mass murderer Erdemovic was freed, given a new identity, residence in an unspecified Western country and a “job”, so to speak, as occasional paid and “protected” witness for the ICTY.

In contrast, General Krstic was sentenced to 35 years in prison and will be eligible for parole in 20 years.

Clearly, the purpose of the “genocide” charge is not to punish the perpetrators but to incriminate the Bosnian Serb, and the Yugoslav Serb, chain of command right up to the top.

Srebrenica As Myth

The transformation of Srebrenica into myth was illustrated last July by an article in the Italian leftist daily *Liberazione* (close to the “Communist Refoundation” party) reporting on a

semi-documentary film entitled "Srebrenica, luci dall'oblio" ("Srebrenica, lights from oblivion"). The title suggests that the film-makers have rescued from oblivion a tragically neglected event, when in fact, rarely in the history of warfare has a massacre been the focus of so much attention.

Here we have the usual self-flagellation: "...what happened in Srebrenica: the massacre of 9,000 civilians, in the most total silence/absence on the part of the world institutions [responsible for] peace..." The author accepts without question the term "genocide" and raises the figure of victims to new heights. "Around 9,000 men between the ages of 14 and 70 were transported by truck to nearby centers where they were massacred and buried in mass graves..." This was "the greatest mass genocide committed since the days of Nazism until today"... What is the point of this exaggeration, this dramatization? Why is Srebrenica so much more terrible than the war that ravaged Vietnam, with countless massacres and devastation of the countryside by deadly chemicals, or the cold-blooded massacre of surrendering Iraqis at the end of the first Gulf War in 1991? But that is a genuinely forgotten massacre-not only forgotten, but never even recognized in the first place, and the "international community" has not sent teams of forensic scientists to find and identify the victims of U.S. weapons.

In all probability the film-makers, aspiring artists and "genocide experts" who consider "Srebrenica" suitable material for touching the emotions of the public believe that they are serving the interests of peace and humanity. But I would suggest quite the contrary. The misrepresentation of "Bosnia" as scene of a deliberate "genocide" against Muslims, rather than a civil war with atrocities on all sides, contributes to a spirit of "conflict of civilizations". It has helped recruit volunteers for Islamic terrorist groups.

The political exploitation of Srebrenica has turned the Bosnian war into a morality pantomimew between pure good and pure evil, a version of events which the Serbs can never really accept and the Muslims have no desire to give up. This stands in the way of unbiased investigation and serious historical analysis. Reconciliation is in fact ruled out by the moralistic insistence that a stark distinction must be made between "aggressor" and "victim". This stark difference exists between NATO and Yugoslavia, or between the U.S. and Iraq, where an overwhelmingly superior military power deliberately launched an aggressive war against a sovereign country that neither attacked nor threatened it.

But the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was not of that nature. The war there was the result of an extraordinarily complex legal situation (an unsettled small Federal Republic constitutionally composed of three "nationalities": Serb, Muslim and Croat, itself part of a disintegrating larger Federal Republic) exacerbated by myriad local power plays and the incoherent intervention of Great Powers. Moreover, this occurred in a region where memories of extremely bloody civil war during World War II were still very much alive. To a large extent, the fighting that broke loose in 1992 was a resumption of the vicious cycle of massacres and vengeance that devastated Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1941-44, when the Nazi occupation broke up Yugoslavia and attached Bosnia-Herzegovina to Greater Croatia, which proceeded to eliminate Serbs.

Today it is an unquestioned dogma that recalling atrocities is a "duty of memory" to the victims, something that must be endlessly repeated, lest we forget. But is this really so obvious? The insistence on past atrocities may simply prepare the next wave, which is what has already happened in the Balkans, and more than once. Because in reality, the dead victims cannot profit from such memories. But the memory of victimhood is a moral and

political capital of great value for the heirs of victimhood and especially for their self-appointed champions. And in the case of Bosnia, it promises to bring considerable financial gain. If Milosevic, as former president of Serbia, can be convicted of genocide, then the Bosnian Muslims hope to win billions of dollars in reparations that will keep Serbia on its knees for the foreseeable future.

The obsessive reference to “Srebrenica” has a negative effect far beyond the Balkans.

The “Srebrenica massacre” is part of a dominant culture discourse that goes like this: We people in the advanced democracies have reached a new moral plateau, from which we are both able and have a duty both to judge others and to impose our “values” when necessary. The others, on a lower moral plateau, must be watched carefully, because unlike us, they may commit “genocide”. It is remarkable how “genocide” has become fashionable, with more and more “genocide experts” in universities, as if studying genocide made sense as a separate academic discipline. What would all these people do without genocide? I wonder what is behind the contemporary fascination with genocide and serial killers, and I doubt that it is a sign of a healthy social psychology.

In the world today, few people, including Bosnian Muslims, are threatened by “genocide” in the sense of a deliberate Hitler-style project to exterminate a population—which is how most people understand the term. But millions of people are threatened, not by genocidal maniacs, but by genocidal conditions of life: poverty, disease, inadequate water, global climate change. The Srebrenica mourning cult offers nothing positive in regard to these genocidal conditions. Worse, it is instrumentalized openly to justify what is perhaps the worst of all the genocidal conditions: war.

The subliminal message in the official Srebrenica discourse is that because “we” let that happen, “we” mustn’t let “it” happen again, ergo, the United States should preventively bomb potential perpetrators of “genocide”. Whatever happened in Srebrenica could have best been prevented, not by U.S. or NATO bombing, but by preventing civil war from breaking out in Bosnia Herzegovina to begin with. This prevention was possible if the “international community”, meaning the NATO powers, Europe and the United States, had firmly insisted that the Yugoslav crisis of 1990 should be settled by negotiations. But first of all, Germany opposed this, by bullying the European Union into immediate recognition of the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia, without negotiation. All informed persons knew that this threatened the existence of Bosnia Herzegovina. The European Union proposed a cantonization plan for Bosnia Herzegovina, not very different from the present arrangement, which was accepted by leaders of the Bosnian Muslim, Serb and Croat communities. But shortly thereafter, Muslim president Alija Izetbegovic reneged, after the U.S. ambassador encouraged him to hold out for more. Throughout the subsequent fighting, the U.S. put obstacles in the way of every European peace plan. [6] These years of obstruction enabled the United States to take control of the eventual peace settlement in Dayton, in November 1995.

This rejection of compromise, which plunged Bosnia-Herzegovina into fratricidal war, was supported at the time by a chorus of humanitarians- not least politicians safely ensconced in the European Parliament who voted for “urgent resolutions” about situations of which they were totally ignorant-claiming that Bosnia must be a centralized State for the sake of “multiculturalism”. These were the same humanitarians who applauded the breakup of multicultural Yugoslavia—which in fact created the crisis in Bosnia.

Clearly, whoever executes unarmed prisoners commits a very serious crime whether in Bosnia or anywhere else. But when all is said and done, it is an illusion to think that condemning perpetrators of a massacre in Bosnia will ensure that the next civil war somewhere in the world will be carried out in a more chivalrous manner. War is a life and death matter, and inevitably leads people to commit acts they would never commit in peacetime.

The notion that war can be made “clean”, played according to rules, should not be the main focus of international law or of peace movements. War first of all needs to be prevented, not policed.

The false interpretation of “Srebrenica” as part of an ongoing Serb project of “genocide” was used to incite the NATO war against Yugoslavia, which devastated a country and left behind a cauldron of hatred and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The United States is currently engaged in a far more murderous and destructive war in Iraq. In this context, the Western lamentations that inflate the Srebrenic massacre into “the greatest mass genocide since Nazi times” are a diversion from the real existing genocide, which is not the work of some racist maniac, but the ongoing imposition of a radically unjust socio-economic world order euphemistically called “globalization”.

Diana Johnstone is the author of [Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, Nato, and Western Delusions](#) published by Monthly Review Press. She can be reached at: dianajohnstone@compuserve.com

NOTES

1. Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998), Section IV, paragraph C.115.
2. Bernard Kouchner, “Les Guerriers de la Paix”, Grasset, Paris, 2004, pp. 372-375.
3. “Srebrenica: The Politics of War Crimes”, by George Bogdanich, Tim Fenton, Philip Hammond, Edward S. Herman, Michael Mandel, Jonathan Rooper and George Szamuely. See <http://www.srebrenica-report.com/politics.htm>.
4. Germinal Civikov, “Kalaschnikow und Einzelfeuer: Der Fall Drazen Erdemovic”, Freitag, 16 September 2005.
5. Davide Turrini “Il genocidio jugoslavo rivive sullo schermo”, Liberazione, 12 July 2005.
6. See David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1995. Lord Owen, who, as co-chairman of the steering committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, attempted from August 1992 to June 1995 to negotiate a peace settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, concludes (Indigo paperback, p.400): “From the spring of 1993 to the summer of 1995, in my judgement, the effect of US policy, despite its being called ‘containment’, was to prolong the war of the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

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