

Second edition

Marko Attila Hoare

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

GENOCIDE, JUSTICE AND DENIAL

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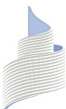
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Marko Attila Hoare
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Genocide, Justice and Denial
Essay selection by Admir Mulaosmanović

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Marko Attila Hoare

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GENOCIDE, JUSTICE AND DENIAL



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GEN TAR ZA NAPREDNE STUDIJE
CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

Sarajevo, 2017.



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Foreword

The articles in this volume were published on my blog, Greater Surbiton, since its launch in November 2007. Although Greater Surbiton was devoted to a number of different themes – including the southern and eastern Balkans, Turkey and Cyprus, Russia and the Caucasus, the meaning of progressive politics and the fight against Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of chauvinism – the former Yugoslavia was at all times central to it. Twelve years after Dayton, when the blog was launched, the war over the former Yugoslavia was being waged as fiercely as ever – not on the battlefield, but in the realm of politics and ideas, both in the region and in the West. Genocide deniers and propagandists who sought to downplay or excuse the crimes of the Milosevic and Karadzic regimes of the 1990s – people like Diana Johnstone, Michael Parenti, David N. Gibbs, Nebojsa Malic, John Schindler and Carl Savich – continued their ugly work. Yet the ongoing struggle to counter their falsehoods was just one front in the war.

The period since 2007 has witnessed the rise of Milorad Dodik's separatist challenge to the precarious Bosnian-Herzegovinian unity established at Dayton, and the consequent degeneration of the post-Dayton political order in the country; the declaration of Kosovo's independence and Belgrade's efforts to derail it; the struggle in Serbia between reformist and nationalist currents; the increasingly aggressive challenge of Russia's Vladimir Putin to the West, manifested most starkly in the attacks on Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, but also in support for Belgrade over Kosovo and for Dodik in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the increasingly apparent failure of the International Criminal Tribunal for

the former Yugoslavia to punish adequately the war-criminals of the 1990s, despite the spectacular arrests of Radovan Karadzic in 2008 and Ratko Mladic in 2011; and the increasingly stark failure of Western leaders to confront murderous tyrants like Putin, Sudan's Omar Hassan al-Bashir and Syria's Bashar al-Assad – reminiscent of their failure in the 1990s over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Today, the truth about the war in the former Yugoslavia is more widely known and understood than ever. The battle for the recognition of the Srebrenica genocide worldwide has largely been won; the remains of most victims of the massacre have been identified and reburied. The deniers and their narrative have been largely discredited. Yet the Bosnian question is further from a happy resolution than ever, while the West – the US, EU and their allies – look less likely to lead positive change in the region than they did a decade ago. Kosovo's full international recognition is still being blocked by Serbia and Russia; Macedonia, kept out of the EU and NATO by Greek nationalist intransigence, is in crisis; not a single official of Serbia has yet been found guilty by the ICTY for war-crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or is likely to be in the future; and leading former-Yugoslav war-criminals such as Biljana Plavsic and Momcilo Krajisnik have been released after serving short prison-terms in comfortable conditions.

The outcomes of the struggles tracked by my blog have therefore been far from unambiguously happy. Yet the politics and recent history of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rest of the former Yugoslavia are much better understood than they were a decade ago; new generations of scholars, analysts and activists are discovering and explaining more all the time. I hope that the articles contained in this volume have made a contribution to this process of discovery.

Marko Attila Hoare, June 2015

NOTE: The following new articles were added to this edition: 1) Srebrenica genocide denier David N. Gibbs praises Donald Trump on foreign policy, 2) Xavier Bougarel's errors concerning the Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War, 3) The judgement on Radovan Karadzic will confirm the criminal character of Republika Srpska's wartime leadership, 4) Kinship and Elopement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 5) The Srebrenica massacre after twenty years, and 6) Is it really true that 'East Timor was worse than Bosnia or Kosovo'?

1

Yugoslavia and its Ghosts

THE WEST AND THE BREAK-UP OF YUGOSLAVIA:
A GROUNDBREAKING NEW STUDY

Review of Josip Glaurdic, *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2011

The break-up of Yugoslavia has generated an enormous literature – much of it poor, some of it acceptable and some of it excellent. There are several decent introductory accounts of the break-up that competently summarise familiar information. There are some very good studies of Slobodan Milosevic and his regime that do justice to the break-up as well. There are some excellent studies of sub-topics or related topics. But there have been few truly groundbreaking studies of the process as a whole. Too many of the older generation of pre-1991 Yugoslav experts had too many of their assumptions shattered by the break-up; too many journalists and casual scholars flooded the market in the 1990s with too many under-researched, third-rate works; too many younger scholars were handicapped by political prejudices that prevented them from addressing the truth squarely. Furthermore, the body of relevant primary sources has been vast and growing exponentially while the body of good supporting secondary literature has only slowly grown to a respectable size. In these circumstances, to write a groundbreaking general study

of the break-up of Yugoslavia has been a difficult task that has required both a lot of talent and a lot of patient hard work.

Josip Glaurdic's *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia* is such a study. As far as general accounts of the break-up go, there are only two or three that rival this work; none that is better. A great strength of this work lies in Glaurdic's careful balance between the domestic and international dimensions of Yugoslavia's break-up; he gives equal space to each and shows carefully the interaction between them. As far as the domestic dimension is concerned, he has skilfully summarised and distilled the existing knowledge about the subject as well as anybody before him. But where this book is truly original and groundbreaking is in its analysis of the international dimension. For this is the best serious, comprehensive, scholarly analysis of the role of the West – specifically, of the US, European Community and UN – in the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The mainstream literature has tended to present the West's involvement in the break-up in terms of a reaction after the fact: Yugoslavia collapsed and war broke out due to internal causes, and the West responded with a weak, ineffective and primarily diplomatic intervention. Some excellent studies of the responses of individual Western countries have appeared, most notably by Michael Libal for Germany, Brendan Simms for Britain and Takis Michas for Greece. Apologists for the former regime of Slobodan Milosevic or for the Great Serb nationalist cause have, for their part, churned out innumerable versions of the conspiracy theory whereby the break-up of Yugoslavia was actually caused or even engineered by the West; more precisely by Germany, the Vatican and/or the IMF. But up till now, nobody has attempted to do what Glaurdic has done, let alone done it well.

Glaurdic's innovation is to begin his study of the West's involvement not in 1991, when full-scale war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, but in 1987, when Milosevic was assuming absolute power in Serbia. This enables him to interpret the West's reaction to the eventual outbreak of war, not as a reflex to a sudden crisis, but as the result of a long-term policy. He places this long-term policy in the broader context of the evolution of the

West's global considerations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The most important of these considerations concerned a state incomparably more important than Yugoslavia: the Soviet Union.

Yugoslavia's principal significance for the Western alliance during the Cold War was as a buffer state vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and as a model of an independent, non-Soviet Communist state. These factors became less important in the second half of the 1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev ruled the Soviet Union and the Cold War was winding down. Milosevic was initially identified by some influential Western observers as a possible 'Balkan Gorbachev'; a Communist reformer who might bring positive change to Yugoslavia. The most important such observer was the veteran US policymaker Lawrence Eagleburger, who became deputy Secretary of State in January 1989. In his confirmation hearings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 15-16 March 1989, Eagleburger stated that 'there is no question in my mind that Milosevic is in terms of economics a Western market-oriented fellow... [who] is playing on and using Serbian nationalism, which has been contained for so many years, in part I think as an effort to force the central government to come to grips with some very tough economic problems.' (Glaurdic, p. 40).

This initial US appreciation for Milosevic dovetailed with a more important consideration: the fear that a collapse of Yugoslavia would create a precedent for the Soviet Union, weakening the position of Gorbachev himself. Of decisive importance was not merely that Western and in particular US leaders viewed Gorbachev as a valued friend, but the extreme conservatism of their ideology as regards foreign policy. Simply put, the US administration of George H.W. Bush valued stability above all else, including democratic reform, and actually preferred Communist strongmen, not only in the USSR but also in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, to the democratic opposition to them. Bush and his team feared the collapse of the Soviet Union and the destabilisation that this threatened – given, among other things, the latter's nuclear arsenal. This led them to acquiesce readily in Soviet repression in Lithuania, Latvia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.



Their acquiescence in Milosevic's repressive policies was a natural corollary.

As Glaurdic shows, this conservative-realist worldview led the Bush Administration, right up till the end of 1991, to champion Yugoslavia's unity rather than its democratic reform. Though the US gradually lost faith in Milosevic, its animosity in this period was above all directed at the 'separatist' regimes in Croatia and Slovenia. The irony was not only that Croatian and Slovenian separatism was a direct response to the aggressive policies of the Milosevic regime, but also that the latter was promoting the break-up of Yugoslavia as a deliberate policy. Through its unwillingness to oppose Milosevic and its hostility to the Croats and Slovenes, Washington in practice encouraged the force that was promoting the very break-up of Yugoslavia that it wished to avoid.

The problem was not that the Bush Administration lacked accurate intelligence as to what Milosevic's regime was doing, but that it chose to disregard this intelligence, instead clinging blindly to its shibboleth of Yugoslav unity, indeed of Yugoslav centralisation. Thus, as Glaurdic shows, a 'conservative realist' ideology resulted in a highly unrealistic, dogmatic policy. In October 1990, the CIA warned the US leadership that, while the latter could do little to preserve Yugoslav unity, its statements would be interpreted and exploited by the different sides in the conflict: statements in support of Yugoslav unity would encourage Serbia while those in support of human rights and self-determination would encourage the Slovenes, Croats and Kosovars (Glaurdic, p. 110). The Bush Administration nevertheless continued to stress its support for Yugoslav unity.

This meant not only that the West failed to respond to Milosevic's repressive and aggressive policy, but that Milosevic and his circle actually drew encouragement from the signals they received from the West. Milosevic scarcely kept his policy a secret; at a meeting with Western ambassadors in Belgrade on 16 January 1991, he informed them that he intended to allow Slovenia to secede, and to form instead an enlarged Serbian stage on the ruins of the old Yugoslavia, that would include Serb-inhabited areas

of Croatia and Bosnia and that would be established through the use of force if necessary. This brazen announcement provoked US and British complaints, but no change in policy (Glaurdic, pp. 135-136).

The problem was not merely ideological rigidity and mistaken analysis on the part of Western and particular US leaders, but also sheer lack of interest. Glaurdic describes the paradoxical Western policy toward the Yugoslav Federal Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, who – unlike Milosevic – really did want to preserve Yugoslavia, and whose programme of economic reform, in principle, offered a way to achieve this. In comparison with the generous financial assistance extended to Poland in 1989-1990, no remotely similar support was offered to Markovic's government, because in US ambassador Warren Zimmermann's words, 'Yugoslavia looked like a loser'. (Glaurdic, p. 68).

The US's dogmatic support for Yugoslav unity was shared by the West European powers. Glaurdic demolishes the myth – already exploded by authors like Libal and Richard Caplan – that Germany supported or encouraged Croatia's and Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia. When the president of the Yugoslav presidency, Janez Drnovsek, visited Bonn on 5 December 1989, German chancellor Helmut Kohl expressed to him his 'appreciation for Yugoslavia's irreplaceable role in the stability of the region and the whole of Europe'. On the same occasion, German president Richard von Weizsaecker informed the Yugoslav delegation that he supported a 'centralised' Yugoslavia (Glaurdic, p. 59). A year later, on 6 December 1990, German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher told his Yugoslav counterpart, Budimir Loncar, that Germany 'has a fundamental interest in the integrity of Yugoslavia', and consequently would make 'the Yugoslav republics realise that separatist tendencies are damaging to the whole and very costly' (Glaurdic, pp. 124-125).

This German opposition to Croatian and Slovenian independence continued right up till the latter was actually declared in June 1991, and beyond. According to Gerhard Almer, a German diplomat and Yugoslav specialist at the time, 'Everything that was happening in Yugoslavia was viewed through Soviet glasses.

[Genscher's] idea was, "Well, Yugoslavia disintegrating is a bad example for Soviet disintegration, and this was bad for us since we needed a Soviet Union capable of action because we needed to get a deal with them on our unity". This was widely accepted in the ministry.' (Glaurdic, p. 160). Contrary to the myth of anti-Yugoslav imperialistic tendencies on the part of Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic government, the latter's support for the Yugoslav *status quo* in the face of Belgrade's abuses was so rigid that it provoked strong resistance from the Social Democratic opposition.

Genscher, subsequently demonised as a supposed architect of Yugoslavia's break-up, actually resisted this pressure from the Bundestag for a shift in German policy away from unbending support for Yugoslav unity and toward greater emphasis on human rights and self-determination. The turning point for him, as Glaurdic shows, came with his visit to Belgrade on 1 July 1991, after the war in Slovenia had broken out. The combination of the overconfident Milosevic's aggressive stance in his talk with Genscher, and the Yugoslav government's inability to halt the Yugoslav People's Army [JNA] operations against Slovenia, destroyed the German foreign minister's faith in the Belgrade authorities, leading to his gradual shift in favour of Croatia and Slovenia. Eventually, after a lot more Serbian intransigence and military aggression, Germany would reverse its traditional policy by 180 degrees, and come out in favour of the recognition of Slovenia's and Croatia's independence, while the EC would split into pro- and anti-recognition currents of opinion.

Nevertheless, as Glaurdic shows, Germany's change of heart was a double-edged sword, since it aroused the anti-German suspicions and rivalries of other EC states, particularly France and Britain, which consequently hardened their own stances against recognition. On 6 November 1991, while the JNA's military assaults on the Croatian cities of Vukovar and Dubrovnik were at their peak, Douglas Hogg, the UK's Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, explained to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons that his government was opposed to the recognition of Croatia since it would create an

'obstacle' to territorial adjustments in Serbia's favour and at Croatia's expense. Several days later, the French president, Francois Mitterand, made a similar public statement, indicating that he saw Croatia's existing borders as a 'problem' that prevented its recognition (Glaurdic, pp. 253-254).

The Bush Administration, meanwhile, acted as a brake on the EC's shift against Belgrade and in favour of recognition, teaming up with the British and French to counter Germany's change of policy. US Secretary of State James Baker and his deputy Lawrence Eagleburger, as well as the UN special envoy Cyrus Vance (himself a former US Secretary of State) waged a diplomatic battle in this period against any shift away from the West's non-recognition policy, and against any singling out of Serbia for blame for the war – even as the JNA was massively escalating its assault on Vukovar in preparation for the town's final conquest. Eagleburger had signalled to the Yugoslav ambassador in October that, although the US was aware that Milosevic was attempting to establish a Greater Serbia, it would do nothing to stop him except economic sanctions, and even these only after Greater Serbia had been actually established (Glaurdic, pp. 243-246). As late as December 1991, Vance continued to oppose recognition and to support the idea of a federal Yugoslavia, and continued moreover to put his trust in Milosevic, the JNA and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, while viewing the Croatians dismissively as 'these Croatian insurgents' (Glaurdic, pp. 264-265).

Glaurdic has marshalled an enormous wealth of documentary evidence to show that the British, French and Americans, far from reacting in a weak and decisive manner to a sudden outbreak of war, actually pursued a remarkably steady and consistent policy from before the war began, right up until the eve of full-scale war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: of vocally supporting Yugoslav unity and opposing Croatian and Slovenian secession; of resisting any singling out of Serbia for blame or punishment; of opposing recognition of Slovenia and Croatia; of seeking to appease Milosevic and the JNA by extracting concessions from Croatia as the weaker side; and finally of appeasing the Serb nationalists' desire to carve up Bosnia. EC sanctions imposed in

November 1991 applied to all parts of the former Yugoslavia equally, while there was no freezing of the international assets or financial transactions through which the JNA funded its war. The UN arms embargo, whose imposition had actually been requested by the Yugoslav government itself, favoured the heavily-armed Serbian side and hurt the poorly armed Croats. Although, largely on account of Germany's change of heart, the EC at the start of December 1991 belatedly limited its economic sanctions to Serbia and Montenegro alone, the US immediately responded by imposing economic sanctions on the whole of Yugoslavia.

According to myth, the Western powers applied the principle of national self-determination in a manner that penalised the Serb nation and privileged the non-Serbs. As Glaurdic shows, the reverse was actually the case. In October 1991, Milosevic rejected the peace plan put forward by the EC's Lord Carrington, which would have preserved Yugoslavia as a union of sovereign republics with autonomy for national minorities, in part because he feared it implied autonomy for the Albanians of Kosovo and the Muslims in Serbia's Sanjak region. Carrington consequently modified his plan: Croatia would be denied any military presence whatsoever in the disputed 'Krajina' region, despite it being an integral part of Croatia inhabited by many Croats, while Serbia would be given a completely free hand to suppress the Kosovo Albanians and Sanjak Muslims. Carrington's offer came just after leaders of the latter had organised referendums for increased autonomy, and after the Milosevic regime had responded with concerted police repression (Glaurdic, p. 242).

Milosevic nevertheless continued to reject the Carrington Plan in the understandable belief that the West would eventually offer him a better deal. He consequently asked Carrington to request from the EC's Arbitration Commission, headed by Robert Badinter, an answer to the questions of whether the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia possessed the right to self-determination, and of whether Serbia's borders with Croatia and Bosnia should be considered borders under international law. Carrington submitted these to the Commission, along with a third question, of whether

the situation in Yugoslavia was a case of secession by Slovenia and Croatia or a case of dissolution of the common state. That the Arbitration Commission ruled against Serbia on all three counts was, in Glaurdic's words, a 'terrible surprise for Milosevic and for many in the international community' (p. 260), given that Badinter was a close associate of President Mitterand, whose sympathies were with Serbia's case. The Badinter Commission's ruling dismayed both Carrington and French foreign minister Roland Dumas, and paved the way to international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. But it did not fundamentally change the West's policy.

Glaurdic's account ends with the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, which as he argues, should be seen as the logical culmination of this policy. The failure of the EC foreign ministers to recognise Bosnia's independence in January 1992 along with Croatia's and Slovenia's was, in Glaurdic's words, 'the decision with the most detrimental long-term consequences, all of which were clearly foreseeable... The EC had missed a great chance to preempt a war that would soon make the war in Croatia pale in comparison. Of all the mistakes the European Community had made regarding the recognition of the Yugoslav republics, this one was probably the most tragic.' (pp. 281-282). Recognition of Bosnia at this time would have upset Milosevic's and Karadzic's plans for destroying that republic; instead, they were given every indication that the West would acquiesce in them.

Thus, on 21-22 February 1992, Bosnia's politicians were presented with the first draft of the plan of the EC's Jose Cutileiro for the three-way partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina into loosely linked Serb, Croat and Muslim entities. Since the plan, based on the ethnic majorities in Bosnian municipalities, offered the Bosnian Serb nationalists 'only' 43.8% of Bosnian territory instead of the 66% they sought, the latter's assembly unanimously rejected it on 11 March. Once again, the EC abandoned universal standards in order to accommodate Serb intransigence, and Cutileiro modified his plan so that the three constituent Bosnian entities 'would be based on national principles and would be taking into account economic, geographic and other criteria' (Glaurdic, p.

294), thereby opening the way for a Serb entity with a larger share of Bosnian territory than was justified on demographic grounds.

Ultimately, Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic rejected the plan. But as Glaurdic writes,

‘The damage that the Cutileiro plan did to Bosnia cannot be overstated. By accepting the ethnic principle for the re-organisation of the republic, Cutileiro in essence recognised the platforms of the SDS [Serb Democratic Party led by Karadzic] and the Boban wing of the HDZ [Croat Democratic Union] and opened a Pandora’s box of ethnic division that still mars Bosnia to this very day. Cutileiro’s intent was obviously to appease the Bosnian Serbs and their Belgrade sponsor into not implementing their massive war machinery. However, instead of lowering tensions and giving the three parties an impetus to keep negotiating, the plan actually gave them a “charter for ethnic cleansing”.’ (p. 290)

In these circumstances, the West’s belated recognition of Bosnia’s independence in April 1992 was naturally not taken seriously by the Serb leaders; Milosevic rather wittily compared it to the Roman emperor Caligula declaring his horse to be a senator (Glaurdic, p. 298).

My principal regret is that Glaurdic did not fully apply the logic of his iconoclastic analysis to his consideration of the Croatian dimension of the Yugoslav tragedy. He carefully and correctly highlights the retrograde nationalist ideology of Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, including his equivocal statements about the Nazi-puppet Croatian regime of World War II and his promotion of the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet he does not properly stress the extent to which Tudjman’s repeated retreats in the face of Serbian aggression merely encouraged the latter, just as did the similar retreats of the Western leaders. Thus, Tudjman capitulated to the JNA’s bullying in January 1991 and agreed to demobilise Croatia’s reservists and arrest Croatian officials involved in arms procurement, including the Croatian defence minister Martin Spegelj himself. Glaurdic argues that this ‘defused the [JNA] generals’ plan for a takeover’ and

brought Yugoslavia 'back from the brink' (p. 134), but it would be more accurate to say that such Croatian appeasement merely encouraged further Serbian assaults, and that the killing in Croatia began only weeks later.

Glaurdic has carefully described the Milosevic regime's secessionism vis-a-vis the Yugoslav federation, but one significant detail omitted from his book is the promulgation on 28 September 1990 of Serbia's new constitution, which stated that 'The Republic of Serbia determines and guarantees: 1 the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and its international position and relations with other states and international organisations;...'. In other words, Serbia declared itself a sovereign and independent state before either Croatia or Bosnia did. This is relevant when evaluating not only the Milosevic regime's hypocrisy regarding 'separatism', but the extent of the West's policy failure. Milosevic posed as Yugoslavia's defender while he deliberately destroyed it. Western leaders were hoodwinked: they sought both to uphold Yugoslavia's unity and to appease Milosevic's Serbia. As Glaurdic has brilliantly demonstrated, their dogged pursuit of the second of these policies ensured the failure of the first.

THE MYTH THAT 'GERMANY ENCOURAGED CROATIA TO SECEDE FROM YUGOSLAVIA'

Those who are sufficiently ideologically driven will readily and tenaciously believe a myth that upholds their own ideology, no matter how completely the myth has been exposed and discredited. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion have been used by anti-Semites from the Nazis to today's Islamists, despite the fact that they were exposed as a forgery a century ago. German anti-Semites sought to explain away Germany's defeat in World War I in 1918 by a supposed 'stab in the back' by the Jews, shifting the ignominy for the murderous Imperial German regime's military collapse onto an innocent third party. In much the same way, apologists for the former regime of Slobodan Milosevic have for twenty years tried to blame the ignominious break-up

of Yugoslavia – which the Milosevic regime deliberately engineered – on democratic Germany’s supposed ‘encouragement of Croatian secessionism’. They have done this despite a complete failure to uncover any evidence to support their thesis.

David N. Gibbs in *First do no Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2009) is the latest author to attempt to breathe life into the corpse of this myth, arguing that ‘Croatian leaders were assured, well in advance, that Germany, the dominant power in Europe, would support their efforts to establish an independent state and to secede from Yugoslavia’ (p. 78) and ‘the key EC state of Germany was clearly in favour of breaking up Yugoslavia, and was actively encouraging secession’ (p. 91). Rarely have I seen such cynical misuse of sources.

- 1) For example, Gibbs quotes the memoirs of the former German foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher as follows:

‘Genscher himself was openly sympathetic toward the secessionists. In his memoirs, he stated: “It was important for us to establish that the Yugoslav peoples alone had the right to freely determine the future of their nation” – with the implication that the Yugoslav central government could not veto this right. Genscher also affirmed “an individual nation’s ‘right to secede’ from the larger [Yugoslav] polity.’ (Gibbs, p. 79)

Yet here are some statements from Genscher’s memoirs that Gibbs omitted to quote:

‘When it came to recognising Croatia and Slovenia, the Vatican displayed extreme reluctance. During my visit in [sic] the Vatican on November 29, 1991, this attempt to remain aloof was particularly apparent. I understood that attitude; the accusation that on this issue the Vatican and West Germany formed a “conspiracy” is therefore very wide of the mark. No one outside of Yugoslavia was interested in the least in the dissolution of Yugoslavia; it was only the pan-Serbian strife [sic] for hegemony that set the country’s dissolution in motion’ (Hans Dietrich Genscher, *Rebuilding a House Divided*, Broadway Books, New York, p. 91)

'On Wednesday, March 20, [1991,] I received Slovenia's president Milan Kucan and Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel; they also spoke of their concerns and of Slovenia's increasing move to independence. I urged them to proceed slowly and above all to take no unilateral steps but to be alert to opportunities to hold the confederation together in some other constitutional form. Especially in view of our delicate, historically burdened relationship with the region, two aspects were of particular importance to German foreign policy: one, not to encourage centrifugal tendencies, and two, to make no unilateral changes in our policy toward Yugoslavia.' (Genscher, p. 491)

'To return to the situation in mid-1991: From June 19 to 20 the first conference of the CSCE Council of Foreign Ministers was held in Berlin. As the host nation, Germany chaired the meeting. Before the conference, I received a few foreign ministers for bilateral talks. Among them was Yugoslavia's foreign minister, Budimir [sic] Loncar, because I wanted to discuss with him first of all the question of how to deal with the issue of Yugoslavia – as might be expected, one of the core topics of the conference. Once again we were impelled to emphasise our interest in maintaining a unified but democratic and federated nation; the conference must remain true to the principles established by the Paris Charter a few months earlier.' (Genscher, pp. 492-493)

So a source quoted selectively and tendentiously by Gibbs to try and squeeze out something approaching 'evidence' for his thesis that Germany encouraged Croatia's secession actually provides rather more evidence that Germany supported a unified Yugoslavia at the time Croatia declared independence in June 1991 [NB since Gibbs falsely accuses me of being unable to read German, I should make clear that I am quoting the English translation of Genscher's memoirs because Gibbs himself relies on the translation, and does not use the German original].

- 2) Likewise, Gibbs quotes the study of Germany's policy toward Croatia in 1991 written by former German diplomat Michael



I get older, they stay the same age - as someone once said in another context. It's one thing I like about Bosnia genocide-deniers. When I first started taking them on at the age of nineteen, their arguments were already easy to refute, and I was hampered only by the limits of my own knowledge. Now, nearly two decades on, I know a lot more, but I still periodically find myself repeating the same old refutations of the same old canards - canards that sound increasingly silly as time goes by. Evidence that Germany 'encouraged' Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia, or that the Western media was 'biased' against the Serb side in the war, or that Bosnian forces shelled their own civilians to provoke Western military intervention against the Serb rebels, has proven as elusive as the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The steady gathering of forensic evidence has made the Srebrenica massacre the most well-documented genocidal crime in history. Yet like lambs to the slaughter, new waves of deniers step forward to sacrifice any reputations they might have in the service of a long-discredited cause.

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