

more likely that the true reason for the bombing of the Yugoslav state television building lies in NATO's desire to stop Western TV networks from borrowing and showing Serbian TV videos of the NATO targets in Yugoslavia which graphically depict the carnage produced and the sufferings inflicted upon the innocent civilians on the Serbian side. In fact, NATO commentator's glee over the destruction of this target was so obvious that the numerous civilian casualties caused by this vicious deed were not even mentioned in his press report as "collateral damage." Similarly, with no remorse or apology for that deed, the Pentagon spokesman even managed in his depiction of the total destruction of this "enemy propaganda headquarters" to promise to his American viewing audience further destruction of the remaining Serbian television facilities, concluding his report with a derisive "tune in" invitation for more of the same in the days to come. While watching his briefing on CNN, I almost involuntarily happened to recall President Reagan's statement made in the heyday of the Cold War that the Soviet Union was an "evil empire." Reflecting further on that afterwards, I could not help but conclude that only a decade later, by unleashing so brazenly its vast military might against four different sovereign countries in a single year (Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Yugoslavia), the Clintonian America has been fully successful in replacing it.

¹ Thomas L. Friedman, "Stop the Music." *New York Times*, April 23, 1999, Op-ed page.

² Raphael Israeli, "International Piracy in Kosovo." *Jerusalem Post*, March 23, 1999.

³ Richard Burns, "Is NATO Right to Bomb Yugoslavia?" Taken from the Internet publication on http://www.suc.org/kosovo_crisis/html/isnato.html. April 12, 1999.

MORAL IMPERATIVES AND GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS: KOSOVO

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The New York Times of Saturday, March 27, quotes Laura Leslie, a senior from Miramonte High School, San Francisco: "I don't want to see another thing like what happened with Hitler, with a terrible person taking over countries." Laura reads the newspaper and listens to the news, and in her innocent way sums up the message of the propaganda war-supporting machine. She is not to be blamed for oversimplifying what is going on in Kosovo and why her country is at war again. The media will try to convince you that this is true and that you should support the men and women of your armed forces for the sake of your values and your children's future. But I would like to offer you a less simplistic explanation—a story without a single hero. Milošević's regime, the NATO and the KLA are responsible for the sufferings of their victims—which are both Serbs and Albanians.

To begin with, the rebellion in Kosovo is not the result of the last ten years. Albanian separatism is the oldest nationalistic movement in what used to be Tito's Yugoslavia, and it has started the circle of mutual mistrust, hatred and eventually war in there. At the beginning of this century, Albanians made up only one third of the Kosovo population. At the beginning of the '50s, after a somewhat prolonged fight with the remains of what used to be the Albanian quisling state established by Mussolini's Italy, Tito's regime decided to give this part of Serbia political, cultural, economical and juridical autonomy, as well as generous subventions from the federal budget.

At the beginning of the '60s, the Albanian population made up two thirds of the Kosovo population. At that time the first public demand for independence was raised, during the riots in 1968 and again in 1981, several months after Tito's death. None of us had at that time heard anything about Milošević, who was a banker with no political influence whatsoever. Their demand for independence had nothing to do with

repression, for if there was any repression at that time, it could only have been an Albanian repression against the Serbs in Kosovo. *The New York Times*, which can hardly be said to be in favor of the Serbs, wrote at that time: "Serbs have been harassed by the Albanians and have packed up and left the region. The Albanian nationalists have a two-point platform, first to establish what they call an ethnically clean Albanian republic and then to merge with Albania for a greater Albania. Some 57,000 Serbs have left Kosovo in the last decade" (NYT, July 12, 1982). Rape, murder, threats, and the destruction of property were the instruments of such a platform, and with the police and courts in Albanian hands, nobody could get protection from the state. In his book, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, Warren Zimmermann, the last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, writes: "I had been warned by American journalists not to believe anything I heard in Kosovo, so I decided to give Rugova a truth test. Referring to the Serbian abuses against Albanians, I asked him how Albanians had treated Serbs when they held the upper hand before the Milošević period. Unfortunately," he answered without hesitation, "there were many crimes committed against Serbs."¹

Milošević rose to power and gained popular support in 1988 with the promise that he would put an end to the violence in Kosovo. The autonomy of the region was abolished in 1990, several months before the dismembering of Yugoslavia started, just as the regional parliament declared Kosovo's independence from Serbia. Both moves were wrong and unconstitutional. At that moment Albanians started to organize parallel state institutions, such as schools, a tax collecting system, courts and the police.

There is no doubt that during the '80s the Albanians in Kosovo were exposed to repression. The police searched their houses looking for arms, arrested them without warrants and often avoided legal procedures. However, at the same time, Serbs were exposed to the same police harassment by the same regime in Serbia, although not to the same extent.

All political forces among Albanians have publicly acknowledged that their aim was not the end of repression and democratization of Kosovo, but independence, which means secession from Serbia and joining Albania. They differ as to what means should be the most appropriate for achieving this goal, but they have never made it a secret that the creation of Great Albania, and not democracy in Serbia or autonomy in it, is their aim.

Refusing to take part in Serbia's political life, especially in elections, Albanians helped Milošević stay in power. Instead of Albanian elected political representatives, Kosovo was represented in Serbia's parliament by representatives of the tiny Serbian population from Kosovo, who were all, needless to say, Milošević supporters. If Albanians had decided to vote for their representatives only once, and they had that chance four times in the last ten years, Milošević would have lost power. The Serbian democratic opposition and independent intellectuals close to the opposition have tried to organize meetings with leading Albanian politicians several times during this period in order to convince them to vote, to take part in Serbia's political life, which would immediately mean the fall of the Milošević regime, the protection of Albanian political rights and the end of repression, but Albanian leaders declined any such proposal, with the answer that the only thing they were interested in would be independence for Kosovo. Thus Milošević and the Albanian leaders helped one another: he ruled Serbia by using their votes, and, on the other hand, with repression helped them radicalize the political situation in Kosovo.

In 1998 the Kosovo Liberation Army emerged as an important player in Kosovo's political game. Reading *The New York Times* or listening to NATO leaders, one might get the impression that the KLA is something like The Red Cross, or a group of peaceful old ladies who every day bring flowers to Serbian houses. But it is not so. It is an armed paramilitary formation which last summer had two thirds of Kosovo under its control. The KLA has ethnically pure and independent Kosovo as its only aim. It struggles for it not with political, but with violent means: attacking police patrols, Serbian civilians and their houses, forcing them to leave Kosovo, and bombing coffee-shops in which Serbian youth gathers. I would like to stress the fact that what they do is ethnic cleansing as well. Killing civilians is killing civilians, and I expect your indignation to be the same in any criminal case of this sort. Not a single day has passed in the year and a half without a report that at least three people were killed by the KLA, Serbs as well as Albanians loyal to the state. It would be highly hypocritical to refer to the KLA as "unarmed civilians," when it calls itself an Army. On the other hand, in the process of regaining control over the parts of Kosovo under the rule of the KLA, Serbian authorities performed actions in which civilians were murdered as in the village of Račak in January.

There is not any excuse for this, and The Hague Tribunal has already started an investigation of it and all similar cases.

Last October a peace agreement between the Serbian authorities and the leaders of the KLA was reached. According to it, the Serbian government would withdraw all the special police and some of the military units, and the KLA would cease its operations until the final peace agreement was reached. Only the first part of this deal was fulfilled. The KLA never stopped the killings, the excuse being that it had no central command and that the local units cannot be controlled by anyone. After the Serbian police and military units withdrew from Kosovo, the KLA simply walked into the empty space and gained control over a large part of Kosovo and continued the violence.

As you can see, the demand for Kosovo's independence led to the repression, the repression led to KLA and terrorism, terrorism led to Serbian military and police intervention, and it led to NATO's assault on Yugoslavia. None of the steps I have listed was unavoidable. Nevertheless, everything eventually comes down to the question of Kosovo's independence. As I was never tempted to support the idea of a Great Serbia, I do not understand why anyone should think that a Great Albania is a noble aim. This aim can be achieved only at the cost of changing borders and by ethnically cleansing Kosovo of Serbs in the first phase, and then by repeating the same procedure in Macedonia, which also has a numerous Albanian minority, and follows the same logic we have seen in previous ex-Yugoslav wars: "Why should I be a minority in your state, when you can be a minority in mine?"

Not Milošević, but Yugoslavia is being bombed today for the failure of its representatives to sign the document offered in Rambouillet. This document is not the result of negotiations and peace talks, and it meets all the demands of only one side in the conflict. According to it, Kosovo will stay in Serbia as a self-governed region only for the next three years, after which period it may declare its independence. The Albanian delegation has signed the document, but they have enclosed a written statement which says that they do not give up their central aim, the independence of Kosovo. The Serbian side accepts a broad autonomy and the UN observers, but declines both the possibility of independence, and the occupation by some 28,000 NATO soldiers.

As the leaders of the NATO countries say, the bombing will stop the moment "Milošević," who has become a general name for ten million

Serbs, their state and their president, agrees with the Rambouillet document. This means that the bombing will last as long as there is anything in Serbia left. Neither Milošević, nor anybody in Serbia can sign such a document, for it would mean signing that part of our country will become part of Albania in three years. Even though I think that Serbia would be better off without Kosovo, I wouldn't sign it either. It would mean a continuation of the process of establishing more and more violent, ethnically clean nationalistic states in the Balkans. This is neither a matter of Serbian sentimentality, nor has it anything to do with the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, as some crash-course experts would have it. It has to do with principles and with the right of any country to protect its borders and its integrity. In spite of repeated claims that the NATO countries are not in favor of Kosovo's independence, this is exactly what they are supporting by their military intervention. In Rambouillet Serbia was confronted with the alternatives to agree with the secession, or to be bombed and thus forced to agree with it; not much of a choice, as you see.

If the term ethnic cleansing is to be used, it has been committed by both Albanians and Serbs over the last twenty years, but genocide has not taken place, and the killings happen on a much smaller scale than in Algeria or Ethiopia, to name only two current crises in the world. Yugoslavia is a sovereign state and Kosovo is a part of it; Yugoslavia has not committed an aggression against any neighboring state. On the contrary, it is being threatened by Albania as a KLA base and by Macedonia as a NATO base. (Leaving the Yugoslav territory the other day, U.S. diplomat William Walker said, "Next time I will not need a visa to enter Yugoslavia," a sentence which, as you might assume, does not mean that the visa regime between our countries will be suspended.) The assault on Yugoslavia is a clear case of violating the UN Charter, and no rhetoric can change this fact. If Serbia refuses to allow a province to secede, outsiders have no right to label such defense of its national borders an "aggression" and to support the rebels. Great Britain fought for the Falkland Islands, the small leftover of its colonial empire, and nobody bombed London for that.

The ongoing bombing of Serbian cities has taken its first victims. As I write this text, the number of civilian casualties among Serbs is 1,000, and I invite you to compare it with the number of Albanian casualties in the village of Račak in January of this year, which was 40. Among other things, NATO bombs have destroyed or damaged 50

schools, the printing facilities of Koha Ditore, the leading Albanian daily newspaper, the ice cream factory in Sombor, the 600 year old monastery Grčanića in Kosovo, and the monastery Rakovica in Belgrade. Recalling high human values and morality, the NATO leaders do exactly the same thing of which they accuse the Serbs.

The bombing of Yugoslavia has produced exactly what NATO claims to have tried to prevent: more destruction, more dead bodies, more violence and more refugees. While the KLA is in the offensive, rightly understanding the NATO missiles and planes as its own air force, Serbian extremists are taking their revenge, thus taking into the conflict the parts of Kosovo spared killings and destruction so far.

A further result of NATO's aggression on Yugoslavia seems to me easy to foresee. A new era of insecurity has begun, for nobody knows when NATO leaders are going to invoke values, principles, and moral imperatives as a pretext of attacking some other country without the authorization of the UN. It can be Macedonia when Albanians take arms, or Romania, with its huge Hungarian minority, or any other multi-ethnic state in the world. I am pretty sure it will not be Turkey, even if a new Kurd upsurge breaks out, and you probably do not need my help to understand why not. Second, from now on no argument can prevent Bosnian Serbs to secede stating the very same arguments the NATO leaders used in the case of Kosovo—to be able to live in their own country—and that means the end of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Thirdly, it doesn't take much to predict that Yugoslavia cannot defend itself against the overwhelming power of NATO. It is only a matter of time when NATO accomplishes its goal of seceding Kosovo from Serbia. The new, greater Albania will not be a democratic and peaceful state, but aggressive and violent, and the region will be shaken with violence and conflicts even more than so far. As far as Serbia is concerned, Milošević will emerge from this crisis even stronger than before, but no Western oriented and democratic Serb will be able to say aloud words like democracy, the rule of law, and justice. If the states usually identified with these values were able to violate international laws and the UN Charter, hypocritically recalling the values that were renounced by their deeds at the same moment, in order to help dismember Yugoslavia, then we in the opposition are left without any argument. The same applies to the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, established to investigate war crimes against civilians

committed in the last ten years in the former Yugoslavia, for there is no difference between Serbian officers who plan and execute the bombing of Serbian cities and villages today. They can both list their reasons endlessly, and words like "moral imperative," "defenseless people," "our children," as well as the sentence "the enemy understands only the language of force" can be heard from them very often. Moreover, this will give perfect justification for all those who during the wars in the former Yugoslavia supported or took part in assaults on civilians, and a perfect excuse for further crimes.

What are the rules in the game of dismembering former Yugoslavia? Addressing the nation, President Clinton made a hardly understandable analogy to the holocaust, which would suppose that the Jews in Germany had a Jewish Liberation Army, that they controlled part of, say, Bavaria and intended to join it with Israel. However, the real analogy to Albanians in Kosovo can be found in comparison with the Serbs in Croatia. As the Albanians in Kosovo, the Serbs in Krajina, Croatia were the majority. As the Albanians in Kosovo, the Serbs in Krajina were repressed and frightened by President Tudjman's resurrection of Ustaša-Nazi ideology and its symbols. As the Albanians were deprived of their autonomy, the Serbs in Krajina were deprived of their constitutional rights. And, finally, as the Albanians now, the Serbs then took arms and started to fight. In August, 1995 the Croatian forces attacked Krajina, bombed cities and villages and killed civilians, even fleeing refugees. In only three days 250,000 Serbs were ethnically cleansed from Croatia and made to join other 200,000 who came to Serbia from other parts of Croatia, without being so far allowed to return to their homes. NATO was silent and nobody said a word about bombing Croatia. Consequently, the U.S. did not cooperate in this matter with The Hague Tribunal, which investigated it as a case of large-scale ethnic cleansing, by refusing to give the satellite photos taken during the action of the Croatian army.

What were the principles and the values defended by the U.S. in 1995? The principle was that no border in the former Yugoslavia could be changed, and that no national minority had the right to form a new state on other state territories. Four years later, the principle has been changed, new values defended, and we witness the U.S. pushing Kosovo towards independence, helping Albanians change the borders within three years and form a new state on Yugoslavia's territory. This is what hap-