

NATO's humanitarian attack and the media

JS

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The following article was sent by JS, a Swiss observer who has had experience in Eastern Europe. The World Socialist Web Site is reproducing the article for the information of our readers. Its views are those of the author, not the WWS. In an accompanying letter, JS says that his article "does not deal with the refugee situation, but rest assured that I'm just as horrified as the rest of you. My heart goes out to both the Kosovars and the Serbs. I see them both as victims of politics. I aim to be neutral in the conflict. My reaction is targeted at NATO's miscalculated bombing campaign and the media's all-too-apparent impotent response to it."

We are now more than three weeks into the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia. Isn't it time for reporters and journalists to start to ask questions about what is really going on? For them to try to put tear-jerking stories about the refugee situation aside and penetrate the fog surrounding a whole package of related issues? So far all journalists have operated more like NATO spokesmen than reporters.

We are led to believe that NATO initiated the attack for humanitarian reasons. This is how NATO has sold the package to the public. The refugee situation shown over and over on television, backed by gruesome stories revealed by reporters like Christiane Amanpour at CNN. It really works in bringing the public behind NATO, keeping them from asking disturbing questions, spinning 70 percent of the public into the we-must-bomb-to-save-life mode. It is so far just like the spin-doctor ordered.

There has been some controversy as to whether Christiane Amanpour is lying; of course she is not. She is telling the stories as truthfully as she reads them in her book. The problem is only that there are several books. Top this the conviction within CNN and other channels of their own importance, and the religious belief that pictures always tell the truth. I'm not here to contradict convictions, only to say that a picture of a seed does not tell the story of the kernel, a picture of a kernel does not tell the story of the tree, a picture of a tree does not tell the story of the wood, a picture of the wood does not, and so on. Pictures can also be manipulated like the famous picture from the so-called concentration camp in Bosnia, showing some lean "prisoners" behind barbed wire. The picture was proven a falsification or at least a manipulation by the court in The Hague. The British TV-team had taken the scene from inside a barbed wire fence surrounding a shed. No barbed wire surrounded the camp. The "prisoners" were free to come and go at their own will.

War is big business for the media. Ratings surge to the ceiling, lifting the bottom line. Talking heads are busy hyperventilating their opinions, stretching the cover to 24 hours, and getting the most out of it. News must be fed every day to keep the wave going.

The NATO apparatus also has very professional media consultants. There was some confusion in the beginning but a theme was soon selected for public consumption: Genocide, Holocaust, Hitler. One US State Department official admitted, "The demonization of Milosevic is necessary to maintain the air attacks." NATO spokesmen don't have to tell the truth, they don't even have to claim they know the truth, basically the truth is of no interest. The system works differently. Every time people representing NATO like White House spokesman Rubin, Secretary Cohen, the British secretary Cook, etc. address the public, they are

instructed to use the word "genocide" several times. If they can manage to put in "holocaust" and "Hitler" as well, fine. As we all remember, the magic phrase for the latest bombing of Iraq was "weapons of mass destruction." Secretary Cohen managed to mention the magic words almost 20 times in a three-minute speech at the outset of the Iraq bombing. And it worked, even though any sane person will know that what they haven't found in seven years they will never find ...

Accusations don't have to be true, again in this game truth is of no interest. It works like this: we are receiving reports that pregnant women are being sliced open; we are being told from several sources that mass rapes are being committed in front of families, we are now collecting evidence of the existence of several new mass graves. Please note that NATO in saying this is not claiming to know, they are not lying. And it works perfectly, it is just the type of extremes the media wants, a hundred times better than any soap opera. Please note! The US, spearheading NATO, has a long experience in "talking war"...

Is the above cynical, not giving any credit to media or journalism as a whole? Of course it is, but it is a fact of life. Why is it like this? Is it that journalists today are so involved or dependent on their own career, that they don't dare to step outside the accepted range of opinion? Are they afraid of being marginalized, of being left out in the cold?

The explanation has to be found within their own ranks. Journalists are well-educated people, they are smart and well-informed, and extensive information on any issue is in general easily accessible today, or at least easily deducible reading between the lines. One thing is much worse than being gullible or ignorant, that is knowing and advocating an opinion against one's better judgment. Journalists should not be fog-bound. Their main responsibility of journalism is to clear the fog, including that which is intentionally created, surrounding any issue. This should be done with bravery and integrity, not with consideration to their well-fed bellies, to careers or social position. I would like to address a plea to the profession as a whole: please prove me wrong. Let us look into some of the claims surrounding the Kosovo crisis, which so far have not been given any significant attention in the press.

NATO had a moral obligation to bomb to save the Kosovars. This is bull. No nation or military alliance has ever gone to war because of humanitarian considerations, and no nation or military alliance ever will. This is deception with a capital D. NATO couldn't care less about the Kosovars. NATO is a military organization; moral obligations are just not in their vocabulary. The Pentagon is not a humanitarian relief agency. The former vice-president of "Doctors Without Borders", Jean-Christophe Rufin, points to the following, "Here we are dealing with a purely military, operational alliance, designed to respond to a threat, that is to an enemy. NATO defines an enemy, threatens it, then eventually strikes and destroys it. Setting such a machine in motion requires a detonator. Today it is no longer military. Nor is it political. The evidence is before us: NATO's trigger today is humanitarian. It takes blood, a massacre, something that will outrage public opinion so that it will welcome a violent reaction. The consequence is that the civilian population in Kosovo has never been so potentially threatened as today. Why? Because those potential victims are the key to international reaction. Let's be clear.

The West wants dead bodies. We are waiting for them in Kosovo. We'll get them. Who will kill them is a mystery but previous incidents suggest that 'the threat comes from all sides'."

It is also evident that NATO was fully informed as to the real nature of the conflict, and that their good-guy, bad-guy scenario didn't hold water.... When the Croat army ethnically cleansed the Krajina region for about 100,000-plus Serbs in 1995, not one in the West objected. The US actually helped facilitate it. Western policies have led to an ethnically pure Greater Croatia, and an ethnically pure Muslim statelet in Bosnia. Some estimates put the total figure of Serbs driven out from these states as high as 800,000.

Prior to the outset of the Rwandan genocide UN troops were in place. They were withdrawn upon US demand. US obstructed efforts to save lives and even failed to apply diplomatic pressure against the killers. In Iraq 5,000 children and elderly are dying every month as a direct result of US policy. Madeleine Albright's said: "We think it is worth the price." 200,000 died in Guatemala caused by the US-backed guerrillas. In Colombia the annual level of political killing by the Government and its paramilitary is about the level of Kosovo, and refugee flight from their atrocities is well over a million. The US, providing arms and training, whole-heartedly backs Colombia. The list could go on but that is not the objective. I only want to prove my case. The US-led NATO's motive is NOT humanitarian.

NATO wanted to get rid of Milosevic. His position is now stronger than ever. This comes as a surprise to no one but NATO. Any country being attacked is subject to increased patriotism. Has anyone asked the question how we ended up having a military organization like NATO negotiating a peace deal? Military organizations do not negotiate peace, they negotiate surrender or occupation. The November 1995 Dayton accord put NATO in as a peacekeeping force in Bosnia. The latter is now virtually a NATO protectorate, it will take tough arguing to call it a sovereign state. The US and EU have installed a full-fledged colonial administration. I wonder if the Bosnians are satisfied with the arrangement.... Practically nothing of importance is left to electorates. And of course FRY's [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] debt to international lenders was divided up between the "new states." No one is going to lose money here. It is interesting to note that multinationals are now looking into undeveloped oil beds, among others Amoco has expressed interest, and whom do you think they are dealing with?

Let us look at the outset. Reviewing the facts and reading between the lines, it is easy to deduce that NATO probably had set their mind to bomb several months ago, to get rid of the last considerable power in the Balkans, the last Russian influence in the Balkans, thus leaving all of the Balkans open to US and EU influence and control. Questions have been raised in the European newspapers *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* as to the real nature of the Racak massacre leading up to Rambouillet. In Rambouillet every possible step was taken to keep the negotiating parties far apart.... In spite of that, some preliminary agreements were reached between the KLA and FRY. This fact was totally neglected. The document presented to the parties was a fait accompli, an ultimatum. Madeleine Albright almost totally neglected Ibrahim Rugova from the civilian Kosovo Democratic Party, she only wanted to deal with the architects of war. Even the KLA was reluctant to give their consent considering the unlimited authority given to NATO, but after being told that NATO could not bomb the Serbs unless they signed, they agreed and finally signed the charter. This was all NATO needed, they knew very well the Serbs couldn't sign the document, accepting independence for Kosovo in three years and an occupation of FRY at NATO's will. The rest was theater, a play of Shakespeare.

NATO didn't pay any attention to the Vienna Convention, that clearly states in paragraph 52 that treaties obtained by threat or by use of force are illegal (sign or we bomb you). NATO is clearly in disrespect of several

international laws in this theater. Even a phrase like "international community" will have to be redefined. In NATO terminology it means everyone backing NATO ...

From the beginning of the eighties the Yugoslav economy became tighter and as so many countries in Eastern Europe and elsewhere they were lured into the IMF trap. After some years of the IMF's lethal medicine the collapse of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was a fact. Taxes taken in by FRY were not distributed to the autonomous regions, as the IMF demanded the full amount to cover debt. The dismantling of the Yugoslav welfare state was a natural consequence. Very relevant to today's crisis may be the fact that the IMF demanded an end to "special privileges" for Kosovo in the end of the 1980s. This of course caused enormous frictions, which finally triggered the uprising and the wars, bringing back to life and feeding on all the ethnic differences.

One incident engendered the situation significantly: Germany's all too eager recognition of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991. This should interest the press. A lot of evidence can be found that strongly indicates that operation FRY was settled in Reagan's chambers and carried out and spearheaded by Reaganomics using the IMF as a convenient tool. It should also be of interest to the press to look into the activities of the CIA and BND (Bundes Nachrichten Dienst) in the Balkans. The CIA had been active for decades, the BND entered the theater in 1990. What role did BND play in creating and training the KLA? The KLA uses German uniforms and East German weapons. Have the CIA and BND been involved in shady arms trades in the region, violating the UN embargo?

The CIA has a track record of being involved in drug smuggling, using the dirty money to finance shady military operations. This pattern of covert financing was established in Indochina and later applied in several other theaters, the overthrow of the legally constituted Government in Bolivia, the Government of Allende in Chile, and in the Caribbean and Central America. The KLA's involvement or at least former involvement in drug smuggling is an open secret, a fact amply documented in European police files. The DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) estimates that 4 to 6 metric tons of heroin pass through the Balkans in route to Europe every month.

What role did BND play in the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991? Germany not only favored secession, it was eager to the extent of pressuring its Western allies to grant recognition. The German foreign minister at the time, Hans Dietrich Genscher, was on the phone every day in May 1990 with his comrade in Zagreb, Franjo Tujman. Maybe the press should investigate how Germany was seeking a free hand among its allies to pursue economic dominance in the region. What was the nature of these agencies' covert activities prior to the outset of the war in Bosnia?

What is the true nature of the German company Preussag being handed over control of the chrome mines in Albania? Albania has abundant oil-deposits, all coveted by Western multinationals for some time now. It has chrome, copper, platinum and gold deposits. The oil pipeline planned, already approved and agreed with US major interests includes a huge port in Albania ...

The US is the main player in the current bombing. So far the press has been homogenous in its backing of the NATO campaign. In the first two weeks a lot of generals were brought on the talk shows presenting matters in military terminology. Lately a lot of politicians have been on, mainly for their own glory and especially after public opinion was turned in favor by the spin-doctors and the tears of the refugees. In any case, consensus is still victory at any cost, to stay in the bomb-to-save-life mode. For the most part the populace both in Europe and the US are easily deceived. What they know about the world is the evening news. But whatever happened to the tough American journalist, to the guy asking tough questions, to the press-hero type from the Vietnam War? At least try to investigate some hidden agendas. NATO did NOT start this bombing campaign out of any consideration for the Kosovars. Humanitarianism has

never been, and will never be, a driving force in US foreign policy. So far NATO is a consensus alliance, but for how long?

NATO has initiated the so-called phase three, terror bombing of all of FRY included Montenegro. DU [depleted uranium] ammunition is used without so much as a note in the press. The latest info indicates that the Americans and the British pilots have turned to cluster bombs, which spray shrapnel over a wide area. Is NATO willing to destroy all the infrastructure and industry, to bomb Serbia back to the Middle Ages, to do whatever ugly it takes, to accept high rate of civilian casualties, all this, to get victory? It will be a hollow victory. Are the political leaders in the NATO-member countries ready to bear the responsibilities and face the consequences? I sense that at least some of them were lured into this, convinced by Albright's two-days-and-Milosevic-will-fold scenario. Is the REAL international community willing to sit back and watch the show unfold, while NATO deals with its credibility? Am I the only one seeing the insanity in this bombing campaign?

It is clear that horrible things must have taken place in Kosovo to cause such an exodus, to frighten people into such actions. But isn't it natural to believe that people being caught in the crossfire between Serbs, the KLA and falling NATO bombs would try to get out? At least this is reflected in statements from some of the refugees. Are we witnessing military strategy in play? The Serbs wanted to clear the battlefield of civilians, taking out the KLA once and for all. NATO eagerly waited for this to happen, allowing them to start all-out carpet bombing of Kosovo, and the Serbs upon receiving this information closed the door so to speak. Even if the Serbs were the only bad guys in this theater, was bombing the right medicine, has the bombing campaign helped avoiding all the bad things that NATO claims has happened? In my opinion the bombing has proven to be the opposite, counterproductive, a lethal medicine ensuring a sudden death of all objectives in this "peace-effort". In compliance with last year's October Agreement, Milosevic withdrew his forces. The KLA reentered the theater and intensified their activities, killing police. The KLA knew they had to provoke Milosevic into some hotheaded counter-action. The KLA knew the only way they could reach their political goal was to get NATO to bomb. Politically, the KLA has been very successful so far. I wonder if some groups started to kill police officers in the US, or in the UK, or in Germany, what would have been the reactions?

I don't know what really is going on inside Kosovo and I don't think anyone knows at this moment. In the aftermath an UN-led impartial investigation team must be set up to do the necessary fieldwork. I'm afraid NATO will be considered biased. As to hidden agendas I'm not really ready to speculate. I will prefer to leave that up to the press, it must be an interesting task for investigative journalism. However I will mention some scenarios frequently surfacing. NATO wants to get rid of the last considerable force in the Balkans and at the same time the last Russian influence in Central and South East Europe. Their aim is to get full control over the future Caspian oil pipeline all the way from the Black Sea to the Adriatic. To NATO I want to say, I cannot do it in military phraseology but most certainly in civilian: when you are in a hole, for God's sake stop digging!

In addition I would like to add a lesson from history. Any Organization, Nation or Empire which puts might before right is at the beginning of the end. Leaders like Clinton, Blair, Schroeder and the rest, who have chosen the avenue of the most cowardly type of war, should at least take responsibility for their deeds. But no, they are not responsible. The responsibility sits with Milosevic. What a class act of evasive responsibility worthy of the baby-boomers. It's like I kick you in the head, but it's your fault. To the press and the media I want to say, heavy responsibilities are on your shoulders to strive to present this crisis as fairly and justly as possible. It should not be your priority to minimize the culpability of Western adventures.

Zurich

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