

David North replies to a reader

Intellectual integrity and claims of Serb genocide

29 May 1999

To the editor,

Martin McLaughlin's ingenious spin on the Kosovo genocide ("it's not like Hitler, because there aren't as many dead bodies or impoverished refugees yet") is inept and dishonest. If Mr. McLaughlin doesn't happen to "get it," that's fine—if mystifying—but don't expect us to turn a blind eye and deaf ear to this astounding tragedy based on his failure of discernment. His apology for ethnic defilement is clever, but lends sinister new meaning to the term "revisionist."

RM

The WSWS replies:

First, you insert quotation marks around a sentence that is your own construction, not Mr. McLaughlin's. That is both "inept" and "dishonest."

Second, as the US has justified its bombing of Yugoslavia by raising Milosevic to the level of Hitler, the issue of numbers of dead is of no small importance. There is a vast difference between the deaths of several thousand people (both Serb and Kosovan Albanian) in inter-communal warfare in which KLA guerillas enjoyed US support—and the mass murder of 9 million people in industrialized extermination camps between 1939 and 1945.

Moreover, if the actions of Milosevic are to be considered war crimes, then it would not be difficult to indict as war criminals at least a dozen leaders who presently enjoy warm relations with the United States—beginning with Tadjman of Croatia.

Third, as for "blind eyes" and "deaf ears," these are the moral handicaps of those who seem to be utterly indifferent to the fate of those upon whom their country is dropping bombs.

David North, for the WSWS

To David North,

I put quotes around a statement to characterize an attitude...and only a literalist whose thought processes were cast in Portland Cement would expect to actually find those words in the text. And as for Hitler, everyone has to start somewhere ... did he begin with the trains and the gas ovens, or with the Brown Shirts and the signs signaling where the Juden resided?

Imagination and memory will take you from there to here, from here to there...but the conveniently deaf and blind will not make that journey.

RM

David North replies:

Excuse me—there is an honest and dishonest way to employ quotation marks.

You misrepresented Mr. McLaughlin's views in a manner that made it appear that he was indifferent to mass murder. You resorted to misrepresentation because it made it easier for you to attack his opposition to the NATO bombing.

As for your latest argument—that Milosevic is an embryonic Hitler and must be stopped now—it does not withstand any sort of serious political or historical analysis. There existed a necessary and causal relationship between the politics of Hitler and the contradictions of German imperialism. Without German finance and industrial capital, a "Hitler" would not have been possible. What are the great Serb industrial and financial transnational conglomerates that are driving the politics of Milosevic? What is the relationship between the imperial strivings of the Serb bourgeoisie (does it even exist?) and the policies pursued by the Yugoslav government?

You are worried about aggressive and genocidal imperialism? I suggest that you have far more to fear from the consequences of the insatiable appetites of the

American bourgeoisie—armed with nuclear weaponry and without credible military opponents—than from the desperate efforts of Yugoslavia to prevent its own destruction.

"Imagination" and "memory" will get you only so far.
A bit of knowledge is also needed.

David North,
for the WWS



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