

Hope, Arkansas to Hope, Albania: Naivete and Idealism to Reality and Tragedy

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ABSTRACT

The wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo were perpetrated by a radical nationalist Serbian cultural political consciousness that the American cultural political consciousness and leadership had difficulty responding to and understanding. There is a great cultural divide between a 'pathology' in Serbian culture, Milošević's radical nationalism, and a humane 'naivete' in American cultural consciousness. I discuss why, finally, American political leadership, Bill Clinton from Hope, Arkansas, responded to the tragedy of these wars. However, we are still left with the question of good vs evil: What is the course of human history; psychotic political leadership causing repetitive human tragedy or can there be a higher humane and moral order to human cultural events?

In the 1990's the pathologies in Serbian cultural/political consciousness created stark realities and tragedies in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo which have become juxtaposed and finally confronted against the naivete and idealism in American culture. These realities and tragedies became focused upon a little boy from Hope, Arkansas, who became our president and now have ended in the realities of a Kosovar refugee camp named Hope in Albania. This confrontation is across an insurmountable historical and cultural divide between American and

Serbian political consciousness, an historical and cultural divide which allows little, if any, understanding. Yet, there are hard facts and realities that reach across that divide and have finally touched our consciousness. We have reacted finally to murder, rape, pillage and burning of homes, have reacted finally to the genocide being committed by the Serbs against first the Croatians, then the Bosnians, and now the Albanian Kosovars.

Radical Serb nationalists and their political actors such as Slobodan Milošević

come out of a psychologically closed and complex cultural reality that is not necessarily connected, except in mythic consciousness, to historical reality. I believe it is appropriate to say that Serbian political/cultural definitions of reality which emphasized historical persecutions of the Serbian people, whether it had been by Ottoman 'Turk', Croat 'Ustasha', or Albanian Kosovar and which emphasized revenge for that history, or which emphasized that where-ever a Serb lived in the former Yugoslavia that this was to be part of a »Greater Serbia«; that these cultural definitions promoted and created psychopathic behavior which resulted in the atrocities by the Serbian military and para-militaries in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. I do not intend to review that history and myth other than to note that finally this Serb mentality exposes itself in one absurd statement after another about their identity and unity with Serbian nationalism, with Kosovo being their Jerusalem and their cradle of Serbian civilization and that they will fight to the death against the US and NATO fascist aggressors. Their bravado was displayed on the Serbian propaganda TV media as they stood on bridges over the Danube with targets displayed on their chests and they dared NATO to bomb. They spoke in Orwellian terms about fascist NATO, Nazi NATO and the US and Bill Clinton being the aggressor and killing innocent Serb civilians as they showed on Belgrade TV bombed out homes, hospitals, buses and retirement homes in Belgrade and Novi Sad. We showed their TV propaganda coverage of the war and we let them talk in interview after interview and they revealed their psycho/cultural pathology and their Orwellian thinking. They talked on and on and they still didn't get it, didn't realize what they revealed about themselves. And, this is a basic difference between their undemocratic and mentally closed, myopic cul-

ture and our open, critical and democratic society; an open society exposes hypocrisy and pathological thinking and behavior.

From our critical and democratic Western press coverage I want to review some of the observations and statements that have been made in relation to American political consciousness and our leadership, comments about President Bill Clinton. We have witnessed over the years of the Serbian aggression in Croatia, Bosnia, and now in Kosovo, an apparent reluctance of the US to get involved in this »European« problem. Yet, it has become apparent that underneath this reluctance we had been making decisions and had been responding, e.g., our allowing the Croatians to build an army even though there was a UN arms embargo and our European allies objected. We even, under the guise of a private corporation, trained the Croatian army officer corp which successfully expelled the Serbian military occupation of the Croatian Krajina and parts of Slavonia. This involvement and leadership continued with the Dayton Accords in November, 1995, which finally brought about a quasi-settlement of the Bosnian conflict, but only after US leadership and NATO had finally bombed Serbian military positions in Bosnia. Only with force did we finally get the Serbian leadership to respond, but only after they had committed unspeakable atrocities against the Croat and Muslim Bosnian population. But, it seemed that we didn't learn from Serbian deceit, lies, and their psychopathologies which they carried out in such places as Omarska and Srebrenica and we allowed the Kosovo nightmare to erupt. Now we ask why? Why did the Serbian atrocities in Kosovo even have to happen? Why was our response delayed and apparently bungled? Why wasn't Mladić arrested? Why did we allow Milošević to remain in

power? Because we needed him as a peace-maker?

The critique of Clinton reveals some explanation. Then we have to ask; Why the critique? Hugo Young in the *Guardian* stated: »Bill Clinton does not want to lead... We are witnessing, I believe, the slow disintegration of American purpose«¹. The *Berlin Zeitung* noted; »Clinton's chance to go down in History as a strategic thinker is vanishing«(ibid). Tony Blair had to become the spokesperson for a hardening NATO position on Kosovo: Blair stating that this is »a just war« and stressing that NATO will not negotiate with Milošević – that Milošević must accept NATO's demands. However, Germany's Schroeder and Italy's prime minister, Massimo D'Alema weakened their position, not wanting to commit to a forced invasion of Kosovo, other than the air strikes. »Meanwhile, Mr. Blair was depicted daily in the British press as a stout-hearted Churchillian leader pressing a reluctant Mr. Clinton to screw up his courage and threaten Belgrade with invasion unless Mr. Milošević accepts NATO's terms«². And, it seems that it took the British foreign secretary Robin Cook to state it once again (for Clinton?): »There will not be a settlement on any terms that do not provide for the return of all refugees, and they will not return until they know the Serbs have withdrawn and NATO has entered Kosovo«³. And, if Milošević wasn't listening, Jamie Shea, every day as NATO spokesperson, stated over and over the demands of NATO; total Serb military, police, etc. withdrawal from Kosovo, return of the Kosovar refugees, autonomy for Kosovo, and democratic elections.

The Serbs have a propensity to redefine reality and meaning for their political purposes (the 1389 field of black-birds'defeat became an identity?) and their propaganda continued with daily accusation and pictures of »Nazi« NATO

bombing 'atrocities' on innocent Serb civilians. The Serbs just wouldn't get it. Their reporters kept asking Jamie Shea at the daily NATO briefings about the latest Serb civilian casualties from the NATO bombing and he replied: »I have some civilian casualty figures for you... 1,582,345 displaced people and refugees resulting from the Serb actions in Kosovo – 93% of the original population of Kosovo; 225,000 men missing; at least 6000 killed in summary executions; and 10 mass graves«³. Then some more truth about the Serbs comes out. On May 13th NATO bombed a warehouse compound in Kosovo – killing more than 80 Kosovar refugees. The Serbs spread the horrible images of this carnage on their TV and before the world. However, weeks later, refugee survivors from that NATO bombing successfully fled to Albania and reported that the Serb soldiers herded them, 700 of them, into the compound and locked the gate – they were put there intentionally knowing that the warehouse was a NATO target. The Serbs created this situation for their propaganda purposes, as they did elsewhere in Kosovo, mixing Kosovars into their military convoys and placing them next to targets; using them as civilian shields to create civilian casualties⁴.

All of this finally played out before the American public and we started to get polls showing that Americans supported the NATO bombing and would even support military action on the ground to stop the Serb killing in Kosovo. The endless pictures on the evening TV news coverage of Serb atrocities and the refugees streaming from Kosovo, all one million of them, finally got to a basic American consciousness that the Serbs don't have a clue about. We do have morals and a basic sense of humanity of what is humane and what should be reasonable human behavior. We had this reaction with the Serb atrocities in Bosnia and then it all

seemed to slide from our consciousness and the Serbs repeated it all in Kosovo. Those that kept watch on Milošević and the Serbs knew that this would happen again like it did in Kosovo. Why wasn't America watching, or for that matter, Europe?

With the British, maybe it required a change in government from that of John Major's complicity with the Serbs and Milošević through Lord Owen and David Hume. For the British to respond to the moral outrage of Milošević in Kosovo it apparently required the change to the refreshing moral honesty of Tony Blair and Robin Cook. With the US and our failure to respond strongly and militarily, I think that the explanation lies in our domestic politics and the personality makeup of that little boy from Hope, Arkansas.

Though Clinton admired John Kennedy as a role model, he was part of an American generation that reacted against the US involvement in Vietnam that Kennedy played such a large role in committing the US towards. Clinton's lesson from Vietnam was that we should not have been involved, that we should not have sacrificed Americans, much less the huge number of Vietnamese that were killed. Clinton will not, if he can help it, get himself in the position of having American servicemen killed in the situation in Bosnia and now Kosovo. That, of course, was a position in the Bush administration towards the breakdown of Yugoslavia in the late 1980's and was the position of General Colin Powell, chief of staff. Not another Vietnam. Besides, with the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia was no longer important for US interests in Europe. Milošević understood this and he would have a free hand with his Serbian psychopathic military methodologies for a greater Serbia.

Clinton, as everyone now knows, is a poll watcher and the polls kept saying

that the American public did not consider the events in Yugoslavia as an American interest. Clinton also had to deal with the Republicans in Congress and they did not consider that any US military commitment to stopping Milošević's killings in Croatia and Bosnia was in American interests. However, the Serbian atrocities against the Bosnians in Sarajevo, Srebrenica, etc., as put before the American public in the evening news with some excellent news analysis articles, finally became too much for US and European senses of humanity. Clinton could now follow the polls and American revulsion to these atrocities and we finally had the NATO air strikes which brought Milošević to Dayton, Ohio for the cease fire accords in Bosnia. This would become the model for NATO's reaction in Kosovo; it can be done with air strikes. But, what a surprise it was. I really never believed that NATO (or Bill Clinton) would order air strikes beyond Kosovo. They struck right to the heart of Serbia, right to Belgrade, fulfilling the words to the Croatian song, »Belgrade is burning«. But, tragically, NATO's air strikes were not enough to stop the Serb military and para-militaries from executing many and expelling the Albanian population from Kosovo. Our Vietnam syndrome prevented a complete moral reaction on our part and we refused to allow any US service men, or NATO service men, to participate in a ground operation to stop the Serbian killing, looting and burning. No American young man should die in this Balkan pathos.

But, backing up a minute, this has been »Madeleine's War«, at least that was the feature story in Time magazine, May 17, 1999. Our foreign policy in the Clinton administration has been shaped, I believe, by our Secretary of State and the State Department; remember, Bill Clinton is from Hope, Arkansas, a rather provincial place to say the least. Clinton's

first Secretary of State Warren Christopher's policy towards Bosnia was expressed in his mentor's role, Cyrus Vance's acquiescence in letting Lord Owen and John Major's foreign office take the lead, a pro-Serb lead which seemed to believe in a myth of Serbian military capability. And, of course, all of this was under the auspices of the UN which could not make assertive decisions against Serbia because of the Russian and Chinese membership in the security council. So, this has all played out in a complicated way: an American public and body politic scared by Vietnam; divisive Republican/Democrat politics in the US, especially the impeachment trial of Bill Clinton distracting him and Congress from the affairs of our government such as Kosovo; European political leadership, British and French, which was, if anything, pro-Serb, and not of a fortitude to militarily deal with Serbia by themselves; and a UN which is incapable of responding to post-cold war politics because of cold war mentalities in the security council.

So, how does it all come down to being »Madeleine's War«? Because Kosovo finally comes down to being genocide, Serbian genocide against the Albanian Kosovars. It has been such for a couple of decades. But, genocide is a word that we very carefully have refused to use, so we have had the euphemism of »ethnic cleansing,« a term coined by our State Department for the Serbian atrocities in Bosnia. But, I believe that Albright has been outraged by the Serbian actions in Bosnia and Kosovo and that it is likely that her Jewish background and her family fleeing the Nazi Holocaust does play a role. But, it really takes no more than to understand her as a decent American liberal intellectual. And, perhaps a woman simply will not put up with the pathological male killing behavior which occurred in Kosovo and which had occurred earlier in Bosnia and Croatia. So, she does play a

pivotal role and maybe her statement to General Colin Powell challenging his doctrine that we must have clear political goals before the military is to be used with decisive force is revealing: »What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?«⁵. Finally, through NATO, we used the superb military, at least part of it.

However, the air war ground on, day after day. We were naïve enough to think that Milošević would give in. But, the Serbian actions in Kosovo, and in Bosnia and Croatia before, go beyond Milošević to the ultra-right wing nationalist hardliners, the Serbian military officers and the para-militaries that have grown rich from killing and pillaging Bosnians and Kosovars. Too large a part of Serbian society has a stake in all that the nationalists have created and many of them have even participated directly in the terrible killing. Tomorrow, with blood still on their hands they will walk the streets of Belgrade: Their myth about the field of blackbirds and their defeat by the Ottomans in 1389 added to and replaced by a new myth about their defeat by NATO and the US - the new injustice in Kosovo redefining their paranoid persecution identity into the 1990's.

And, where does American naivete come into all of these events? For me to understand this I've had to come to Turkey and to become aware of a reality that one archaeological site after another has brought home to me. It is in realizing the depth of culture and history here that I achieve an understanding that my years in Croatia also gave me, but not as dramatically as in Turkey. It is a reality that Americans in their short history really don't grasp. Turkey is ancient Greece and so much more in its historical time depth and complexity, a complexity that gives the Serbs little excuse for their »trauma« of 1389 AD. Turkey is an overlay after

overlay of one culture after another through not the centuries, but thousands of years.

Turkey is where we find early Neanderthal sites and suggestions of even earlier hominid evolution. But, more importantly, Anatolia is where domestication of plants and animals may have taken place, where the foundations of early horticulture, village life, pottery, metallurgy and the other characteristics of early civilization are found. It is Chalchayuk where 9000 years ago a Neolithic city developed. It is where that »third« great ancient civilization developed in the Middle East, the Bronze Age Hittites. They challenged Ramses II's Egypt and then faded from history when pressured by the Ionians and with their decline came the Phrygians and Lydians. The Ionians laid the foundations for Hellenic civilization, then the Persians invaded. At Chanakkale, at the narrows in the Hellespont, the Dardanelles, you can see where King Xerxes of Persia invaded Greece and a century later Alexander the Great invaded Asia. At Troy you see not just where Homer's account of the Trojan war took place, but the nine layers of building and destruction and building, but maybe 40 some layers of death, destruction and renewal. So it goes as one discovers that this was where ancient Greece was to be replaced by Rome. At Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Hierapolis, Miletus, the list goes on and on, seemingly to countless ancient cities. The story is the same; one civilization replaced by another. How much death and destruction? Then the Christians secretly developed their religion in these Roman cities and Paul came to preach, and John writes to the seven cities in Revelations and then Constantine and Justinian will build the Byzantine Empire. Then come the Seljuks who will create the first great Turkish state to rule Anatolia, then the Ottomans and Suleyman the Magnificent.

How much ethnic cleansing took place through all of this history? The Ottomans conquer and expand their empire. The Serbs come in here somewhere? When in Turkey they seem rather insignificant. What is all this 1389 and the field of Blackbirds about?

How significant is this Serbian myth of Kosovo? When I finished looking at Troy, as with the other ancient sites that I've looked at in Turkey, I am impressed with the fact that a reality of history is that cities, cultures, civilizations have been constantly overrun by conquerors; burned, destroyed and populations killed, over and over again, thus the »levels« accumulate. The thousands of people who labored to build these cities, peasants and slaves, then died in these constant assaults by those who wanted to rape, kill, vandalize and destroy them. Where are their remains? Where are their descendants? There is now nothing but piles of stone, so laboriously cut and shaped, layer upon layer covered with meters of soil. Is this the »natural« course of human events which is now being expressed in Kosovo? Pathological and self-serving military and political leaders turning the male animal loose to rape and kill, to »ethnically cleanse« and destroy, expressing some deeper genetic meaning of who we really are? Maybe there is a reality about our »heros« of history. What kind of pathologies were in the makeup of Agamemnon, Alexander the Great, and Suleyman the Magnificent?

Are Americans naive to this reality of the human character and the layers of death and destruction that we have created? Is Milošević what history is all about and we should not be involved with NATO and the Kosovo problem? Or, are we above Milošević and the Serbs to a higher level of humanity and moral human behavior as we enter the 21st Century? Is that what the refugee camp in Albania named Hope is a reminder of; that

there is a higher level of human behavior? Or, is the little boy from Hope, Arkansas who is now president, our president who wants to feel your pain, to console you; is he an expression of our American naivete? Maybe Milošević and the Serbs who support him, who have benefitted from his goals, are what reality and history are all about; the layers upon layers of cultures destroyed by one psychopath after another.

Forensic psychiatrist Park Dietz, an expert on psychopathic behavior, in response to the question: »With all that you've seen, how do you retain a positive view of human nature? Or do you believe that people are basically good?« Dietz: »No. No. I think people are inherently self-aggrandizing, pleasureseeking, unempathic, self-serving, greedy and lustful«⁶.

Dietz's conclusion from his research into the behavior of mass murderers might explain the human behavior that produced layer upon layer of death and destruction that archeology reveals in ancient city states. Maybe his conclusions are a profile of Milošević's and his Serbian nationalist supporter's behavior and their manipulation of the xenophobic paranoia and persecution complex in Serbian cultural identity, e.g., the 1389 field of blackbirds myth. But, Dietz's conclusion about human nature doesn't explain the »higher human purpose« we finally found in our moral outrage and our response to help the victims of these Serbian psycho-cultural pathologies and stop Milošević's war in Kosovo. Maybe there is »hope« for positive idealism in human nature; that good can prevail over pathological evil.

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HOPE, ARKANSAS ZA NADU, ALBANIJA: NAIVNOST I IDEALIZAM SPRAM REALITETA I TRAGEDIJE

SAŽETAK

Ratovi u Hrvatskoj, Bosni i Hercegovini i na Kosovu su bili počinjeni od strane radikalne nacionalističke srpske kulturne političke svijesti, na koju je američka kuturna politička svijest i vodstvo s teškoćom u razumijevanju odgovaralo. Postoje velike kulturne razlike između »patologije« u srpskoj kulturi, Miloševićevog radikalnog nacionalizma i humanističke naivnosti američke kulturne svijesti. U radu razmatram raz-

loga zašto je, napokon, američko političko vodstvo, na čelu kojeg je Bill Clinton iz Hope, Arkansasa, odgovorilo na tragediju ovih ratova. No usprkos tome, ostavljeni smo s pitanjem dobra naspram zla: Koji je tijek ljudske povijesti; psihotičkog političkog vodstva koje uzrokuje ponavljanje ljudskih tragedija ili postojanje više humanog i moralnog reda u kulturnim događajima u ljudi?