

THE BOSNIAN TRAGEDY AND THE UNITED STATES UNTIL DAYTON PEACE MEETINGS

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Abstract

After Tito's death in May 1980, a new era began in Yugoslavia. Social and economic unrest became greater. Yugoslavia entered in its own "Prestroika" period. Nationalism took the place of communism. Multi-national Yugoslavia was deeply affected by nationalistic movements. Historical patterns supported nationalistic tendencies and these patterns increased historical hatred among the Yugoslavian nations. In mid-1991, disintegration of Yugoslavia was on the way. Yugoslavia did not have the energy to keep people united and there was not a strong leadership to unify the country.

Soon after the Bosnian declaration of independence, Bosnian Muslims experienced one of the world's bloodiest and unjust wars. Well-armed Bosnian Serbs-with the support of Serbia- committed genocide against the Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian war was the greatest human tragedy in Europe since World War II. NATO intervention and finally Dayton Peace accord ended the Bosnian war.

Özet

"Bosna Trajedisi ve Dayton Barış Görüşmelerine Kadar Amerikan Politikaları"

Tito'nun Mayıs 1980'de ölümünden sonra Yugoslavya'da yeni bir dönem başladı. Ülkede sosyal ve ekonomik problemler iyice su yüzüne çıktı ve Yugoslavya kendi "Prestroika" dönemine girdi. Ülkede milliyetçilik hakim ideoloji olarak komünizmin yerini aldı. Çok uluslu Yugoslavya milliyetçilik akımlarından çok ciddi bir şekilde etkilendi. Tarihi unsurlar milliyetçilik hareketlerini destekledi ve bu unsurlar Yugoslav milletleri arasında tarihi nefretleri körükledi.

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1991 yılı ortalarına gelindiğinde Yugoslav devletinin artık onu gelmişti. Yugoslavyaya halkı birleşik olarak tutacak ne enerjiye ne de bu işi başaracak bir lidere sahipti.

Bosna'nın bağımsızlık ilanının hemen akabinde, Bosna halkı dünyanın en haksız ve kanlı savaşlarından birisini yaşamak zorunda kaldı. Sırbistan'ın desteğindeki iyi silahlanmış Sırp lar, Bosna Müslümanlarına karşı soykırıma giriştiler. Bosna savaşı İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan bu yana Avrupa'nın tanık olduğu en büyük insanlık dramıydı. NATO'nun müdahalesi ve nihayetinde Dayton Barış Anlaşması bu savaşı sona erdirmiştir.

HISTORICAL CONTEX OF BOSNIA

Historical settings of the Balkan nations are important to understand modern and contemporary problems of the region. During the Bosnian war, ethnic and religious differences were in focal point. A short historical context of Bosnia may help for a better understanding of the problems, which were mainly stemmed from ethnic and religious differences.

The early history of Bosnia is not clear. The first Slavic settlements-- in what is today's Yugoslavia-- from Karpats and the Baltic sea region, and from around Kiev--began in the sixth century. The newcomers settled on the left bank of the Danube.¹ The first Slavic settlements in Bosnia began in the seventh century. Bosnia took its name from the classical era's "Bosante" or "Bosanius."²

Sava, Bosna and Drina are important Bosnian rivers. Sava is navigable and open to trade. Four important tributaries join the Sava between Zagreb and Belgrade, each providing a route deep into the Una, Urbas and Bosna mountains.³

Until the twelfth century, Slavs lived as tribes and apart from each other in Bosnia. These tribes—Zupes--were not unique. When the Church was divided into two portions--East and West-- Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia were divided into religious groups as well as national ones.⁴ Bulgarian King Boris I's (852-889) conversion to Christianity played an important role in Bosnia's history. Like the Russians, western Bulgarians, who were originally a mixed Turkish tribe, moved from the east to the Balkans in their early history and accepted Christianity under Byzantium influence while eastern Bulgarians--

¹ Pavlowitch, Stevan K. *Yugoslavia*, Praeger Publishers, New York, Washington 1971, p. 25

² Clissold, Stephen *A Short History of Yugoslavia, from Early Times to 1966*, Cambridge University Press, London 1966, p. 58.

³ Pavlowitch, pp. 17, 21.

⁴ Clissold, *A Short History of Yugoslavia*, p. 58.

Kazan Bulgarians--were converted to Islam. Christian Bulgarians brought their faith first to Macedonia, and later, to the entire former Yugoslavia.

One of the Bulgarian priests, Bogomil, established a new cult, and its doctrines affected all the Balkans and Asia Minor. His adherents were called "Bogomolists." They rejected the Old Testament.⁵ Furthermore, they also rejected ecclesiastical and secular power such as princes, officials, and landowners. Bogomolism continued to spread throughout the Middle Ages. Social unrest fed this movement. Gradually, this religious idea lost its strength in Asia Minor and most of the Balkans, but it gained more power in Bosnia and threatened the central rulers' and feudal Barons' power. Bosnians established their own "Bosnian Church" and had their own Bishop.⁶ Because of Bosnians' different interpretation of Christianity, they were always under pressure from the Catholic and Orthodox churches. As a reaction to these pressures, Bosnians welcomed the Ottoman presence in Bosnia.

The Ottoman Turks first took Bulgaria, then the Mora peninsula. Later, they appeared deep in the Balkans. When Turkish expansionism arrived in the Balkans, Slovenia, Venice, and the Adriatic coast were under the Habsburg dynasty's hegemony; Bosnia and northern Serbia were under Hungarian control. The Turks made Macedonia their suzerainty. In 1389, the Turkish Sultan Murad II defeated the Serbian king Lazar, then Serbia lifted the Turkish occupation. In the late 1980s, the Serbs celebrated the anniversary of this war. During the war between the Serbians and the Bosnian Muslims, this anniversary was a special reason to seek revenge against the Muslims. Another turning point was the Turkish-Hungarian war in 1526. The Turks defeated the Hungarians and their allies on the Mohac plain. This victory strengthened the Turkish presence in the Balkans. After seizing Constantinople in 1453, the Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror tied Serbia to central government in 1459. He did the same with Bosnia in 1463.

When the Turks arrived in Bosnia, Bosnians willingly began to convert to Islam. The Ottomans' just rule, welfare distribution, and light taxation encouraged the Bosnians to become Muslim, and strengthened the Ottoman presence in the Balkans for a long time. During the Ottoman era, the Turks established many social endowments, such as roads, bridges (Mostar and Drina bridges were the best-known), hospitals, and Turkish baths.

The Serbians called the Muslim Slavs "Turks" and "Poturice." Bosnia was generally ruled by a native Muslim governor. Not only Bosnians converted to Islam; Serbians and Croats converted as well. The Albanians were the second-largest group to accept Islam. Like Bosnia, the other Balkan nations—as well as

⁵ ibid, p. 59.

⁶ Clissold, *A Short History of Yugoslavia*, p. 59.

Greeks and Jews--also enjoyed the privilege of serving as high-ranking officers in the Ottoman government. From the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century, more than fifteen Ottoman Sadrazams—Chancellors--were of Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian origin. At least the same number of these nationalities occupied another prestigious position--Kaptan-i Derya-- Navy Admiral. The Sadrazam of Suleyman the Magnificent, Sokullu Mehmet Pasha, of either Serbian or Bosnian origin, was one of the most successful and well-known of the Ottoman sadrazams.

Austria seized Hungary from Turkey and established the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The emergence of a powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire and numerous lengthy Turkish-Russian wars, weakened the Ottoman authority in the Balkans. When Serbia and Montenegro went to war against the Turks, Russia entered the war on behalf of the Serbians and the Montenegrinians in 1878. During this war, Austria-Hungary temporarily occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina. After the war, Serbia and Montenegro became free states, and Bosnia-Herzegovina technically remained under the Ottoman rule but it was entrusted to Austro-Hungarian administration. When the Berlin Congress made decisions about Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Congress did not consult the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Bosnian delegation were not to have a chance to speak out in the Congress.⁷ In 1908, Bosnia-Herzegovina was invaded by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. World War I broke out when Austro-Hungarian archduke was assassinated in Sarajevo. After the war, a new state of Yugoslavia was born, unifying Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro.

BOSNIA FROM WORLD WAR II TO END OF THE YEARS OF TITO

During World War II, Yugoslavia was occupied by some Axis states. Italy occupied the Dalmatian coast, the Yugoslavian islands, and most of Kosovo, Macedonia. It also controlled Montenegro. Serbia and northern Slovenia were under German influence. The larger part of Voivodina was annexed by Hungary, and Bulgaria annexed the southeast part. Only the Croatian kingdom, including Bosnia, remained as free Yugoslavia.⁸ At the beginning of the war, many Croatian Bosnians wanted to annex Bosnia in order to free Croatia, while Herzegovina fell under Italian occupation.⁹

Yugoslavia experienced some of the worst war casualties. Yugoslavians were fighting against occupying powers. At the same time, they fought each other. Communist Partisans, Serbian nationalists, Chetniks and Croatian

⁷ MacKenzie, David *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism 1875-1878*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York 1967, p. 318.

⁸ Pavlowitch, p. 108.

⁹ Mojzes, Paul *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans*, Continuum, 1995, p. 32.

nationalists, and Ustashas were trying to seize control in Yugoslavia and establish their own government. In this chaos, the Bosnian Muslims, in the cross-fire, just tried to survive. They did not have any political aim, nor did they attempt to establish a Muslim-led government in Yugoslavia. The Muslims fought on every front. Some of them were Partisans, some of them Ushashes, and a few of them were Chetniks. Some of the Muslims were even drafted into the German SS. In November 1942, some of the Muslim intelligence officers sent a memorandum to Hitler. They demanded special protection because they were of the same race as the Germans. They claimed that the Bosnian Muslims were not Slavs. They came to the Balkans in the third century from the same location as the Germans. The claim of the race unity between the Germans and the Bosnian Muslims was an unbelievable story for Hitler.¹⁰ In December 1942, the Bosnian Muslims established the “Muslim Volunteer Legion,” numbering 4,000, to protect themselves. They requested a permit from the Germans to be active legally, but Germany could only allow this Legion to be active if it were under German control.¹¹

During the war, more than one million people died in Yugoslavia. Most of the casualties resulted from Inter-Yugoslav fighting. The Chetniks started a bloody campaign of genocide against the Muslims. In order to differentiate themselves from the Serbian nationalists, the Muslims became allies of the Italians, Germans, Partisans, and Ustashas. But some Muslims were on side of the Chetniks. During the war, some 75,000 Muslims were killed in Yugoslavia. This number was 8.1 percent of the total prewar Muslim population. The Serbs lost 7.3 percent of their total prewar population in World War II.¹²

As a result of the civil war in Yugoslavia, communist Partisans gained power. Their struggle to keep power ushered in another bloody page of Yugoslavian history. One of the distinguished Yugoslavian statesmen—Djilas—pointed out the communists’ cannibalistic behaviors in his memoirs: “Communist sons confirmed their devotion by killing their own fathers, and there was dancing and singing around the bodies.¹³ During the war, Serbians, Muslims, Gypsies, and even some Croatian victims were sent to the death camp in Jesenovac, which was built by the Independent State of Croatia.¹⁴

¹⁰ Malcolm, Noel *Bosnia A Short History*, New York University Press, New York 1994, pp. 5-6.

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 6.

¹² *ibid*, p. 192.

¹³ Clissold, Stephen *Djilas, The Progress of A Revolutionary*, Maurice Temple Smith Press, Worcester, 1983, p. 85.

¹⁴ Mojzes, p. 47.

In 1945, the Partisans gradually seized power in Yugoslavia. In early Spring of 1945, the Communists entered Bosnia. In April 1945, Sarajevo was under control of the Communists.¹⁵ Tito entered Bosnia with 1500 Serbians and 500 men from Sanjak.¹⁶ Establishing control over the Bosnian Muslims was not hard for the Partisans. Exhausted Muslims posed little danger for them.

Tito's reign began in Yugoslavia in 1946. To keep the Federation alive, Tito brought equalism and a non-class communist system in Yugoslavia. Tito's brand of government was "Titoist Communism" or "Neutral Communism." Tito had serious problems with Soviet Russia. At first Tito received American economic assistance. Later he receive American military aid, but he never became an ally of the western world. Rather, he always tried to remain neutral.

After the war, Tito inaugurated an industrial development program, and economic conditions improved. This industrial development program did not help Bosnia and Kosovo's agriculture-based economies.¹⁷ Some special programs to improve the economies of the less- developed regions did not change the economic gap between the economy of Bosnian and those of Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia.

During Tito's era, Serbia—with 39.7 percent of the population in Yugoslavia-- dominated the other ethnic nationalities. Under communist rule and communist propaganda, the Muslims almost lost their cultural identities.¹⁸ Tito's government applied pressure on the Muslims. For example, Tito banned the wearing of veils, and one of the most important Islamic traditions, circumcision, was also banned. The religious Mosque schools were shut down. The government forced the Dervishes to eat pork. The "Young Muslims" organization, which resisted these kinds of policies, was closed, and its members were imprisoned. During Tito's government, 756 mosques were destroyed or badly damaged. The private and social endowments were nationalized. Some Muslim graveyards were made into parks, and some governmental buildings were built on these graveyards.¹⁹

In 1971, Tito granted the Muslims nationhood and allowed the Bosnians to declare their national identity as Muslims.²⁰ In the census of 1971, 1.7 million

¹⁵ Malcolm, p. 191.

¹⁶ Clissold, *Djilas*, p. 79.

¹⁷ Rusinow, Dennison *The Yugoslav Experiment 1948-1974*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1977, p. 367.

¹⁸ Borowiec, Andrew *Yugoslavia After Tito*, Praeger Publishers, New York 1979, p. 29.

¹⁹ Malcolm, pp. 194-195.

²⁰ Levinsohm, Florence Hamlish *Belgrade Among the Serbs*, Ivan R. Dee Publishing, Chicago, 1994, p. 206.

Bosnians identified themselves as Muslim, which represented forty percent of the total population of Bosnia.²¹

POST-TITO YUGOSLAVIA AND THE COMING END

The 1980s witnessed radical changes in the world. The Cold War came to an end, and economic struggle became more important than armed conflict. Beginning in the 1970s, third-world emergence in world policies continued with these countries' growing economies. Third world countries and even communist countries abandoned state-controlled economies and transformed themselves into free-market societies. This transformation brought radical political changes. Privatization of economies cannot occur without the recognition of individual rights and political, social, and economic choices. The transition to a free-market economy--or opening the communist economies to the world economies--motivated individual and nationalistic tendencies. First of all, the communist regimes were bankrupt, and, second, artificially united states dissolved. The Soviet republic was divided into fifteen republics. Czechoslovakia was divided into two states: the Czech republic and the Slovak Republic. Yugoslavia experienced the worst separation process. Yugoslavia, with its multi-ethnic structure, formed a microcosm of the Balkans. As was true in the past, nationalistic movements hit Yugoslavia. Historical hatred among the Yugoslavian peoples was renewed. There was again a fire in Sarajevo, but these flames did not ignite a new world war. Rather, they brutally burned innocent people.

After Tito's death in May 1980, a new era began in Yugoslavia. Social and economic unrest became greater, and the media criticized all the state institutions except the army. Yugoslavia entered its own "Prestroika." Nationalism took the place of communism. Multi-national Yugoslavia was deeply affected by nationalistic movements. Historical patterns supported nationalistic movements, and these patterns increased historical hatred among the Yugoslavian nations. The Belgrade government feverishly celebrated anniversaries of the Kosovo war. These celebrations turned out to be disadvantageous for the Muslims. Numerous books, poems, and articles were written about Kosovo, and the Serbs re-conquered the nation. In June 1989, hundreds of thousands of Serbians celebrated the anniversary of Kosovo in Gazi Mestan. President Milosevic and the black-robed metropolitans of the Orthodox Church participated in this celebration. Milosevic addressed the high tempered crowds.²²

²¹ Borowiec, p. 49.

²² Malcolm, p. 213.

Serbian-led nationalism burned the bridges connecting the Yugoslavian nations. Serbs were not a majority in Yugoslavia. In 1981, they represented just 36 percent of the total 22.4 million Yugoslavian population. Croats were 20 percent, Muslims 9 percent, Slovenians 8 percent, Albanians 8 percent, Yugoslavians 5 percent (people declaring no other nationality), Montenegrin 3 percent, Hungarian 2 percent, and Gypsy 1 percent. (Truth about Bug. p. 9) In terms of religious divisions, there were 10 million Orthodox, 7.3 million Catholics, and 3.8 million Muslims in Yugoslavia.

Under the communist regime, Yugoslavian Muslims mostly had forgotten their traditions and even their identities. They had a totally secular lifestyle. According to a survey in 1985, 17 percent of Bosnians identified themselves as religious believers. At the end of 80s this number increased to 30 percent.²³ There is no doubt that Serbian hostility and discrimination made Muslims turn to their origins and cultures. During the war with Serbs and Croats, Bosnian Muslims discovered their values and more willingly owned them.

In September 1987, Slobodan Milosevic came to power in Yugoslavia. He instituted highly centralized policies. Some autonomous provinces, such as Kosovo and Vojvodina, were tied to the central government, and their autonomy was destroyed. Milosevic rehabilitated the Orthodox Church and increased Serbian nationalism with help from the Church.²⁴

After 1985, Yugoslavia was in chaos. The people of Yugoslavia obtained arms to use against their future neighbor enemies.²⁵ According to Paul Mojzes, an expert about Yugoslavia, at the end of the 1980s Yugoslavia had three options: one, it would be surrounded by western economies; two, a communist dictator would come to power; three, Yugoslavia would dissolve and the reforms would be successful.²⁶ The least likely option was that the reforms would be successful. The Yugoslavian people had lost its sense of unity. Every nation gave priority to its own interests, not those of Yugoslavia.

THE DISSOLUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA AND BOSNIA'S APPROACHING DOOMSDAY

In 1990, the communist party dissolved in Yugoslavia, and Milosevic's party was renamed the "Serbian Socialist Party." Milosevic won the election, gaining

²³ Malcolm, p. 222.

²⁴ Ramet, Sabrina Petra *Balkan Babel, Politics, Culture and Religion in Yugoslavia*, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford 1992, p. 22.

²⁵ Mojzes, p. 60.

²⁶ Mojzes, p. 64.

the votes of communists and nationalists in Serbia.²⁷ The semi-fascist party of the Chetnik leader Wojislav Sejelj, ex-prisoner and one of the architects of Muslim genocide, finished second in the elections.²⁸

The major Muslim party was “Party of Democratic Action” in Bosnia. It was founded in May 1990 by Alija Izetbegovic, who had been released from prison in 1988. Izetbegovic was the single political leader in Yugoslavia who was never a member of Communist Party. This party’s main policy was to strengthen Muslims’ own identities and to keep Bosnia unique with its multi-national and multi-religious structure. The other Muslim party was the “Bosnian Muslim Organization” led by Adil Zulfikarpasic. This party’s program was entirely non-religious.²⁹

In the election of December 1990, the Muslims won 93 of 240 seats in the Bosnian assembly. Serbs won 85, Croats 49, and the others, identified as Yugoslavians, won 7. At the end of 1990, Izetbegovic established his government.³⁰ The result of Bosnian elections fit with national lines. In 1991, 43.77 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovinian population was Muslim, 31.46 percent Serbian, and 17.34 Croat.³¹

In mid -1991, the end of Yugoslavia was on the way. Yugoslavia did not have the energy to keep people unified, nor were the people willing to be unified, nor was there a strong leader to unify the country. According to Sabrina S. Ramet, Yugoslavia was not to have its own Ataturk to create a new consensus on the basis of a new culture.³²

Growing ethnic separatism and conflicts in Yugoslavia made European policies hot. Germany, unique and interesting in playing an active role in European and world policies, encouraged Slovenia and Croatia to declare independence. On June 25, 1991, these republics unilaterally declared their independence. Germany immediately recognized their independence, but later the Germans hesitated in recognizing the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³³ Hungary was sympathetic to Slovenia and Croatia. It also supported their

²⁷ Denitch, Bogdan *Ethnic Nationalism, The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London 1994, p. 46.

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 69.

²⁹ Malcolm, p. 218.

³⁰ Malcolm, p. 222.

³¹ Ramet, p. 22.

³² Ramet, p. 3.

³³ Woodward, Susan L. *Balkan Tragedy Chaos an Dissolution After The Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. 1995, p. 200.

independence. In 1990 Hungary illegally sold 36,000 to 50,000 Kalashnikov rifles to the Croatian government.³⁴ France, England and Spain hesitated to recognize Croat and Slovenian independence because of similar problems in Corsica, Scotland, and Catalonia, but Austria and Italy gave full support to these newly independent countries.³⁵

On the day after these two republics' declaration of independence, the Yugoslavian National Army (JNA) crossed Slovenian and Croatian borders to suppress their separatism. Clashes between the Yugoslavian army and the Croats and Slovenians lasted six months. Over ten thousand casualties were incurred.³⁶

The independence of Macedonia was very problematic. Bulgaria said that it would welcome the independence of Macedonia. When the nation declared its independence, Greece opposed the nation's use of this name. According to Greece, Macedonia was a name of a northern Greece province. Under the name Macedonia, this state was danger for Greece. Because of Greek reservations, the EC recognized sovereignty of Macedonia very late. Greece also had problems with its Albanian minority. The termination of Kosovo's autonomous status was appreciated by Greece. Traditionally, Greece supported the Serbs with Russia in every issue and in the Bosnian war. When the separatist movement gained power, the Albanians in Kosovo rose up against the Serbian government to regain their autonomous status. Milosevic suppressed the Albanian uprising and shut down the elected Kosovo assembly. He also banned the publishing of newspapers in the Albanian language.³⁷

During the Serbian-Croatian and Slovenian war, Izetbegovic declared Bosnia's neutrality. In December 1991, Izetbegovic declared that in the case of Slovenian and Croatian secession from Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina would declare its own independence. The leader of the Serbian Democratic Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Radovan Karadzic, declared that in case of Bosnian declaration for independence, they would annex Serb-populated areas to Serbia.³⁸ In support of Karadzic, Milosevic also declared that in the case of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Serbia would annex Serb-populated areas in Bosnia and Croatia.

In October 1991, Slovenia and Croatia officially seceded from Yugoslavia. Slovenians and Croats defeated the Serbs with German- and Hungarian-

³⁴ ibid, p. 149.

³⁵ Woodward, p. 206.

³⁶ Fyson, George *The Truth About Yugoslavia*, Pathfinder Press, New York, London, Montreal, Sydney 1993, p. 16.

³⁷ Ramet, p. 39.

³⁸ Ramet, p. 47.

purchased weapons. At that time Karadzic declared Serbian autonomy in Serb-populated Karajina in Croatia. He intended to establish a Serbian republic in Karajina by annexing three Serbian-populated provinces from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Beginning in July 1991, Milosevic was sending weapons to the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs, and Karadzic's actions were directed by Milosevic.³⁹

At the end of 1991, the Serbian army tacitly occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Serbian army had been constructing heavy artillery positions around major Bosnian towns, including Sarajevo. To show his peaceful intentions, Izetbegovic allowed this construction and permitted the Serbs to obtain arms from Serbia.⁴⁰

After the secession of Croatia and Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina held a referendum to ask the people for independence on February 29, 1992. Bosnian Serbs protested the referendum, and they did not vote. Sixty-four percent of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina participated in the referendum, and 99.7 percent voted for Bosnia's independence.⁴¹ In April 1992, the EC and America recognized the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On March 27, 1992, the Bosnian Serbs declared the independence of a Serb Republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

AN UNJUST WAR AND BOSNIAN BLOOD BATH

Soon after the Bosnian declaration of independence, the nation experienced one of the world's most unjust and bloody wars. Well-armed Bosnian Serbs—with the support of Serbia-- began a genocide against Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian war was the biggest human tragedy in Europe since World War II. Actually, what occurred in Bosnia was not a war. Rather it was an ethnic cleansing designed to destroy a nation and its culture. The warfare in Bosnia became a "rape-fare." Raping incidents were so common other wars' rape percentage. This human tragedy occurred not in some place far from civilization, and it did not occur in some pre-historical era. Rather, this tragedy happened in the middle of Europe, the home of highly industrialized and civilized nations. These nations used to say that they brought civilization to colonized lands. Moreover, these nations were preparing to commemorate the anniversary of Doomsday in order to condemn what Hitler's Germany did to innocent Jews. These same nations did not want to see what was happening on their continent, although all of the broadcast media quite clearly showed the

³⁹ Malcolm, p. 225.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 230.

⁴¹ Kohen, Lenard J. *Broken Bonds, Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford 1995, p. 243.

atrocities occurring here.

Bosnia provided an opportunity for the great powers to show their post-Cold War policies and to prove their effects on world policies. UN condemnations, political games played on this issue, and the organizing of hopeless and useless peace meetings did not help the Bosnian Muslims.

There is no doubt that the genocide in Bosnia was directed by the Belgrade government. The ideology was not different from that of Nazi Germany. Ethnic cleansing was worked out and articulated by Serbian politicians, intellectuals, and professionals. The Serbian Academy of Science in Belgrade concluded that “every square meter of Yugoslavia inhabited by at least one Serb shall be part of the state of Serbia.”⁴² According to the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, the second biggest party in Serbia, all Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina had to be exterminated in forty-eight hours.⁴³ The Belgrade government released prisoners to rehabilitate them and sent them to Bosnia to fight against Muslims. There were some anti-war sentiments in Serbia. In June 1992, some 100,000 people paraded against the war.⁴⁴ But these demonstrations and the other anti-war actions did little to actually end the conflict..

Against the Serb assaults, the Muslims were defenseless. In September 1992, the Serbs had 300 tanks, 200 APC, 800 artillery pieces, and 40 aircraft in Bosnia. In June 1993, the Muslims had 40 tanks and 30 APC, which were captured from the Serbs.⁴⁵ The UN didn't protect the Muslims very well. It sent ground forces—UNPROFOR--into Bosnia to protect UNHCR aid convoys. UNPROFOR could help the millions of refugees who fled the country in the middle of the civil war.⁴⁶ Initially the UN was to establish safe havens in Sarajevo, Zepa, Srebrenica, Grozde, Tuzla and Biha, but the establishment of these zones did not prevent Serb attacks on these areas. When NATO air strikes began against Serb artillery positions, the Serbs took UN troops hostage, putting them in strategic places to prevent air strikes. This incident shows that the “blue helmets” could not even protect themselves.

EC and American policies encouraged the Serbs to perform their ugly actions. The EC and America did not intend to intervene in the Bosnian war. When the war's brutality was made manifest, Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated on May 26, 1993 that “Bosnia is a humanitarian crisis, a long way from home, in a middle of another continent. The United States was only

⁴² Dizdarevic, Zlatko *Sarajevo, A War Journal*, Fromm International, New York 1993, p. 5.

⁴³ Mojzes, p. 49.

⁴⁴ Fyson, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Malcolm, p. 243.

⁴⁶ Woodward, p. 200.

prepared to deploy American troops to deal with situations threatening its deepest national interests,” and Christopher defined Bosnia as “morass.”⁴⁷ The vice-president of Bosnia-Herzegovina--Eyup Ganic--in his address at the American Congress on June 23, 1994, pointed out American policies concerning Bosnia. According to Ganic, before the conflict the Bosnian government requested troops to settle on the Serbian border in order to prevent a future conflict with the UN, but this request was refused. When the Bosnian government pleaded for American help in Bosnia. One of Cyrus Vance’s advisors stated that “you have to have war first. There will be casualties, and then some kind of cease-fire, at least a temporary cease-fire, and then we will come.”⁴⁸

By early July 1993, 9000 people had been killed, and more than 50,000 people were wounded in Sarajevo during the fifteen-month siege of the city. During the same period of time, 133,000 people had been killed or were missing, including 16,000 children from across Bosnia.

By March 1993, some 2.28 million people, almost half of Bosnia’s prewar population, were refugees.⁴⁹ According to UN and city officials, Sarajevo was hit by an average of 329 shells per day during 1993.⁵⁰ As a result, some 200,000 Bosnians were killed, and 50,000 females—including children and the elderly--were raped, and more than 70 percent of Bosnian territory was occupied by the Serbs.

In his address to the American Congress on September 29 1993, Roy Gutman-- author and Newsday correspondent in Bonn, Germany--pointed out that the American government had very good data about Bosnia, but these data could be used just for the American government. They were not appropriate for consumption by the American people. Gutman barely mentioned the Bosnian tragedy in his speech. The Muslims starved and were beaten in the concentration camps until they died. In Gradiska, two sixty-two-year-old women were raped. In Banja Luka, an eighty- year-old woman was left stark-naked, and her husband’s body was burned by cigarettes. In central Bosnia, Croat soldiers played soccer with their victims’ decapitated heads. Two hundred civilians and

⁴⁷ Cohen, p. 248.

⁴⁸ “Statement of Eyup Ganic, Vice President of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.” Impact of a unilateral United States lifting of the arms embargo on the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina: hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, One Hundred Third Congress, second session, June 23, 1994. US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1994, p. 43.

⁴⁹ Cohen, p. 291.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 290.

Dutch UN soldiers witnessed this incident. By the end of 1993, each Sarajevo resident lost an average of 30 pounds. People burned their furniture and shoes for heat in the winter. Their food was mostly animal feed.⁵¹

Chief of the Human Rights Investigation Committee to UN in Bosnia, Cherif Bassuoni, a professor at De Paul University in Chicago, witnessed tremendous incidents. According to this committee's testimony, at end of 1993 more than a half million people were housed in 800 prison camps.⁵² The Committee confirmed the existence of 151 mass graves and conducted the world's largest rape investigation. In 1993, there were 3,000 abortion incidents in Sarajevo hospitals.⁵³ The committee accumulated 65,000 documents, 300 tapes and over 3500 pages of reports.⁵⁴

The Serbs were not only killing and raping the Muslims, they were also destroying their culture and their heritage. In 1992, the Serbs destroyed famous buildings, including one of the symbols of former Yugoslavia--the Mostar bridge and Karadjoz mosque built in 1557 in Mostar. According to testimony by Andres Riedlmayer to the American Congress, the Ottoman Sultans and the local government had embellished Bosnia's towns and cities with splendid mosques and established pious endowments to build and support schools, libraries, and other institutions. The Orthodox, the Catholics, the Muslims, and the Jews peacefully lived in these towns and cities. But now the Serbs were destroying a nation's heritage in order to destroy the nation itself. Four hundred sixty-one years old, Gazi Husrev mosque in Sarajevo was hit 150 times by the Serbs.⁵⁵ Sarajevo's famous library, containing many manuscripts, was shelled for three days. The Serbian snipers targeted Sarajevo's Oriental Institute, home to the largest library of Islamic and Jewish manuscript texts and Ottoman documents concerning southeastern Europe. Two hundred thousand Ottoman documents were burned. One of these documents was a decree of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror confirming the privileges and liberties of the Catholic Franciscan order in Bosnia.⁵⁶

THE PROCESS TO END THE WAR IN BOSNIA

⁵¹ The Crisis in Former Yugoslavia and the U.S Role: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Third Congress, first session, US Printing Office, Washington 1993 pp. 37,39.

⁵² *ibid*, p.8.

⁵³ *ibid*, p.18.

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.9.

⁵⁵ The Crisis in Former Yugoslavia and the U.S Role: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Third Congress, first session, US Printing Office, Washington 1993, p.22.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 22.

The EC and the United States agreed that there would not be a cease fire until the establishment of a political settlement. The UN was not willing to send troops until the emergence of the political settlement.⁵⁷ The first political settlement was the Vance-Owen plan. All participants--the Serbs, the Muslims, and the Croats--were invited to Geneva to discuss this plan. The Bosnian government refused to sit at the same table with the Serbs, who were considered war-crime perpetrators by the Muslims. In early January 1993, the Serbs and the Croats met in Geneva. According to this plan, there would be a decentralized state in Bosnia. This state would be established with three groups of recognized "constituent units." Bosnia would be administratively divided into ten provinces. Each of the provinces would have a mixture of different ethnic groups, but nine of them would be dominant from one majority group. Sarajevo was designated as "mixed" province, but it would be multiethnic, with the Muslims being in the majority.⁵⁸

The Vance-Owen plan was only accepted by the Croats. This plan was unjust according to the Muslims. The plan was far from the Muslim government's purpose of a centralized state. The Serbian Parliament in Bosnia rejected this plan. Already the Serbs had taken advantage in the war. The plan provided smaller opportunities than they had. In March 1993, the Izetbegovic government accepted the Vance-Owen plan as a basis for future negotiations.

Early on in his election campaign of 1992, Clinton asserted that Bosnia could expect more help if he was elected.⁵⁹ The Clinton government supported the Vance-Owen plan. When the peace process was interrupted, America threatened the Serbs with air strikes. The U.S. began air drops to supply food to the Bosnians. America did not take action after the actions of the Serbs, who concluded that America would not intervene in the war. Furthermore, the Croats united with the Serbs against the Muslims. Nineteen ninety three was the worst year for the Muslims in the war. Meanwhile, the peace process--unaccompanied by military force--gave the Serbs time to reach their ultimate goal. Many peace initiatives were started, and some cease-fires were signed, but none of them brought peace to Bosnia. International mediators asserted that signatures by Balkan leaders meant nothing: "They were barely worth the cost of the ink."⁶⁰

In May 2, 1993, another peace meeting was held in Athens. A revised Vance-Owen plan was developed. Russia pressured the Serbs to accept the plan. The Bosnian Serb Parliament discussed this peace plan. President Milosevic

⁵⁷ Woodward, p. 211.

⁵⁸ Cohen, p.253.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 261.

⁶⁰ Mojzes, p. 58.

went to Bosnia to mediate the Bosnian Serb meeting about the Athens peace plan. This was Milosevic's first known visit to Bosnia after the war. Serbia and Montenegro were united again under the name of Yugoslavia. The new Yugoslavia had deadly economic and political problems. Milosevic needed peace to fix his country. After long negotiations, the Parliament refused the peace plan, with 151 not in favor, 2 in favor and 12 absentees. In the referendum on May 15, 96 of the Bosnian Serbs refused the plan.⁶¹

The last incidents proved that the Serbs would never accept a peace plan but that they would continue toward their ultimate goal using arms. The Bosnian government's struggle to abolish the arms embargo—which didn't allow the country to defend itself--and Turkey's support of Bosnia's desire to arm the Muslims, as well as international intervention, did not change the mind of the EC and the United States.

In July 1993, President Clinton warned the Serbs. If they did not terminate Sarajevo's siege, he was willing to participate in an Allied bombing mission against Serb artillery. NATO also shared this idea. Because the Serbs evacuated some artillery pieces from the top of the hills overlooking Sarajevo, the bombing mission was cancelled. At the end of 1993, NATO sent its troops to protect the UN staff in Bosnia. The French formed the majority of this detachment. and supported the idea of air strikes to protect NATO troops. They opposed, however, NATO intervention and termination of the arms embargo. England also opposed the termination of the arms embargo and NATO intervention. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher defended the ending of the arms embargo and NATO intervention in Bosnia. According to England's notion, the termination of the arms embargo would increase Muslim casualties in Bosnia. The termination of the embargo would also liquidate Bosnia's Muslim population.⁶²

When the BBC correspondent for Yugoslavia and Central Europe, Misha Gleeney, explained the English view to the American Congress on September 29, 1993, he concluded that America had vital interests in the Balkans, and that "America is clearly concerned with the region around Turkey because of Turkey's central position... both bordering on Iran, the southern rim of the Soviet Union, the Middle-East, Iraq and so on, and also the southern Balkans."⁶³

Turkey was the biggest supporter of Bosnia. Early on, Turkey defended termination of the arms embargo and an immediate international intervention in the war. Turkey felt responsible in the Bosnian war. Bosnian Muslims do not have Turkish origins, but they were usually called Turks in Yugoslavia.

⁶¹ Cohen, pp. 264-266.

⁶² The Crisis in Former Yugoslavia and the US Role, p. 4

⁶³ *ibid*, p. 11.

Converting to Islam under Turkish rule and living together for a long time made these two nations very similar. Turkey has deep historical, religious, and cultural ties with Bosnian Muslims. When Bosnian Muslims were involved in a bad war, naturally they turned to Turkey. There are some millions of Balkan origin who emigrated to Turkey when their situations worsened in their home countries. This was also another reason for Turkey's support. A lot of Turkish citizens had their relatives in Bosnia, and they were anxious about their lives. Turkey felt responsible for the ethnic cleansing. For example, in the mid 1980s Turkey struggled against a Bulgarian state policy of assimilating more than two million Turks in Bulgaria. As a result, Bulgaria agreed to allow some 350,000 Turks to become refugees in Turkey. Turkey had problems and still has problems with Greece about Turkish minorities in Greece. Some hundreds of thousands Iraqi Kurds escaped from Saddam's cruelty and sought refuge in Turkey. The Azerbaijani issue was another Turkish responsibility, and Chechenia was Turkey's last important issue. Turkey was a refugee haven for neighboring states.

There were numerous meetings organized to condemn Serbs and to attract the attention of world opinion in Turkey. Millions of dollars were accumulated through private, state-organized, and religiously organized aid campaigns. Some Turks went to Bosnia to fight with them. The Turkish public became angry because there was no final solution for ending the war. People condemned the double standard of the West and compared the West's Bosnian policy with the Gulf War. Finally, at the end of 1994, Turkey supplied arms and humanitarian aid to the Bosnians. Turkey is ready to supply economic sources to restore post-war Bosnia.

By 1994, arguments about the termination of the arms embargo and an international intervention were increased. In his message to the American Congress on June 23, 1994, the Turkish Ambassador to Washington--Nüzhet Kandemir--reflected the Turkish view on these issues. According to his explanation, Turkey believed that the Bosnians have a right to defend themselves. Either the international community could give this right to the Bosnians, or the international community could directly protect the Bosnians. In case of any international intervention, UNPROF (in which Turkey had 1500 troops) should continue.⁶⁴ In his speech to the UN on September 27, 1994, concerning the termination of the arms embargo, the president of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegovic stated:

War that was forced upon Bosnia and Herzegovina and its peoples and has now entered its 31st month, belongs to the bloodiest wars in the history of

⁶⁴ Impact of a Unilateral United States Lifting of the Arms Embargo, p. 27.

mankind. In its very beginning it was not a war, but an attack of a well-armed and equipped army, the former Yugoslav Army, against defenseless citizens.... The more brutal an attack, the more hesitant the world became. The free world neither defended, nor supported freedom. Our people, facing the threat of extermination and a clearly pronounced death sentence, decided to defend itself.... Every thing changed (in Yugoslavia),

the war began, the aggressor and the victims emerged, but the arms embargo has remained in place, as if nothing had happened in the meantime. Justice has turned into injustice, because the aggressor had weapons which had been stock-piled over 40 years time-while the victim was unarmed and its hands were kept tied.⁶⁵

On October 13,1993, President Clinton said that UN resolutions 781 and 786 banned unauthorized flights over Bosnia, but that they were violated by the Serbs. On April 12 1993, NATO began to enforce violations and declared a no-fly zone. Fifty American aircraft deployed for that mission. In the President's explanation, the number of airdrops to Bosnia reached 1900, and 1000 of them were to UN safe areas.⁶⁶

The bombing of Sarajevo's marketplace on February 4, 1994 was one of the war's turning points. Sixty-eight people were killed, and 200 people were wounded in this attack. The world watched on TV the brutality of Bosnian war. After this incident NATO told the Serbs that they must move their heavy guns and artillery to a position at least 20 kilometers from Sarajevo. Aircraft and 4,300 UNPROFOR soldiers patrolled this 20-kilometer area in order to prevent the introduction of more weapons.⁶⁷ Jeanne Kirkpatrick, professor of government at George Washington University and senior fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, wrote a letter to president Clinton in 1993 about Bosnia. She said that America and western democracies should help the Bosnians by hitting Serbian military targets with air strikes. She justified this position by referring to Article 51 of the UN. According to Kirkpatrick, the Bosnian army should be militarized and America should send 25,000 troops to Bosnia.⁶⁸ In her proposal the total number of NATO troops would be 50,000,

⁶⁵ Frequently Asked Questions...news/faq/archive/bosnia-news-faq. html. 02/13/1996.

⁶⁶ "The Statement of President of the United States of America, Willim J.Clinton" Enforcement of the no-fly zone in Bposnia-Herzegovina: communication from the President of the United States transmitting his fellow up report on the deployment of united States combat-equipped aircraft to support NATO's enforcement of the no-fly zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina. US Government Printing Office, Washington 1993, pp 1-2.

⁶⁷ Briefing on Bosnia and other current military operations: hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United states, One Hundred Third congress, second session. The US Governmental printing, Washington 1994, p. 13.

⁶⁸ The Crisis in Former Yugoslavia and the US Role, p. 12

and their mission expense for one year was expected to be \$ 2 billion. The cost was \$ 1 billion for the American government.⁶⁹ In February 1994, Secretary of Defense William Perry established three criteria for a proposed plan for Bosnia. This plan should help a comprehensive peace, reduce civilian casualties, and allow NATO air power to support UN ground forces, UNPROFOR.⁷⁰

Bishop Anthony of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America also joined discussions of the arms embargo. He wrote a letter to president Clinton on April 20, 1994. Anthony felt that America should not be severe in its policies against the Serbs. The Balkans are unlike the Gulf. An attempt to become involved in the Bosnian war would create a second Vietnam for America. As a patriotic American, the Bishop did not want American sons to die in the Bosnian civil war. Furthermore, the Bishop asserted, America knows that the Russian people love the Serbians and that Yeltsin is America's favorite politician in Russia. Thus, America should not alienate the Russian people and should not jeopardize the Yeltsin government in Russia in order to help the Bosnian Muslims.⁷¹

Michael Djordjevich, president of Serbian Unity Congress of America, blamed the West for causing Yugoslavian dissolution. The CIA predicted Yugoslavian dissolution 18 months before it occurred, but did nothing to prevent it. According to Djordjevich, Germany and some certain Muslim states were responsible for the Yugoslavian dissolution. Destabilizing Yugoslavia meant destabilizing the Balkans. Djordjevich accused America of establishing a Croat-Muslim alliance with Germany. This alliance would make Serbia and Greece weak, and Germany would expand its influence from the Adriatic to the Middle-East. In addition, Germany would control Danube's international water-way.⁷²

In 1994 the Muslims gained the advantage in the war against the Serbs and Croats. The Croats realized that the Serbo-Croat alliance would not help the Croats to reach their goals. To gain support of the West and the Islamic states, especially Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the Croats signed a cease-fire with the Muslims on February 23, 1994. The Croat Republic evacuated its 5,000 troops from Bosnia.⁷³ In December 1994, with Croat help and arms from Turkey, Iran,

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p.46.

⁷⁰ Briefing on Bosnia and other current military operations, p. 16

⁷¹ US Policy Toward Bosnia and the Balkans: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Third Congress, second session, US Government Printing Office, Washington 1994, pp. 55-56

⁷² *ibid*, pp. 5-6.

⁷³ Cohen, p. 304.

Saudi Arabia even Malaysia, the Muslims launched a major military offensive. They were successful and regained some Muslim populated areas.

In 1994, the UN arms embargo remained in former Yugoslavia. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 947 on September 30, 1994. According to this resolution, UNPROFOR was acting in an essential role in Bosnia, and the Security Council decided to extend UNPROFOR's mandate for an additional period, terminating on March 31, 1995.⁷⁴

Due to the Serbs' violations of the agreement concerning a cease-fire in UN safe areas, NATO began air strikes against Serb artillery positions on August 30, 1994. NATO gave information to Russia about the air strikes, which were not approved by this nation. On November 18 and 19, the Serbs launched air strikes against Bihac--where 1,200 UNPROFOR troops were deployed--and Cazin from the Udbina airfield close to Karajina. The Serbs used chemical weapons and napalm in this attack. In response to the Serb attacks, NATO—using 39 aircraft--launched an attack against Udbina airfield on November 21, 1994.⁷⁵ Air strikes against the Serb army positions occasionally continued. With these strikes, NATO tried to secure the Serb attacks against UN safe areas.

On March 31, 1995, the UN Security council separated UNPROFOR into three operations: the UN Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO); the UN Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in Macedonia; and UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Approximately 500 American soldiers were deployed as part of UNPREPED.⁷⁶

NATO air strikes and the Muslims' successful attacks against the Serbs made the Serbs willing to compromise. In November 1995, a peace initiative was started by America in Dayton, Ohio. The Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia participated in this peace meeting. The United States, Britain, France, Germany and Russia's representatives joined as the Contact Group Nations.⁷⁷ An initial peace accord was signed in Dayton, and peace meetings continued in Paris. In December 1995, America sent 2,500 troops in Bosnia to finish the war.

In sum, there are a lot of lessons from the Bosnian war. Considered in humanitarian terms, the war was a great tragedy. From a political perspective, it

⁷⁴ Frequently Asked Questions...news/faq/archive/bosnia-news-faq.html. 02/13/1996.

⁷⁵ Efforts to Achieve Peace and Security in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Communication from the President of the United States. US Government Printing Office, Washington 1995, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁶ Enforcement of the No-Fly Zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Communication from the President of the United States. U.S. Governmental Printing Office, Washington 1995, pp 1-2.

⁷⁷ <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/www/current/bosnia/bossumm.htm>

showed that the world's policies had changed and that post Cold-War political settlements were not yet finished. The Bosnian war demonstrated proved increased political differences between Europe and America, and showed the European's great powers' will to lead Europe and to have a play a more active role in world policies. The Bosnian war also showed an increase of German political power. For the first time since World War II, Germany sent its troops abroad, to Bosnia. The war alienated the Muslim States from the West because of its double standard. The West used to accuse some nations of violating human rights, but the West was not disturbed by the Bosnian tragedy. For the Bosnians, the West was responsible for innocent people's death.

The war brought regional states' historical and traditional policies in the Balkans. Nationalist movements and the regional and European powers' policies resembled pre-World War I political settlements in Europe. Russia has played her Tzarist role and Turkey has challenged Russia. The Serb-allied Russia opposed NATO's actions in Bosnia, but later she also participated in the NATO mission in Bosnia. The war in Bosnia proved that US leadership in world policies would continue and this war, at the same time, proved the UN's bankruptcy of leadership. The UN was no longer a reliable and powerful international organization. It was just a toy of the great powers, especially America. Finally, the war stopped with international intervention. This intervention did not become a new "Vietnam" for the Americans. Nor did it cause bigger conflicts and increase Muslim casualties; however, England and France defended these ideas. It was obvious that the stopping of the arms embargo and the use of NATO air strikes--or an international intervention--which were always defended by the Bosnian and the Turkish government--could stop this unjust war.