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[Introduction to] Religion and Justice in the War over Bosnia

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Introduction

Interpreting Contemporary Conflicts

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In 1985, contemplating the prospects for Yugoslavia after Tito and more than aware of the "centrifugal forces" driving sections of the nation apart, Fred Singleton recorded that "my own inclinations are towards optimism and hope for the future." (Singleton, 1985: 285) Writing shortly after the elections of December 1990, Ivo Banac allowed that "the possibility of . . . civil war is great," while still holding out a chance for "peaceful, internationally supervised, negotiated dissolution, leading to at most a loose confederal arrangement." (1992: 186) His more pessimistic premonitions carried the day. From Vukovar to Mostar, Dubrovnik to Sarajevo, scenes of death and destruction of the civilian populations of Croatia and Bosnia are now commonplace. Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power in 1987–88, his call for a "Greater Serbia," and his suppression of Kosovo in the south and Vojvodina to the north, coupled with the worsening economic situation, led to increased tensions throughout 1989, which culminated in the fracas at the Communist Party congress in January 1990 that came to mark the symbolic end of Yugoslavia.

Beginning in June of 1991, out-and-out war moved from Slovenia to Croatia to Bosnia, with the Bosnians in particular having borne the brunt of the fighting. Cease-fires came and went; plans for the partition of Bosnia were embraced, and rejected, as it suited the aims of one party or another. The early summer of 1995 witnessed some gains by the Bosnian government, but the breakaway Serbs led by Radovan

Karadzic and his general, Ratko Mladic, responded in July by taking the safe haven of Srebrenica, amidst reports of massive atrocities. In August, as the United States and its allies wrangled over how to protect Bosnia, the reinvigorated Croatian army launched a campaign to retake the Krajina. Finally, as summer moved toward fall, NATO forces mounted a systematic air attack on Bosnian Serb installations. American diplomatic pressure, led by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, resulted in talks at Dayton, Ohio, which ultimately produced a peace accord promising a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina, made up of a Bosnian-Croat Federation and a Serbian Republic. As the new year rolled in, a NATO-led force to number some sixty thousand troops was being deployed in Bosnia. There was an uneasy peace, broken occasionally by snipers and anti-tank guns. Though at present the cease-fire is holding, few are willing to predict how long it will last.

But pessimism, however sober, does not absolve us from thought or action. Writing as the states of Communist Europe fell, and shortly before the buildup to Desert Storm and the Gulf War, Paul Kennedy insisted on the "clear need for the United States polity to understand much more about what is going on outside its borders." (Kennedy, 1991: 182) The interrelations of political, economic, and social change make it impossible to envision and plan for the future without some attempt to coordinate our political and social goals, and in lieu of a major cataclysm such coordination will have to be international as well as domestic. The ways that we do this will themselves command moral scrutiny, not simply from some "the bell tolls for thee" solidarity, but because of our complicity in events and their aftermath.

Consider Susan Strange's claim that "in Yugoslavia the fundamental imbalance of military force between Serbs and the Bosnians was indirectly the result of two ways in which the United States exercised its structural power in matters of security." (1995: 64) Her argument hinges on the leadership taken by the United States in making Yugoslavia a formidable Cold War army as a challenge to Soviet domination. Having watched that army be coopted in support of Milosevic's Serbia, the United States acquiesced in the embargo that kept arms from the Bosnian government. Strange concludes that "without leadership from Washington, it is doubtful whether this unevenhanded treatment of the civil conflict would have persisted for so long." (1995: 65)

My interest here is not in the justice of Strange's accusation, but in the way that any strategic policy implicates one country in the lives of others. If she is right in seeing the international community's treatment of Bosnia as "unevenhanded" then an injustice has been committed, and if our government engineered the situation then it shares in the blame. To recognize a blameworthy situation and do nothing about it compounds the offense. At least that's what we teach our children. Of course, if Strange is not right then it's another story, but either way it becomes a matter of conscience to bring whatever resources are available to bear on finding out where justice lies.

This is the point at which journalism become tremendously important. While it is a common trope of correspondents to portray themselves as cynical and hard-boiled, the detached coolness is part of a strategy to avoid being misled by the powers that be. Telling the truth is what journalists contribute to our attempts to be just. Worries about justice were responsible, in at least some measure, for the outrage felt by many journalists and their audience at the handling of the press during the Gulf War. Attempts to restrict reporting in the Gulf prompted a number of organizations and individuals to file suit against the government for its attempt to control the flow of information. (cf. Schanberg, 1991)

Just before the Gulf War broke out, Walter Cronkite wrote of the importance of a free press in time of conflict. He recounted the following story from his experience in the Second World War:

> Once in England the censors held up my report that the Eighth Air Force had bombed Germany through a solid cloud cover. This was politically sensitive; our air staff maintained we were practicing only precision bombing on military topics. But the censors released my story when I pointed out the obvious—Germans on the ground and the Luftwaffe attacking bombers knew the clouds were there. The truth was not being withheld from the Germans but from the Americans. (Cronkite, 1991: 382)

Indiscriminate bombing is an affront to justice, and keeping such information from the American public serves no legitimate war aim; it serves only the attempt of American strategy makers to avoid accountability. If our strategies are questionable, then as citizens we should hold our leaders to account. Cronkite tells the story in order to highlight the duplicity of the censors in the Gulf, closing with the

healthy reminder that "any system that prevented the press from reporting freely on all aspects of the conflict could not have well served a democratic people." (1991: 383) Judgments of responsibility inevitably depend on findings of fact, and for this a free and independent journalism is indispensable. It is the beginning of any attempt to interpret the rights and wrongs of an ongoing war.

But it is not sufficient, a fact brought home with a vengeance by a cursory survey of the writing on the conflict in Bosnia. Take, by way of illustration, the Sunday *New York Times* for June 4, 1995. R. W. Apple's lead article for the "Week in Review" section provides a helpful summary of what constrains the major powers from acting decisively in Bosnia. Thomas Friedman's Op-Ed piece endorses lifting the arms embargo and attempting to contain the fighting within Bosnia. Among the letters to the editor, one advocates U.S. intervention of some sort on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims. Another takes A. M. Rosenthal to task for confusing Radovan Karadzic and his "murderous thugs" with Christian patriots, while Alex Dragnich reiterates the claim that "the Serbs want nothing more than the right recognized for the other ethnic groups that constituted Yugoslavia—self-determination." (Dragnich, 1995) Dragnich's contribution is interesting, connecting as it does the world of public debate with the halls of the academy. His earlier work is regularly cited in discussions of the origins of Yugoslavia, and the 1993 paperback edition of his *Serbs and Croats* offers the *Wall Street Journal*'s judgment that the "narrative has a clear and concise historical logic." (Dragnich, 1992) Singleton, however, while recommending Dragnich's earlier work, does so "despite its pro-Serbian orientation." (Singleton, 1985) How are we to distinguish among partisans?

This last question is crucial given the role of the media in shaping our understanding of events in Bosnia.[1] In a world of satellite hookups and on-site reporting, public sentiment, and with it political resolve, rides a rollercoaster built on dramatic coverage of breaking stories. It suffices to recall how quickly American sentiment turned against our involvement in Somalia as a result of television reporting. Our collective concern for the victims of ethnic cleansing has ebbed and flowed with the television tides as well. Print journalism remains a more sober way of sifting for the facts.

Of all the stories to come out of the Yugoslavian breakdown, none are more distinguished than those of Roy Gutman. His *Newsday* story of July 3, 1992, focused on the beginnings of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, along with the attempts by Serb representatives to portray this

as voluntary emigration on the part of the refugees. (Gutman, 1993: 21)[2] Through the fall, Gutman's stories chronicled the holding camps where survivors reported that prisoners "had their throats slit, their noses cut off and their genitals plucked out," (1993: 51) and reported that "members of Karadzic's inner circle" established a "transit facility" in Foca that, in the summer of 1992, "functioned as a rape camp, holding 74 people, including about 50 women." (1993: 157–158) Gutman has been particularly effective in deploying the Serbs's words against them, pressing his investigation until they become flustered in their evasions. In the case of the mayor of Prijedor, whom Serb spokesmen first reported dead, then charged with "resisting the armed forces," then said had "escaped," Gutman pursued Simo Drljaca, the newly installed police chief, until finally:

> A week later, on his home turf in Prijedor, he put it more bluntly. Cehajic, who was 53 at the time, had "disappeared." "You know how it is. You find they disappeared," said Drljaca. "There may be some who died in the process of disappearing." (Gutman, 1993: 111)

The Muslims of Bosnia, the story suggests, seem to have become remarkably adept at the "process of disappearing."

As compelling as Gutman's reporting is, skeptics remain. Misha Glenny notes the tendency of belligerents to inflate the numbers, remarking that the Omarska camp, which Gutman discusses in detail, held "between 3,000 and 5,000 according to figures released by international humanitarian agencies. The Bosnian government insisted that the number was 11,000." (Glenny, 1993: 203) The most common figure for casualties in the conflict is 200,000, though Glenny, writing in June of 1993 gives something over 100,000. (1993: 182) By February of 1995, Glenny was closer to the 200,000, (1995a: 60) but in April George Kenney, formerly of the State Department's Yugoslav desk, rejected the received figure in favor of "the range of 25,000 to 60,000 fatalities." (Kenney, 1995: 42) These disputes about the numbers may not be directly relevant to assessing justice or injustice, but they point up the difficulty of determining the facts, and this *is* important for assessing responsibility.

Determining responsibility is made harder by the predominantly anti-Serbian tenor of much of the journalism. There is the occasional piece inclined to blame all sides, seeing the recent swing in favor of Bosnia as the product of "newspapers and history books uniformly

reflecting rosy images of prewar Bosnia peddled by the old communist regime." (Smajlovic, 1995: 113) In this particular case, though, it may be important to place Smajlovic's remarks in the context of her break with *Oslobodjenje*, the "Sarajevo Daily" of Tom Gjelten's recent volume. In the fall of 1992, according to Gjelten, Smajlovic left the Sarajevo paper "and moved with her nine-year-old son to Belgrade, where she went to work for *Vreme*, a weekly opposition news-magazine." Gjelten tells her story as that of a Serb from Bosnian Sarajevo who "can choose to stay out of this war and not take the side of my people," but who "cannot fight against them, and that's what staying at *Oslobodjenje* would have meant." (Gjelten, 1995: 50) Should this make us cautious in reading her most recent reflections?

Pro-Serbian writing can, however, be found. Florence Levinsohn sets out, in *Belgrade*:

> to try to set the record straight about the Serbs. . . . What had led to the terrible rupture of Yugoslavia, I wanted to know. Were the Serbs actually the murderous warriors described in the U.S.? . . . It didn't seem reasonable that the atrocities had all been on one side. That isn't normally in the nature of war. (1994: 3)

Through interviews with a broad spectrum of the Belgrade intelligentsia, Levinsohn becomes convinced that Serbia is more sinned against than sinning. Without denying the culpability of Slobodan Milosevic for raising the specter of nationalism and leading the nation into war, she conveys the impression that Serbia has been roundly mistreated by the United States and the Europeans. An informant early in her story traces the connections between Nazi Germany, the United States, and the United Nations's economic embargo on Serbia. "The day Bosnia was recognized," recalls her subject, "the 6th of April, was a date people here remember so well. It was the Nazi bombing of Belgrade in 1941." Having earlier heard claims of a German conspiracy in dismembering Yugoslavia, Levinsohn asks why the Germans of today would seek the destruction of Yugoslavia:

> "I don't know. It is very difficult to understand. But it is clear that in the very near future Germany is going to be so strong they will be able to do anything they want." It was the same theory I'd heard the night before from what I'd considered two mad zealots. This woman was clearly not a zealot. (Levinsohn, 1994: 34)

Since her informant is clearly sane, the inference seems to go, the conspiracy theory likely has a grain of truth. If so, then it is hardly surprising that the Serbian leader, Milosevic, would feel it necessary to take steps against the secessionists.

Following some reflection on Serbia's economic grievances under Tito's regime, Levinsohn's informant makes the connection between the Nazis and the Allies in the Second World War:

> "It was always a mystery. You know, Croatia was not bombed by the Allies, but Belgrade and other towns in Serbia were. On Easter Day in 1944. I recall the day very well. . . . And we were fighting on the side of the Allies! At this same time Croatia, a Nazi puppet, was never bombed. It was crazy. And no one knows why." (1994: 35)

Levinsohn lets this pass without comment, allowing her narrative to proceed to the war in Bosnia and the reports of rape and death camps. But the story returns later on, as Levinsohn interviews the press attaché at the American embassy. She reports their general agreement on the counterproductive nature of the UN embargo, though to his response that the United States is but "one of the parties involved" she retorts that "it was the U.S. that first adopted the formal position that Serbian aggression in Bosnia Herzegovina was the cause of the war there, and only then were sanctions imposed. Michael smiled weakly." When he instances the siege of Sarajevo and the destruction of Vukovar as direct consequences of Serbian support for the war in Bosnia, she counters with the firebombing of Dresden. "And," she presses on, "how about the Allies bombing Belgrade and other Serbian towns occupied by the Germans? 'Well,' Michael said, 'you have a point.'" (Levinsohn, 1994: 212)

There is a complex argument, really a net of interwoven arguments, being deployed here. First, there is the established fact that Belgrade was bombed, then invaded, by Nazi Germany beginning 6 April 1941, making the Serbs victims of manifest aggression. This victimization was repeated, so the argument goes, by the Allies at the end of the war, only to be perpetuated by the irrationalities of Tito's government. In the present war the process of victimization has been reenacted by the UN, under American impetus. Second, there is the memory of Nazi atrocities, for which many were tried as war criminals. But there is also the carpet bombing of the German interior, not to mention Belgrade, for which the Allies would surely have been tried

had they lost the war. Thus even if Milosevic could be held unilaterally responsible for the war in Bosnia, he has only undertaken the sorts of strategy typical of modern leaders. Finally, the embargo depends on America's "formal position" that the Serbs are the aggressors. Levinsohn seems to contrast "formal" with "substantive," implying that there is no fact of the matter that justifies calling one side the aggressor as opposed to another. This makes the hardships imposed on Serbian noncombatants even more unfair, particularly since the embargo has failed to achieve its political ends.

To these arguments Levinsohn adds yet another. Since American intervention is perceived as crucial to separating themselves from the rump Yugoslavia, and since to "gain that intervention, it was crucially required that the Serbs be demonized," the governments of Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo "hired foreign propagandists to help them win their wars." This puts the Serbs at an unfair disadvantage, but worse, it raises the specter of an American public viciously duped into supporting the wrong side, since "most of us who are old enough have clear memories of U.S. victory stories coming out of Vietnam, most particularly the body counts that were later proven to be fabricated by the government." (Levinsohn, 1994: 312–313) Only by resisting "the disinformation trap" being laid for the American psyche will public opinion develop into "a more realistic picture of three peoples fighting each other on fairly equal terms." (Levinsohn, 1994: 318)

There's much to be said about each step here, but for the moment I want to focus on the way Levinsohn ties history to present conflicts. In the first strand of argument, it is crucial to make the link between the evil bombing of Belgrade by the Nazis and the "crazy," inexplicable bombing of Belgrade by the Allies. This provides the grounds for the Serbian claim to be advocates of democracy, inexplicably victimized by their supposed allies. But a little sleuthing in the history of the Second World War puts the situation in a different light. The Allies landed in Italy in the fall of 1943, and in the winter of 1943–44 the Russians were beginning their push into East Central Europe. By the end of March 1944, the Russians were preparing to liberate the Crimea and drive into Romania. "At the same time," writes Liddell Hart, "the Allied heavy bombers from Italy launched a series of blows at the main railway bottlenecks, beginning with attacks on Budapest, Bucharest, and Ploesti, in the first week of April." (1970: 574) Levinsohn's informant herself refers to the German anti-aircraft emplacements shooting at Allied planes. The bombings in and around

Belgrade would appear to have been part of the softening up of the German armies in the Balkans as a precursor to the liberation of Belgrade in October of 1944.

But why spare Zagreb? Although Tito was almost captured at Drvar, southwest of Banja Luka, in the German offensive of May, the Partisans did receive Allied air support. But this "was the last occasion on which German troops took a major initiative in the Balkans. From June 1944 until the final surrender, the Partisans, backed by an increasing weight of Allied support, gradually pushed the Germans back." (Singleton, 1985: 203) The last German armies in the Balkans fled north to the Danube and then pushed on into Hungary, pursued by the Red Army. In April of 1944 Belgrade was a Germany military command center closely linked to rail targets. That it came in for some heavy action is not in the least surprising. By the time Zagreb fell to Tito's Partisans in May of 1945, the Allied armies were long gone and there was no reason to target the Croatian capital.

Levinsohn's failure to follow up isn't just a worry for prissy academics; it reflects a critical and moral failure that has become all too common in the Bosnian conflict: invoking a partisan history to excuse contemporary barbarism. Essential to any responsible assessment of our political duties are history, politics and ethics. Understanding human actions generally requires placing them within a particular narrative, if only because the reasons we search for must connect the present to the past. People seek one thing over another because of what they believe about themselves, their family, and the community around them, and these beliefs refer inevitably to past events. If Levinsohn's informant genuinely believes that the Allied bombing of Belgrade was inexplicable, "crazy," then it is no wonder that she feels set upon. But the ease of rectifying the belief, particularly for the reporter, should make us wonder whether we are being intentionally left in the dark.

Without an adequate grasp of the history it is extremely difficult to assess competing political agendas. This is a problem that emerges early on in Levinsohn's book. At the outset she insists that:

> The rebellion in Yugoslavia ... was not a rebellion against communism; it was a rebellion by the nationalist Catholic Croatians and Slovenes and the Bosnian Muslims against the nationalist aspirations of the Eastern Orthodox Serb leaders. The wars in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia were religious-ethnic civil wars over disputed lands and control. (Levinsohn, 1994: 4)

To call the conflicts "rebellions" implies the revolt of subordinates against a legitimate sovereign. This claim in turn suggests that the interpretive work has already been done, that the recent history of Yugoslavia registered federal recognition of the Belgrade government by the separate republics, and that Belgrade had done nothing to forfeit that recognition. How we should treat these conclusions will detain us in a later chapter, but Levinsohn takes it upon herself to settle those questions and to pronounce the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia the result of "a history of events between the Serbs and the Croats that made this war all but inevitable." (Levinsohn, 1994: 5) With the history done and the politics settled, the moral upshot is clear. The West should have worked harder to hold Yugoslavia together; having failed we are now visiting misery upon the citizens of Serbia; this is wrong and it should stop.

Would it were that simple, but it is not. Levinsohn's version of the story skillfully arranges material to insure that the reader focuses on a particular angle, in order to reinforce frequently unstated propositions. Nowhere is this clearer than in her treatment of the role of Islam in these conflicts. Slovenia and Croatia, for instance, may be viable entities, but Bosnia is "an ungovernable state. Its Muslim president had been jailed in the 1970s when he circulated a tract announcing his intention to convert Bosnia into a Muslim state." (1994: 14) This turns out to be important because, from the perspective of another of her informants, the Muslims of Bosnia "are the same Turks whose forefathers did all the terrible atrocities to the Serbs." (Levinsohn, 1994: 274) Here again history and politics reinforce one another.

Among the atrocities her subject cites is a tower "built entirely of the skulls of Serbs at Nis in 1809," and Levinsohn adds the further example, taken from an 1988 volume by Paul Pavlovich, of the Pasha of Nis ordering a pyramid of skulls as a monument during the Russo-Turkish war. Both references may be to the same famous story, in which Stevan Sindjelic, defeated at Nis, "set fire to the stores of gunpowder on which he himself sat, leaving to posterity the memory of a courageous deed of a caliber rare even in this heroic period." (Dedijer, et al., 1974: 273) Temperley's lively older history extolls Sindjelic as making for himself

> a name in song, like to that of Kiurtschia and Kara George, though his was a purer fame. Seventy years afterwards the Serbian troops entered Nish to find a Turkish tower garnished with the skulls of the Serbians

> who had died in this great fight. A chapel hard by now contains the skulls. (1919: 191)

There is no reason to doubt that the vanquished were beheaded, given that "both sides customarily cut off the heads of the dead and carried them to their leaders as trophies. Not even the wounded were spared this final indignity." (Skrivanic, 1982: 330) What Levinsohn fails to point out is the political complexity of the first Serbian revolution, which had begun as a response to the depredations of renegade Janissaries, the Ottoman military elite, and bandit forces that could not be controlled by the capital. With the outbreak of revolt in 1804, the Sultan dispatched a new pasha to Belgrade to put down the renegades in support of the Serbs led by Karadjordje. After benefiting from the Sultan's aid, the Serbs continued to revolt. In 1805 the Pasha of Nis led an Ottoman army against a substantial Serbian army; the Serbs won. In a conflict that rose and fell over almost a decade, the destruction of the magazine was but one incident. After the Ottoman army retook Belgrade in 1813, Constantinople issued an amnesty, reinstated exiles, and undertook other measures of reconciliation, however short-lived. (Jelavich, 1983: I, 196–202) The story of Sindjelic occurs in the context of a war not unlike the American Revolution. But failure to place the story in its full historical context reinforces the equation of Bosnians with Turks and Turks with barbarians.

This demonization of the Bosnian Muslims is furthered by adding a sexual component to the savagery of war. Thus these "same Turks ... would come into a Serb's house and take his wife," with the intention of humiliating the oppressed peasant. Not only do they rape the women, but "having been bisexual," Levinsohn's informant continues, "the Turks would also seduce the sons of the Serbs." The Muslims, it would seem, are civilization's worst nightmare: savage brutes give to barbarism and sexual perversion. Levinsohn signals some skepticism here, but closes with reflections on the Yugoslav novelist Ivo Andric, whose "*Bridge on the Drina* reveals ... a people mostly supine under the treacherous rule of the conquerors, living in friendly truce with the converted Muslims." (Levinsohn, 1994: 274) Broken by the First World War, violated by atrocities during the Second, this truce no longer holds and the Serbs, she implies, have risen with the goal of shaking off their victimhood.

To complete her picture of the situation, Levinsohn systematically minimizes accusations of Serb responsibility for assaults on their

neighbors. Thus to accusations of genocidal activities during the Second World War, she responds that "there is simply no evidence for any such Serbian terrorism." (1994: 247) This is an odd remark when juxtaposed to Noel Malcolm's report that "Cetniks and other local Serb forces had killed many thousands of Muslims in the winter of 1941–42 and the summer of 1942.... At least 2000 Muslims were killed [in Foca-Cajnice] ... and in February 1943 more than 9000 were massacred." (Malcolm, 1994: 187–188) That the numbers, which Malcolm takes from post-war Yugoslavian sources, may be inflated is true, but that there is "no evidence" does not seem to be borne out, and the claim is particularly jarring given that Malcolm's is one of the few sources cited by Levinsohn for background.

Minimizing the historical record makes it easier to dismiss accusations of Serb atrocities in the present conflict. Levinsohn tells several stories of rape and the abuse of Serbs by Croatians and Bosnians, from a report published in January of 1993 by the Serbian Council Information Center. The stories are analogous to those reported by Gutman, who notes that in July of 1992 he was present at the Bosnian Serb headquarters in Banja Luka while an army major "sat behind a portable typewriter churning out lurid diatribes.... Taken literally, it made no sense. I viewed the propaganda as a coded message for the army and the paramilitary bands operating under loose army supervision." When the major subsequently referred to these atrocities as the work of Janissaries, Gutman "tried to suppress a grin. 'Which century are you talking about?' I asked. He replied: 'It is a new and recent phenomenon.... " (Gutman, 1993: ix–x) The disinformation trap may work on both sides of the Drina.

Levinsohn's selective skepticism runs with a chill through her final pages, where she discounts the efforts of Gutman and others to locate and document rapes and other acts against noncombatants, asking rhetorically about the rape reports, "Where did the 50,000 figure come from? From the heads of the Bosnian Muslim leaders. How did they miraculously reach us in the United States and Europe? Through the good offices of [the public relations firm] Ruder Finn, which made no effort to check out such improbable numbers." (1994: 314) The language is almost indistinguishable from that of Karadzic's press officer in July of 1995, fielding questions about the fate of refugees following the Bosnian Serb taking of Srebrenica.

Levinsohn's *Belgrade* is a remarkable polemic, using the voices of contemporary Serbians to lay out a history designed to portray the

citizens of Belgrade as the long-suffering victims of ignorance, duplicity, and malice. The goal is to sway the reader to the Serbian side, enlist support for lifting the economic embargo, and heighten the reader's supposed fear of Islamic fundamentalism establishing a beachhead on our European homelands. But I do not want to suggest that hers is the only perspective that incorporates an author's local sympathies and political animosities. The greatest of all such writing, Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, is permeated by memories of ethnic strife and premonitions of impending war. Yugoslavia is a metaphor for Europe, caught between bouts of totalitarian oppression, represented by the Ottomans and the Nazis. She closes with a dramatic condemnation of the passivity of her own leaders:

> In the country it sometimes happens that the sleeper awakes to an unaccustomed stillness. It is as if silence stretched for miles above him, miles around him.... In England there was such a stillness, such a white winter of the spirit, and such a prolongation of it that death was threatened. It would have been expected, with fascist Italy and Nazi Germany crying out to kill, and England being what they both needed to kill, that there would be much bustling to and fro on the building of defences, that there would be shouts of warning, proclamations, calls to arms, debates on strategy. But there was silence, and no movement. (1941: 1114–15)

West and her husband traveled through Yugoslavia as Hitler assembled his troops for war; she collected her thoughts as Chamberlain shuffled toward Munich; and in her last pages West holds up Yugoslavia's resistence to Hitler as a lesson of hope. But for many, West's moral imperative has given way to ennui.

In *Balkan Ghosts*, the most self-consciously West-like of the recent reflections on Eastern Europe, Robert Kaplan portrays the world east of Vienna as a congeries of almost unimaginable malice, degeneracy, and corruption, but rarely relieved by a glimmer of insight or humanity. Kaplan reports a 1985 exchange with Milovan Djilas, the last great dissident from the days of Tito's Partisans. "'What about Yugoslavia?' I asked. He smiled viciously: 'Like Lebanon. Wait and see.'" In late 1989, in what seemed to Kaplan a peaceful easing into democracy, Djilas was still pessimistic, certain that whatever the final outcome "there will be national wars and rebellions. There is such strong hate here." (Kaplan, 1993: 75–76) Djilas's prescience may

tempt us into a paralytic despair. The fall of Srebrenica and humiliation of the United Nations in the second week of July 1995 may only confirm the hopelessness.

Misha Glenny, whose reporting has been among the most influential, presents a morality play where the dream of democratization spirals down into a post-apocalyptic nightmare, poised to engulf all Europe, from which he tries to rouse himself, crying "I hate the Balkans. I hate Europe. But we have nowhere else to go." (1993: 234) David Rieff's *Slaughterhouse* is the Sarajevo equivalent of *Belgrade*, though being closer to the action, it offers a richer mingling of blood with plum brandy. Rieff's principal objects of opprobrium are the waffling Clinton administration and what he portrays as the moral duplicity of UNPROFOR, whose tendency "to be *more* sensitive, not less, to the slaughterhouse that our world really is," made all the more shocking by "their insistence that the slaughter had to be allowed to go on." (Rieff, 1995: 170; see also Glenny, 1995a: 63) But this fatalism is subject to the same condemnation West visited upon the politicians of her day. Rieff correctly diagnoses the situation as the product of "moral dereliction," (Rieff, 1995: 193) and if we are not to continue thrashing helplessly about we need to bring together our critical resources to determine what we can do to set right the consequences of this dereliction.

Talk of political morality is likely to sound simpleminded in the face of so much systematically contrived human suffering. Politics, it will be said, is a matter of power and self-interest, and will always resist the constraints of morality. The problem with this popular cynicism is that it is not borne out by the facts. The architects of twentieth-century realism insisted that "an international order cannot be based on power alone, for the simple reason that mankind will in the long run revolt against naked power." (Carr, 1946: 235–236) This is nowhere more clearly borne out than in the study of the laws of war. While the occasional machiavellian will kick dirt on the idea that a sovereign should submit to the rule of law, belligerents have always drawn lines. (cf. Howard, et al., 1994) And even when they lacked either the restraint or resilience to abide by their own moral commitments, most governments have been quick to deny, excuse, or make a show of atoning for their failures. (cf. Walzer, 1992: 323–325. But see also Best, 1994: 410–414) Richard Haass, himself a veteran of the National Security Council, distinguishes four key influences on "what appears in today's newspapers and academic journals:" just war

theory; the legal paradigm developed over the last three centuries; theorists of military strategy, from Clausewitz to Liddell Hart; and Cold War analysts such as Kissinger and Schelling, giving primacy of place to the just war tradition, which has "dominated Western thought for centuries and provides a reference point for anyone speaking or writing on this subject." (Haass, 1994: 9) What is this tradition, and what is its place in recent political ethics?

Haass identifies the just war tradition with Christianity, as do Michael Howard and many others. This, however, needs to be qualified in several important ways. Over 30 years ago Paul Ramsey lifted the just war tradition to center stage in the American debate over nuclear deterrence, and through the decade of the sixties he expanded it to cover our involvement in Vietnam, conscientious objection, and a variety of issues in social and political thought. His expressed intention was to address the deficiencies he saw in the Protestant ethics he had learned from the brothers Niebuhr, and to this end he drew unashamedly on the natural law tradition associated with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Ramsey insisted that "'natural law' judgments do not proceed from autonomous reason alone, but are derivative principles in which *agape* shapes itself for action." (Ramsey, 1961: 33) This foundation in Christian love was important to his theological concern to demonstrate the preferability of Protestant over Roman Catholic moral theology. For Ramsey the natural law tradition associated with Thomas Aquinas could not be understood apart from the Gospel insistence on neighbor love, particularly as interpreted by St. Augustine. If Christian love were at the heart of the just war tradition, and if the shape of that love could be known only through Scripture, as mediated to a community of equals, then the ethics of war would be best explicated in terms of a Protestant Christian community.

Needless to say, this component of Ramsey's analysis did not go without criticism. Natural law thinkers within the Catholic tradition criticized Ramsey's apparent willingness to tolerate injustices in the name of a greater political end. This came out during the mid-1960s in Ramsey's ongoing dispute with a distinguished group of British Catholic thinkers over the justice of deterrence. While Walter Stein, Elizabeth Anscombe, and others maintained an absolute and unequivocal condemnation of nuclear weapons, leaving little alternative to unilateral nuclear disarmament, Ramsey attempted to articulate a theory of deterrence that would retain what he took to be a strategic

and moral necessity without offending the canons of justice. (cf. Stein 1961; Ramsey, 1968; and Ramsey, 1988: 183–212) This remained a thorny issue for two decades, receiving its most public airing in the debate over the American bishops' pastoral letter, which some suspected of making too many concessions to the residual realism of Ramsey and his proponents.

From the early 1970s to the present, James Johnson's work has emphasized the multiple intersecting sources that underlie the just war tradition. (cf. Johnson, 1975 and 1987) In 1977 Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* appeared, advancing a thoroughly secular approach to justice in war, taking aim in several sections at Ramsey's account of the tradition and its implications. Though Walzer received criticism from all sides, *Just and Unjust Wars*, has been instrumental in fostering a discussion of the just war tradition that goes beyond theological sources to Plato, Aristotle, and other key thinkers in the philosophical tradition. Thinking about justice in war is scarcely a Christian or even a religious matter; it is part and parcel of our best traditions of political reflection in the West.

The flowering of work, historical and philosophical, on the just war tradition has not produced uniformity. Distinctions abound in the foundations and applications of the various versions currently under debate. But whatever their differences on the intellectual underpinnings of the just war tradition, far and away the majority of these thinkers recognize a core to the tradition, made up of a number of criteria that must be met for war to be just. These criteria come in two distinct sorts: those dealing with the justice of going to war—*jus ad bellum*—and those which must be satisfied in the prosecution of war—*jus in bello*. The particulars differ from writer to writer, but the following list is common to all:

Jus ad bellum
1. Proper Authority
2. Just Cause
3. Just Intent
4. Last Resort
5. Reasonable Hope of Success

Jus in bello
1. Discrimination
2. Proportion

Though they can be turned into jargon, the just war criteria are nothing other than the distillate of practical reflection on how reasonable people of goodwill could possibly justify the intentional and protracted use of deadly force against other human beings. Such reflection is unavoidable, regardless of the way the community is constituted. The first criterion for going to war insists that random violence and the indiscriminate injuring of others is always and everywhere an evil. Private individuals may feud, wreak vengence on each other, and undertake vigilantism, but none of these is war, and they are all contrary to justice and the common good. War is an organized, communal action and as such can only be undertaken on the authority of the community. This is as true of a monarchy as a democracy.

To act without just cause manifests indifference to the welfare of friends and enemies alike. Recognizing a just cause rarely requires invoking any arcane theories of justice, any more than recognizing a good play on the baseball diamond requires a theory of baseball. Almost any mature member of the community already possesses the knowledge and experience necessary to determine whether he is behaving properly or doing well. The best evidence of this is our inclination to make excuses, along with our ability to recognize them for what they are. What is surprising is the relatively high standard to which we normally hold ourselves. Most of us, should we find a twenty-dollar bill on the grocery floor, will make some effort to determine its provenance, and the effort we make is likely to increase with the amount. So while I might pocket the twenty, I'd go out of my way to return a thousand dollars, and so would most of us. It's not ours; we're not entitled to keep it. Without seriously extenuating circumstances we would condemn anyone who didn't make a minimal effort to do the right thing.

For most people, twenty dollars would be an annoying loss, but not life-threatening; a thousand dollars might make the difference in a poor family having a place to stay. A prank that might embarrass someone is just childish; one that could maim or kill is unconscionable. To steal is wicked; to rape is worse. To shoot Native Americans attacking your frontier farm is tragic, even in self defense; to appropriate their lands, exclude them from resources, and deploy the army against them is genocidal. No specialized training or expert knowledge is required, though we may sometimes delude ourselves with excuses like "manifest destiny" or protecting the "purity" of the nation.

Just intent is somewhat more complicated, for it plays a dual role

in interpreting our actions. On the one hand, it describes the relation of the agent to justice, since the desire to secure and protect the good, with an eye to the general betterment of the community, is something we may reasonably demand of each other. But the agent can be just in his intent without being clear about where justice lies in the prosecution of a war. Thus there is a second sense in which just intent is secured by the commitment to abide by all the just war criteria. To put it another way, we require fairness in resorting to and prosecuting a war, and a failure renders the entire effort defective. If I threaten to gouge out the eyes of a hostage-taker's infant daughter, I have embraced evil, even if he gives in and I do not have to test my resolve. And when I make myself no better than the aggressor, my claim to justice melts away. (cf. Davis, 1992: 103–109)

Last resort and reasonable hope are subordinate to just intent. Should we undertake war as anything other than a last resort, doubt would be cast on our motives. Are we merely looking for an excuse? Do we secretly hope to gain some further advantage? Are we willing to use war, with all its risks and losses, for something less than a just cause? If something less than war will do, then only indifference to the common good would tempt us to resort to arms. At the same time, last resort does not mean trying everything conceivable before going to war. Last resort has been reached as soon as you become certain that nothing less will achieve justice. To take a recent example, the embargo that preceded the Gulf War probably resulted in more noncombatant injury on both sides than a more timely response would have, since it allowed the Iraqi army to consolidate its positions, exploit and destroy Kuwaiti resources, and prepare attacks on Israel, all the while jeopardizing the health and welfare of Iraqi civilians.

In many ways the demand for reasonable hope is the mirror image of last resort. A hopeless war makes no sense. It amounts to throwing away our lives and resources without the prospect of securing the common good. This is contrary to right reason and justice. But to reject hopeless war need not mean meek submission to a murderous power. Accumulating allies and resources may transform a wish into a reasonable hope. Suffering under an oppressive regime may be necessary, but criticism and protest can be surprisingly effective. Flight may be the counsel of prudence, as it was for Jews and others before the murderous fury of Nazi terrorism.

The *in bello* conditions are also clear requirements of justice.

Failure to distinguish those who are subject to attack from those who are not amounts to willingness to kill anyone you want in pursuing your ends, but that is the opposite of justice. A war is a public enterprise, pitting the instruments of one government against another. Only those public forces may legitimately be attacked. Everyone and everything else is immune. This immunity is not a matter of individual conscience. The reluctant draftee may have our sympathy, but on the battlefield he is a just target, while civilians cheering the roundup of Jews and Gypsies must be protected, as despicable as they are. This is not to say that there are no borderline cases; there are. Nonetheless, as John Ford wrote many years ago, the burden of proof falls on "those who want to increase the number of combatants, and include large numbers, even the 'vast majority,' of the civilian population." (Ford 1944: 20) Some occupations, even when they are crucial to an enemy's efforts, may prove immune from just attack. Ford offers a famously prolix list that includes shoemakers, dairymen, telephone girls, reporters, and "all children with the use of reason, i.e., from seven years up ... all co-operate in some degree in the aggression." (Ford, 1944: 21–22) None of them is a legitimate target, and to attack them is murderous. But soldiering is not on the list. I can directly attack soldiers, but I *must* discriminate between them and civilians.

Even a discriminate attack is not perfect. Bombs do not always fall just where you would like, and children don't always duck and cover. Although tragic, casualties resulting from good faith efforts to avoid noncombatants are not vicious and do not make a war unjust. They may be tolerated, though not welcomed, on the principle of "double effect." Here again, though the term is subject to much abuse, we make judgments based on it every day. If I compete with a friend for a contract or a position, I may know that losing will make him miserable, but that does not mean I shouldn't make my best effort. If I surprise a thief, and in the struggle he cracks his skull, I've done no wrong; he shouldn't have been there in the first place. In the classic example, which gave the principle its name, Thomas Aquinas noted that "the act of self defense may have two effects: one, the saving of one's life; the other, the slaying of the aggressor. Therefore, this act, since one's intention is to save one's own life, is not unlawful." (*ST*: 2a2ae, 64, 7) If my intention is good and my tactics fair and reasonable, we should regret the event, but there is no guilt.

I do, however, have the burden of insuring not only that my actions are necessary to securing justice, but that the good achieved is

not outweighed by the unintended loss of life and livelihood that may attend even the best executed actions. There is no simple calculation that can establish by some formula what miseries are acceptable in the pursuit of which goods. Thus determining whether the good to be achieved is proportionately greater than the damage being risked can never be a matter for technicians alone. The just war criteria are intended to clarify conscience when the way is obscure and experience limited, but they cannot eliminate the need to exercise prudence.

War forces my hand; I either submit or act. The criteria offered by the just war tradition help me interpret my actions and test my resolve to do justice. If my attack is out of proportion to the importance of the target, then I do not really care about the lives at risk, and if I do not care, then my willingness to discriminate is superficial. As my commitment to discrimination becomes shaky I may be tempted to pretend that the civilians in my sites are "collateral damages," but this demonstrates a murderous intent, and once I determine to sacrifice noncombatants my cause becomes irrelevant; I am a murderer and my war is unjust.

Haass writes that "the overall effect of this body of thought is to make it more difficult politically to go to war and more difficult militarily to fight one." (1994: 9) This is exactly right and exactly as it should be. War involves great risks and even greater sacrifices for all parties on all sides. The restraints we place on ourselves and our political leaders should discourage self-interest and adventurism not only in others but in ourselves. But this does not mean that war is morally unimaginable. The following essays attempt to bring social and political history together with moral analysis to characterize the ongoing conflict in the successor states to Yugoslavia, a necessary propaedeutic to justifying whatever actions we contemplate or our leaders ask us to endorse.

Michael Sells traces the rhetoric of the contemporary conflict back to a clash of religious communities and the emergent vocabulary of Romantic nationalism. Jean Bethke Elshtain asks us to reflect on the realities of nationalism. Liberals in particular have recently advocated a politics of identity, inviting ethnic and other groups to assert themselves in the face of civil society. Surely this is an important aspect of minority empowerment, but how should we react when "ethnic nationalism," to take a term from Bogdan Denitch, erupts into war and "ethnic cleansing"? If war is intentionally directed against noncombatant civilians, should we tolerate it on the basis of past

standards and legal norms? James Turner Johnson investigates this question with reference to the siege of Sarajevo and its crippling effects on the inhabitants of that city. My contribution reflects on the impact that just war thinking might have on American foreign policy, were our leaders to take justice seriously in international affairs. John Kelsay, finally, undertakes to display the impact our actual policies have on the Muslim world, many of whose leading thinkers are already skeptical of the claims of modern, industrial culture to be a vehicle for progress and liberation. Is genocide, some Muslims wonder, anything other than the natural expression of materialist, secularized modernity?

These are not the only questions prompted by the conflict in Bosnia. They are important ones nonetheless. The answers we give will be a direct expression of our ability to make sense out of our own politics, a measure of the health of our own public discourse. "War," wrote Clausewitz, "cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect the two elements are destroyed and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense." (Clausewitz, 1976: 605)